

# Asking for a Reference

If you are preparing for an internship or job search, one of the things you will need to do is line up references. References are people an employer can speak with who can vouch for your qualifications for the position and provide insight into your work ethic.

The following are tips to consider when choosing a person to serve as a reference:

- **Choose Wisely**

Choose someone who knows you well enough to be able to speak about your strengths and talents. Consider someone who can provide specific examples of times you excelled in your role, and what you brought to the organization. Possible references could include a professor, an advisor, former employer, a volunteer experience supervisor or co-worker, or an internship supervisor. Choose two or three of these people to include on your list of professional references. Leave family off your reference list. Hiring managers will assume that family will say only nice things about you.

- **Be Polite**

You are asking a person for a favor, so be professional and polite. Emailing or calling is fine, but if at all possible, meet with any prospective reference in person. Your approach should be simple and straight forward. Simply ask “Would you be willing to serve as a reference for me based on what you know about me and my work?” Keep in mind that for a variety of reasons not everyone is comfortable serving as a reference. It could be that they feel they don’t know you well enough. It could be that they don’t want to be bothered. In the case of former co-workers, it might even be that they are prohibited from doing so by the company. Whatever the reason, if a person declines to serve as a reference be gracious and thankful that they are candid with you. A lukewarm or mediocre reference will do you no good. NOTE: Never list a person as a reference without getting their permission first.

- **Notify Your Reference**

Immediately after the interview, notify your references and provide information about the position. Send them your resume again if need be and provide a brief description of the position. Mention specific qualities and skills of yours that you would like your reference to mention as they relate to the position for which you are being considered. If you have any information about the company and its culture, you can include those details as well. In other words, help your references help you. The more information you can provide, the stronger the given reference will be.

- **Thank Your References**

Whether or not you get the position, always write a thank you note to your references. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it will let your references know how much you appreciate their help as you start a new internship or job or as you continue the search.

## Sample Email Reference Request Messages

### Sample Email Message for a Supervisor/Co-worker:

Subject Line: Reference Request

Dear Ms. Smith,

I hope you are doing well. It's hard to believe that I am about to graduate in a couple of months!

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to serve as a professional reference for me. I will be beginning my job search and if you would feel comfortable discussing my strengths and skills with a potential employer, I would sincerely appreciate it.

Please let me know if you are willing to do this for me. I have attached my resume for your reference and can provide additional information to help with your decision.

Thank you for considering my request. I can be reached at 512-555-5555 if you would like to speak to me directly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,  
Mary Longhorn

### Sample Email Message for a Professor:

Subject Line: Reference Request

Dear Dr. Pine,

I really enjoyed the classes I took with you and our hilarious conversations during your office hours! I have learned so much just knowing you and really appreciate our time spent together.

As you know, I am looking for an internship and I am writing to ask if you would be willing to serve as a reference. If you would feel comfortable discussing my strengths and skills with a potential employer and agree to serve as a reference, I would sincerely appreciate it.

Please let me know if you are willing to do this for me. I have attached my resume for your reference and can provide additional information to help with your decision.

Thank you for considering my request. I can be reached at 512-555-5555 if you would like to speak to me directly.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,  
Mary Longhorn

***Career Advisors are available to meet with you to help you ask someone to serve as a reference. Make an appointment with CCS by logging into STAR or by calling our office at 512-471-9421. For additional online resources, visit the Career Toolkit on our website ([moody.utexas.edu/ccs](http://moody.utexas.edu/ccs)).***