

A telephone reference check is more timely and less expensive than written verifications. Letters and forms rarely uncover negative information. Employers often hesitate to put into writing negative information that they may give in the course of a conversation.

The interviewer should make the telephone call. The interviewer is most familiar with the information received from the candidate and is most prepared to ask the appropriate questions. Forms, such as the EMPLOYER TELEPHONE REFERENCE GUIDE may be used to facilitate the call, however, specialized questions may be required to obtain all the needed information.

The applicant gives permission to contact their employment references when submitting their application. As a courtesy, you should remind the applicant during the interview that references will be checked. You must conduct all reference checks prior to making a job offer. At least two reference checks should be made.

DO

- Use the EMPLOYER TELEPHONE REFERENCE GUIDE.
- Identify yourself immediately, explain your position and tell the employer why you are calling.
- Assure the employer that the information discussed will be held in confidence.
- Offer to have the employer call you back (collect if necessary) if the employer doubts the legitimacy of your call.
- Establish a comfortable rapport with the employer.
- Tell the employer about the position for which the applicant is being considered.
- Let the employer talk freely without interrupting.
- Be alert for obvious pauses, which may indicate the employer may have other information to share but is hesitant.
- Ask only job-related questions.
- Plan your questions in advance and document job-related responses. Do not retain unsolicited personal information.

DON'T

- DON'T ask questions that can be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No". Ask follow up questions with yes/no questions.
- DON'T be concerned with the length of the conversation. While most reference checks take relatively little time, the time invested in good reference checking will help to avoid hiring a person ill-suited for the position.
- DON'T end the conversation until you are sure you know the opinion of the employer. A helpful technique to confirm the employer's opinion is to summarize your conversation by saying, "I take it that you do (or do not) recommend this applicant."
- DON'T ask questions that will in effect screen out minorities, women and persons with disabilities, or will bias the reference in terms of age, gender or religion.
- DON'T ask any of the following questions:
 - Has the applicant ever filed a discrimination suit against your company?
 - Has the applicant ever filed a Worker's Compensation claim?
 - Has the applicant had financial difficulties?
 - Does the applicant have any disabilities or health problems?
 - Is the applicant married or have children?
 - Has the applicant ever been arrested or convicted of a crime?