

Completing Applications and References

Fact Sheet No. 9.153

Consumer Series | Finance

by K. Wolfe and J. Carroll*

A selection process is used for many opportunities: a job, an award, a scholarship, a trip, or an educational experience. You may find that many of these opportunities require an application and references. A complete, good-looking application and useful list of references always gives candidates a competitive advantage.

Filling Out Job Applications

What is an application?

- A form prepared by the employer, award giver, school or college.
- Asks information about you and your history of education, employment, and experiences.
- Usually 1 to 2 pages, hardcopy or available on the Internet.
- May include fill-in-the-blank, short answer and/or essay-type questions.

How do I complete an application?

- Print the application from the Internet, or get a copy from the employer, award giver, school or college, etc.
- Copy the application, or scan it into a computer, so you can make a draft copy of your answers.
- Complete your draft copy, then proof read it to be sure it makes sense and does not have any errors. Be sure every question is answered. If a question does not apply to you, mark the space "N/A" which means either not applicable or no answer. This shows that you did not ignore or skip the question.
- Be honest and do not exaggerate in your answers.
- Have a trusted friend or an adult read what you have written and make suggestions on how you can strengthen your qualifications to improve your application.

- Make a final copy on the computer. If you must complete the application by hand, use a pen and print very neatly.
- Sign and date the application if asked.

Why do I need references?

Employers want to know if you will be a reliable employee with strong character traits. Award committees want to know if you are deserving and what sets you apart from other applicants. One way they make these determinations about you is by asking questions of people who already know you.

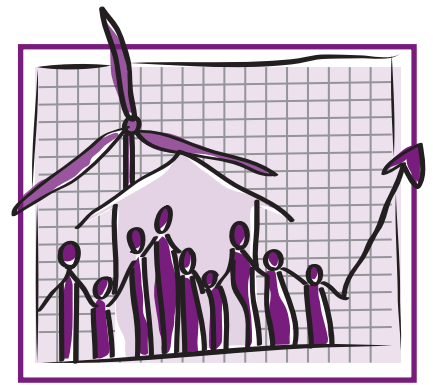
Whom shall I select as references?

Teachers, coaches, counselors, 4-H leaders, 4-H agents, previous employers, or people for or with whom you have done volunteer work. These are people:

- who are not related to you,
- who know you well enough to be able to answer questions about your abilities and personal characteristics,
- with whom you have had positive experiences.

How do I ask someone to be a reference for me?

- Before you list anyone's name as a reference, it is important to get permission.
- Ask references in person, by phone, or by letter. An e-mail request may be acceptable, too.
- Share information with your reference about the application you're making, your interest in being selected, and the characteristics you think best position you for success.
- State whether an employer or an award committee will contact your reference, or whether you need the individual to write you a letter of reference.



Quick Facts

- Practice filling out an application before you submit a final.
- Identify people to serve as references who know the quality of work you perform.

*K. Wolfe, Colorado State University Extension 4-H youth development agent, Larimer County; J. Carroll, Extension director, federal & civic engagement. 7/2011



Requesting References

At right is a copy of an actual letter received by a 4-H youth development agent. Note that it allows the agent almost three weeks to respond. It gives specific directions on addressing and returning the letter. A resume is included to inform or remind the reference of activities the applicant considers important. Your letter should be printed on good quality paper. Be sure to sign it and keep a copy for yourself. If you haven't received the letter in two weeks, you should call the reference with a very polite reminder. By changing this letter slightly, you could use it to request a letter of recommendation from any adult.

The way to develop your network is by talking to people.

You can use the notation "References Available Upon Request" rather than listing individuals.

If you list specific references, be sure to include name, title, relationship to you, address, and telephone number with area code, and email address. And, always obtain permission from potential references to use their names before giving them to employers.

Here are some resume databases and job banks on the Internet:
Career Builder: www.careerbuilder.com
Monster Board: www.monster.com

Be Prepared

You will find an application actually presented to a 4-H member on the following page. Since it was completed at the job site, it was printed and not typed. The applicant had taken all the required information along, including references and their contact information, so no blanks were left empty. If you take the application home to complete, scan it and/or type it, and keep a copy for your records. By filling out this sample, you can have experience with a job application before you actually have one to complete.

123 West First Street
Anytown, State 01234
May 1, 2011

M. Y. Agent
County Extension Office
P.O. Box A
Anytown, State 01234

Dear Ms. Agent,

As an advisor, agent, and friend I have learned from you, and you have helped me become a better person. Now that my senior year in high school is almost finished, it is time for me to seriously think about my future educational plans. I have decided that I will be attending Colorado State University to study biology. Afterward, I plan to continue my education to become a medical doctor.

In order to achieve my goals, I will need some financial assistance along the way. I have started to apply for scholarships, and I would like your help. If you could please write a letter of recommendation for me, I would be very thankful. There were no specific requirements concerning what the committee wishes you to include in the letter content. You can address it "to whom it may concern." Since you may not be familiar with all of the activities that I am involved in, I have included a resume containing this information. Please return your letter of recommendation to me by May 19, 2011. Thank you so much for being an important part of my education.

Sincerely,

Kirby A. Student

Enc.

PRACTICE JOB APPLICATION

PERSONAL DATA
DATE

SOCIAL SECURITY
NUMBER

NAME

LAST

FIRST

MIDDLE

PRESENT ADDRESS

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

PERMANENT ADDRESS

STREET

CITY

STATE

ZIP CODE

PHONE NO.

DATE OF BIRTH

IF RELATED TO ANYONE IN OUR EMPLOY
STATE NAME AND DEPARTMENT

REFERRED
BY

EMPLOYMENT DESIRED

POSITION

DATE YOU
CAN START

SALARY
DESIRED

ARE YOU EMPLOYED NOW?

IF SO, MAY WE INQUIRE
OF YOUR PRESENT EMPLOYER?

EVER APPLIED TO THIS COMPANY BEFORE?

WHERE

WHEN

*The Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals who are at least 40 but less than 65 years of age.

EDUCATION	NAME AND LOCATION OF SCHOOL	DID YOU GRADUATE?	SUBJECTS STUDIED
ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL			
HIGH SCHOOL			
COLLEGE			
TRADE, BUSINESS OR CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL			

SUBJECTS OF SPECIAL STUDY OR RESEARCH WORK _____

WHAT FOREIGN LANGUAGES DO YOU SPEAK FLUENTLY? _____ READ? _____ WRITE? _____

ACTIVITIES, CIVIC, ATHLETIC, ETC.

References:

1. Name _____ Address _____ Job Title _____

City State Zip Code Telephone E-mail

2. Name _____ Address _____ Job Title _____

City State Zip Code Telephone E-mail