**Career Headlines**

**How To Get Good Job References**

*"My manager is old school and doesn't really relate to teens, but he was the only reference I had when I applied for a part-time job. I think I do good work, but he gave me a horrible reference. What should I have done differently?"*

A great reference doesn't have to be a former manager, and shouldn't be if you think the person might say negative things about you. While the most important references are supervisors who will give you a good review, you also can use a former coach, leader of an organization you've volunteered with, a teacher, or an adult leader of a student organization.

These questions and answers may help you find the right reference:

**When do I provide references?** Only when employers ask, not to everyone you give résumés.

**How do I let my references know I want to use them?** By asking permission before you ever use their name.

**What do I tell my references?** As much as you can about the job you're interviewing for, with some broad hints about the type of information you'd like the person to give: "The recruiter will be asking about my technology skills and attitude."

**How many references should I have?** At least three who will make positive comments about your performance and character.

**What if someone refuses to be a reference?** Say, "Thank you" and find another reference. Some companies, for legal reasons, prohibit employees from giving references.

**What information can companies legally give about my past employment?** Employment dates, salary, titles, promotions, positive and negative job performance, any disciplinary action, and reasons for leaving. Other topics such as race, national origin, disabilities, age, and religion are legally protected.