Reference check request email

Send it the same day the candidate gives you their references, usually after the final interview and before or alongside the offer. References reply far more often within the first 48 hours, while the candidate's heads-up is still fresh.

REQUEST A SHORT CALL

Subject: Reference for [Candidate Name]: 15 minutes this week?

Hi [Reference First Name],

I'm [Your Name], a recruiter at [Company]. [Candidate Name] is a finalist for our [Job Title] role and listed you as a reference from their time at [Previous Company], where they tell me you were their [Relationship, e.g. direct manager].

Would you have 15 minutes for a call this week? I'd ask about their work, strengths, and how they handled [one or two areas relevant to the role, e.g. leading a team through peak season].

You can pick a time here: [Scheduling Link]. Or reply with a time and a good number to reach you.

Everything you share will be used only for this hiring decision. Thank you for helping.

[Your Name]
[Title], [Company]
[Phone Number]

WRITTEN QUESTIONNAIRE

Subject: Quick reference questions about [Candidate Name]

Hi [Reference First Name],

[Candidate Name] is in the final stage for a [Job Title] position with us and has given us permission to contact you as a reference.

If a call is hard to fit in, you can answer a short form instead. It has [Number] questions and takes about 10 minutes: [Form Link]

It would help us a lot to hear back by [Deadline]. If you'd prefer to talk, reply with a time and I'll call you.

Thank you,

[Your Name]
[Title], [Company]

FOLLOW-UP

Subject: Re: Reference for [Candidate Name]

Hi [Reference First Name],

Following up on my note from [Day]. We're hoping to make a decision on [Candidate Name]'s application by [Decision Date], and your input would make a real difference.

A 10-minute call or the short form both work: [Form Link]

If you're not able to give a reference, no problem; just let me know so I can follow up with someone else.

Thanks,

[Your Name]
[Title], [Company]

HIGH-VOLUME / HOURLY

Subject: Reference for [Candidate Name], [Job Title] at [Company]

Hi [Reference First Name],

[Candidate Name] applied to be a [Job Title] with us and named you as a reference. Could you answer 5 quick questions about working with them? It takes about 3 minutes on your phone: [Form Link]

Thanks for helping them get started with a new job.

[Company] Recruiting Team

SUBJECT LINE IDEAS

- Reference for [Candidate Name]: 15 minutes this week?
- [Candidate Name] listed you as a reference
- Quick reference questions about [Candidate Name]
- Reference request from [Company] for [Candidate Name]
- Could you share your experience working with [Candidate Name]?
- Re: Reference for [Candidate Name]

SMS / WHATSAPP VERSION

Hi [Reference First Name], this is [Your Name] from [Company]. [Candidate Name] listed you as a reference for a [Job Title] role. Could you answer a short form (about 5 min) or take a quick call? [Form Link]. Thank you. Reply STOP to opt out.

Placeholders to replace: [Reference First Name], [Candidate Name], [Job Title], [Previous Company], [Relationship], [Scheduling Link], [Form Link], [Number], [Deadline], [Decision Date], [Your Name], [Title], [Company], [Phone Number]