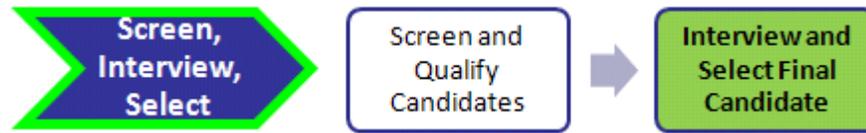


Conducting an Effective Reference Check



Overview: Use this job aid as guidance on how to conduct an effective reference check. In addition to highlighting the process, it provides other essential information and sample questions. Thoroughly checking references will give you a good indication of how a new employee will perform in your department.

Intended Audience: Hiring Managers

The “Who”

A reference is:

Previous and present employers

- ✓ Immediate Supervisors (required of all final candidates)
- ✓ Yale counterparts with supervisory knowledge of the candidate’s performance
- ✓ Documented performance records
- ✓ Former clients, depending on the role



A reference is **not**:

- ✓ Unqualified hearsay or rumors from colleagues or friends (even from those in a supervisory role, *if that* individual did not supervise the candidate you are inquiring about).
- ✓ Names of individuals who do not directly supervise the employee (*i.e.* do not accept names of co-workers, non-work related colleagues, etc.).

Whose References Should be Checked?

1. The final candidate(s) whom you would consider hiring.
2. Candidates whose information on the resume or during the interview needs greater clarification or verification from an employer or supervisor in order to make a decision to rank the applicant.

The “What”

1. A phone call is more effective than sending a written request. Written reference letter responses are generic and can be unreliable, as they likely do not refer to your specific opening. If you need to request feedback in writing, be certain to follow up with a phone call to verify information and seek clarity.
2. Begin the discussion by verifying the candidate’s employment information and assuring the candidate has given consent for the call.
3. Share your job needs, and ask questions related to your opening.

TIP: Use the posted job description you have to develop the questions.

4. Determine what the required job competencies or behaviors are for the position the applicant is being considered for and ask the reference for examples on how the candidate demonstrated those competencies in their former position.



All references should be asked the same questions in order for you to evaluate candidates fairly and consistently.

5. Ask for a brief description of the candidate’s previous job duties, size of office, organizational design, pace of work, etc.
6. Assess how the candidate performed previous job duties. What duties demanded most of the applicant’s time? Effort? Independent judgment? With what degree of success?
7. Keep all notes from the reference check in a supervisor’s file, NOT the employee’s file, and retain for 3 years.

The “When”

During the interview, obtain permission from candidates whom you consider to be potentials for the job opportunity. Also consider obtaining references from internal/layoff candidates for whom you need additional information to make a determination.



Do **not** contact references before receiving permission. Contacting supervisors prematurely can injure the relationship between the employee and their current employer.

TIP: It is not uncommon for an applicant to withhold permission to speak to the current supervisor during the interview/ranking process. In this case, an offer can be made contingent on the receipt of a strong and positive reference.

The “Why”

We check the references of both internal and external candidates, as a critical part of the hiring process. Every hiring manager is expected to secure references on the prospective employee(s) they wish to hire. This includes referencing Yale faculty and managers with the permission of the candidate.

Reference checks serve to verify information the candidate provided on their resume and during the interview; obtain assessments of the employee’s skills, strengths and areas for development relative to the opening; confirm impressions/opinions derived from the interview.

Sample:

Candidate Name: _____

Reference Name: _____

1. [Describe position] Based on what I’ve described about this position, and what you know about the candidate’s work in your company, would you recommend him/her for this position? Why or why not?
2. What is/was the reporting relationship? Did you supervise him/her directly?
3. Did the candidate hold any other positions at the company?
4. Please describe the key responsibilities of the candidate in his/her most recent position.
5. What were/are the candidate’s most significant strengths on the job?
6. What were/are the candidate’s most significant areas for development?
7. How would you describe this person’s reliability on a daily basis? Would you describe him/her as punctual on a regular basis?
8. This position requires one to be highly reliable with an attendance record supporting that. Can you tell me how much unplanned time (not scheduled vacations, personal days) was taken in the past year?
9. Please comment on the following skills that the person used in their position with you:

Communication skills; customer service skills; leadership skills; flexibility; attention to detail/follow through; ability to take initiative; ability to work as a team member; independence

10. Why did the person leave your employment? Would you rehire this individual? Why or why not? Has this employee ever been on discipline in your organization? If so, what were the circumstances and time frame?

11. Are there additional comments you'd like to make? Is there anything I should know?

TIP: Many employers will only provide dates of employment, job title and salary information. If this is company policy, document this information and proceed to the next reference listed.

PROHIBITED INQUIRIES:

Yale University does not discriminate in the employment process.



Do **not** ask questions regarding:

- ∅ Race
- ∅ Color
- ∅ Religion
- ∅ Gender
- ∅ Age
- ∅ National or ethnic origin
- ∅ Sexual orientation
- ∅ Veteran status
- ∅ Disability
- ∅ Marital status

These topics are not appropriate and will not provide you with any information relative to making a decision about employment. It is allowable to **ASK ONLY JOB RELATED QUESTIONS** during the reference check.



Should you recognize a negative pattern or significant performance issue in the references, this may be an indication of future performance problems. Please speak to your Recruiter regarding this candidate.