

Do's and Don'ts for Checking References

DO's:

- Do contact at least three former employers, preferably someone who has evaluated the candidate's job performance. References should be checked before making a job offer.
- Do contact the most current and/or a recent employer for whom the applicant worked for a significant period of time.
- Do ask the applicant to provide reference information if it is missing from the application, including name, title, phone number and email address of the most recent employers.
- Do consider whether performance problems reported by previous employers are in areas that might affect performance in the position you are filling.
- Do follow the suggested questions included in the [Reference Contact Form](#) to document the details.

DON'TS:

- Don't raise any questions that fall under the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) discriminatory practice areas, such as questions regarding gender, race, color, national origin, age, disability, or religion.
- Don't say the applicant has "been selected" only that he or she is "a finalist" for the position.
- Don't let letters of reference substitute for phone calls or email inquiries.
- Don't forget that email messages become a part of the documentation. Be sure to keep copies for the search records.
- Don't accept references from friends, relatives or individuals not in a supervisory role. Some organizations will only allow contact with a representative from the organization's human resources office, which is an acceptable alternative if you can't speak with a past supervisor.
- Don't feel obligated to contact references for all candidates who were interviewed, instead you can contact the references of only those candidates being seriously considered.
- Don't accept unsolicited references from undesignated individuals.