Reference request email to candidate

Send it when the candidate is a finalist, usually after the final interview and before or alongside a contingent offer. Asking every applicant for references at the application stage wastes their time and yours.

STANDARD FINALIST REQUEST

Subject: Next step for [Job Title]: your references

Hi [First Name],

Thanks for your time with the team on [Interview Date]. You're one of our finalists for the [Job Title] role, and the next step is a short reference check.

Could you send me [Number] professional references by [Deadline]? Ideally:

- At least one person who managed you directly in the last [Number] years
- A peer, internal customer or someone who worked closely with you

For each, please include their name, current title and company, how they know you, and a phone number and email.

We'll reach out by [email / phone] for a 10 to 15 minute conversation about your work. We won't contact your current employer without asking you first.

It helps to give your references a quick heads-up that [Your Name] from [Company] may contact them.

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

HOURLY AND HIGH-VOLUME

Subject: [First Name], 2 references to finish your application

Hi [First Name],

You're almost through. To finish your application for [Job Title] at [Location], please add 2 references using this short form: [Form Link]

They can be a former supervisor, a manager from a part-time job, a teacher or coach, or someone you volunteered for. Family members don't count.

It takes about 3 minutes. Please complete it by [Deadline] so we can keep your start date of [Start Date].

Questions? Reply here or text [Text Number].

[Company] Recruiting Team

SENIOR OR LEADERSHIP ROLE

Subject: References for the [Job Title] search

Hi [First Name],

The panel enjoyed Thursday's conversation, and [Hiring Manager Name] would like to move to references.

For a role at this level, we usually speak with 4 people:

- Two people you reported to, including one from your current or most recent role if you're comfortable with that
- One peer or cross-functional partner
- One person who reported to you

If you'd prefer we hold off on anyone at your current company until an offer is agreed, just say so and we'll sequence it that way.

Please send names, titles, how you worked together and the best way to reach them by [Deadline]. [Hiring Manager Name] will make some of these calls personally.

Best,
[Your Name]
[Title], [Company]

REMINDER

Subject: Quick reminder: references for [Job Title]

Hi [First Name],

Just checking in on your references for the [Job Title] role. We need them by [Deadline] to keep things moving toward an offer.

If you're having trouble reaching a former manager, let me know. We can usually work with a different supervisor or a senior colleague instead.

Thanks,
[Your Name]
[Title], [Company]

SUBJECT LINE IDEAS

- Next step for [Job Title]: your references
- Please send your references by [Deadline]
- References for your [Job Title] application
- You're a finalist: reference check next
- 2 references to finish your application
- Quick reminder: references for [Job Title]
- Who can we speak with about your work?

SMS / WHATSAPP VERSION

Hi [First Name], it's [Your Name] at [Company]. Next step for [Job Title]: please add 2 work references here by [Deadline]: [Form Link]. A former supervisor is best. Questions? Just reply. Reply STOP to opt out.

Placeholders to replace: [First Name], [Job Title], [Interview Date], [Number], [Deadline], [Form Link], [Location], [Start Date], [Text Number], [Hiring Manager Name], [Your Name], [Title], [Company], [Phone Number]