

HOW TO PREPARE FOR REFERENCES CHECK

candidate's guide



WHY IS IT WORTH PREPARING FOR REFERENCES CHECK?

According to Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), **87% of employers will check at least one of your references when offering you a position**. Additionally, based on our experience, the **vast majority of employers require an oral reference** and definitely prefer that to a written one which may not contain the information that your potential boss would like to ask about. According to current data protection regulations (GDPR), an employer may only check references **with the express consent of the candidate**. It is worth knowing that when recruiting for senior management positions, great emphasis is often placed on verifying the candidate's competence and experience in this way.

WHAT INFORMATION ABOUT YOU CAN BE PROVIDED?

During the interview, it is important to indicate a person who will be able to talk about you and present you in a positive light. **Your potential employer will most likely ask about:**

- length of employment & previous job title,
- details of responsibility / duties,
- major **strengths & weaknesses**,
- overall performance & quality of work, incl. major **accomplishments**,
- time-keeping and attendance,
- reason for leaving,
- **interpersonal skills** with co-workers and/or clients.

Potential employers can also ask **if your previous company would re-hire you** should you apply for a position there in the future.

HOW TO PREPARE?

- 1) Before you give the name of your former boss or the person who will be your reference, **ask them if you can do so**.
- 2) Upon approval, provide the person who will be your reference with an **overview** of what kind of position(s) you have applied to and **who & from which company** will most probably call them.
- 3) Hardly anyone remembers everything at all times – **provide your reference with a summary of all 7 points mentioned above** (see: [“What information about you can be provided?”](#)).
- 4) You can also **share the following tips & info with them**:
 - If you receive a “reference check call” that takes you by complete surprise, remember you can always re-schedule it for a more convenient time.
 - Be natural & honest.
 - What if you get a **question you do not feel comfortable answering**? You can always say, “I’m sorry, this is confidential.” or “I’m sorry. I don’t remember.”. Remember that, in accordance with applicable data protection regulations, your potential employer cannot ask about sensitive information such as your health status, sexual orientation, political views or religious affiliation.
- 5) General rule: **don’t be afraid of using superlatives**. Depending on who calls you, this is how they might interpret your answer:



“They were a **good employee.**”



“They were **below-average.**”



“They were an **average employee.**”



“They were a **good employee.**”



“They were an **exceptional employee.**”

If you are on friendly terms with your reference, you can ask them **not to disclose certain information**. For example, the question about your starting and final **salary** is often asked. If you do not want this information to be disclosed, you can ask your reference to respond with, “I’m sorry, but that’s confidential information.” or “I’m sorry, but I don’t remember.”.

THE MODERN APPROACH TO REFERENCE CHECKING

Personal data protection regulations: Since the GDPR came into force in the European Union, checking references is no longer just a “simple phone call”, but a process that is subject to specific legal regulations. Not only can an employer only check your references **with your explicit consent (some legal departments even insist on written consent to process the data of those providing references)**, but you also have the right to be informed of the outcome of the check and even to see what information about you has been provided. If the references were provided by an automated verification system, you can request that they be rechecked by a human. However, keep in mind that these regulations apply in the European Union – it may be different outside its borders.

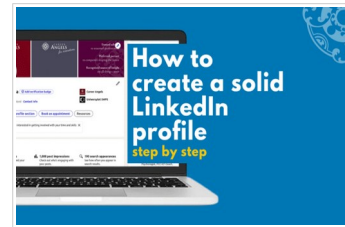
Process automation: More and more companies are using artificial intelligence and automated reference verification tools such as [Harver](#), [VidCruiter](#), and [Xref](#) in their recruitment processes. These tools automate the reference checking process and enable faster, better hiring decisions by collecting and analyzing data. They can complement traditional interviews with designated contacts or serve as the sole means of verification, so it is important to understand how they work and what their limitations are.

Online presence: In addition to traditional methods of checking references, your potential employer may look for additional ways to verify your experience or activities, for example on **LinkedIn**. In the age of modern recruitment, having a **professional, error-free profile on this platform is not only an advantage, but a necessity**. When preparing references, make sure they are **consistent with the information on your profile**.

New trends in the job market: According to the [Future of Jobs](#) report analyzing jobs and skills of the future until 2030, the **development of digital technologies, artificial intelligence** and information processing, robotics and **automation** will lead the way, so it will be necessary to develop related skills. At the same time, **soft skills** such as creativity, curiosity, leadership, resilience and flexibility **are becoming increasingly important**. Your potential employer may pay particular attention to these aspects of your experience when checking your references.

Before you give your potential employer the details of the person who will provide your references, **we can check them for you!** Contact your dedicated Career Angel or send an email to Contact@CareerAngels.eu.

If you need help creating a professional, flawless LinkedIn profile or preparing for a job interview, take a look at our guides:



Click on
the graphics
(active links!)

If you find our materials valuable, you can give us a “like,” buy us a “virtual coffee” or simply recommend us. Here are a few ideas:

