

Finding Referees

A referee is someone who can answer any questions employers have about your skills, attitude, work experience and work habits. You usually need at least two referees for a job application.

How do you find a referee?

Employers talk to referees to find out about how you work. Choose referees who will say good things about you and your work. Note that some applications may ask for a specific person, such as your current manager or work colleague.

Careers NZ has more advice on how to choose a referee: www.careers.govt.nz/articles/how-to-choose-good-referees-when-job-hunting/

It is best to use people from New Zealand workplaces as your referees if you can. It really helps if you have a part-time job while you study, or take the opportunity to do work experience or internships during your course. Then you will be able to ask people you have worked with to be your referees.

You can use a tutor or a professor if you do not have other referees, but make sure they know you well enough to be able to talk about your work ethic and skills.

If you need to, you can also use referees who know about your employment and experience outside New Zealand.



Simon and Nikki recommend that you find non-family people who are willing to act as your referees when you start applying for jobs.

“We want to know what you would be like to work with. Your priority should be to get some work experience in New Zealand. We are not concerned about the type of work you did in your part time job - it doesn't have to relate to your studies. We want to know that you will show up, follow instructions, work hard and ask for help when you need it.”

Mike Doyle, General Manager, Carac Group, Eltham, Taranaki

Do not use your friends as referees if they do not know anything about your work

experience and skills. Someone who only knows you socially cannot say what you are like to work with!

Make sure you use people who will be honest about you – if your referee lies about you or makes up stories that are only partly factual, the potential employer’s trust will be damaged and you could miss out on the job.

A story from a career adviser

I had an experience where a referee lied and said the candidate had worked for them. When the employer discussed the reference with the candidate, the candidate said they had never worked there. The candidate didn’t know the referee lied. They missed out on the job because the referee could not be trusted, and that reflected badly on the candidate.

What will happen with referees?

In New Zealand, employers usually prefer to contact your referees directly by phone.

Ask your referees and get their approval to be your referee before you list them on your CV or give their contact details to an employer.

You will need to provide these details: Referee name, Position, Company, email, and phone.

Example

Referee

Mr George Tell

Operations Manager

Example Company

g.tell@examplecompany.xx

Mobile: 0211 123123123

If you know the employer is going to make contact with your referees, it is a good idea to let them know to expect a call or email. It’s also good to give your referees a copy of your CV and to let them know what roles you are applying for, and the potential employers. Your referees should not be surprised when a potential employer contacts them to find out about you!

You may also want to ask your referees how they would prefer to be contacted, and what time is best. Be sure to pass this information on to the employer.

In New Zealand, job seekers do not usually include written letters of reference with their job applications, unless the application specifically asks for this.