



## The basics about referernces

By The N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions

For the Journal

At some point during your job hunt, you may be required to provide references either with your job application or at an interview. Letters of recommendation and verbal references definitely matter and can be one of the last deciding factors for an employer.

Carefully consider who you can approach to be a reference. First, know if the prospective employer is requesting professional work references only or would like personal references as well. Second, create a preliminary list of those people who best know your work ethic, strengths, and experience. Keep in mind that previous supervisors and managers may carry more weight as references. Be prepared if some companies you have worked for have policies that do not allow for references to be provided.

Always ask someone if you can use them as a reference before doing so. If someone is caught off guard by an inquiry and you have not spoken to them in five years, it is not going to be to your benefit. Explain why you would like to use them as a reference and ask how they would like to be contacted.

Once you have permission, let them know the names of the people and organizations to whom you will provide your list of references. Also, describe the types of jobs you have applied for and the application time frames, so your references will be better prepared when they are contacted.

If you have recently graduated, ask former teachers and professors if they would be willing to be a reference for you, especially if they taught classes that directly apply to the job you seek. For example, if you are applying for a job at a bank, you could ask your former finance teacher to be reference. Consider listing these types of references separately as "Academic References."

You may be required to provide references from a certain time period, such as from the previous three years. If you will not get a solid reference from someone you have to list from that time period, let your prospective employer know before they contact that former employer. It is better to explain any issues from the past up front, and be honest about the situation.

Listing references on your resume may not be a good idea if you are distributing many resumes during your job hunt. Your references do not want to be swamped with random calls, and they will not appreciate their information being widely distributed. Note on your resume that your references will be provided upon request, and then provide a separate sheet with their names, titles, organizations, and contact information when absolutely required or when you land an interview.

Always keep in contact with people, even after you have been hired. You never know when you will be offered a new opportunity or will be looking for a different position. If someone provided you an excellent reference and took time to speak to your prospective employer or to write a letter of recommendation, be sure to send them a thank-you note. This lets them know you appreciate what they did for you and also is great chance to maintain your network for the future.

For additional information about interviewing, resume tips, and resources available to job seekers, visit the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions at [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us) or the New Mexico Workforce Connection at [www.jobs.state.nm.us](http://www.jobs.state.nm.us).

This is a regular column written by the N.M. Department of Workforce Solutions. For more information, go to [www.dws.state.nm.us](http://www.dws.state.nm.us).

Published April 3, 2016.

The NMDWS column can be found in the Albuquerque Journal's Classifieds section featuring Real Estate, Automotive, and Careers every Sunday.