

Reasons to check references:

- Helps you determine the true qualifications of each candidate.
- Gives another perspective aside from one or two brief interviews.
- People occasionally falsify information.
- Gives perspective on past (and possible future) performance.
- May prevent hiring dangerous people.
- It is a required step in the hiring process.

In short, the hour or two it takes to conduct reference checks is far less time than it will take to deal with performance, attitude, or behavior problems.

Sources for references:

- Former supervisors (the best source, whether given by the applicant or not)
- Peers/colleagues whose names the candidate has given as work references
- People you may know who have personally worked with the applicant
- OES may review the personnel files of internal candidates.

What to do:

- Identify yourself and the organization.
- Ask if the time is appropriate for a reference conversation; if not, set an appointed time.
- Indicate that the candidate has applied for a position within your department.
- Establish rapport with the individual providing the reference.
- Confirm the relationship between the reference and the applicant and verify basic data such as title, functions, salary, dates of employment, and reporting relationship.
- Describe the position.
- Ask straightforward, job-related questions.
- Solicit opinions on the applicant's ability to perform in the new position.
- Ask for additional sources of referral.
- Thank the individual for their time.
- If a reference for an applicant is problematic, you should check with other sources to confirm. You will want to ensure that one person is not purposely and perhaps falsely giving a poor reference.

Just as you are with interviews, you should be consistent in the questions posed to references. Ask the same job-related questions of each reference, and weigh information in the same manner for all applicants. What disqualifies one applicant should disqualify any others. Consider the source of your information, as the perceptions of the individuals providing information limit the information.