



Reference Letters and Reference Lists

A *reference letter* may be requested by a graduate/professional program and asks the reference to explain why the applicant would be a good fit for the position. For a job/inter-ship application you, as an employer, will then reach out to these people for a short

Determine your best representation

Depending on the purpose of a reference letter or list (ex./ employment vs. graduate school applications), you will need to determine the best person(s) to be your reference. Generally, all references should be professional in nature (no friends or family members) unless otherwise noted. Appropriate references may include professors, advisors, coaches, supervisors, and in some cases, colleagues. Choose people who know you well and can speak to your strengths and skills, especially to match the context of the letter/list.

documentation could include a transcript, other reference letters, or a list of accomplishments/skills that you would like them to highlight.

Allow yourself enough time

Faculty/administrators get many requests each semester to write reference letters; do not wait until the last minute to ask them. Generally, a month's notice is plenty of time. If the person will serve as a reference for employment Reference letter writers should follow instructions given by the specific program which you are applying. If no prompt is given, you should determine what information you would like the person to highlight and communicate this to them. A career consultant will also be able to help you brainstorm this during an appointment.



Reference lists should include the following regarding the reference:

- x name
- x current title and organization
- x your relationship to the reference
- x address
- x phone number
- x email
- x You may also choose to describe the context to which this person can speak about you and your skills. See examples below

(Always use the same header that is used for your resume and cover letter)

Example 1

CHLOE CHEMISTRY
412-268-2064
chloechemistry@andrew.cmu.edu

REFERENCES

Dr. Lawrence Laboratory
Professor of Chemistry
Former professor of Inorganic Chemistry course at CMU
Carnegie Mellon University
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 555-5555
laboratory@andrew.cmu.edu

Dr. Bunsen Burner
Director of Research
Former Principal Investigator for Research Assistant position
Big Research Institute
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Ms. Connie Sultant
Lab Manager
Former supervisor for Research Assistant position
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csultant@andrew.cmu.edu

Example 2

CHLOE CHEMISTRY
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