It is recommended to contact a candidate’s references via phone to hear the tone of references voice and to easily ask follow up questions depending on his/her responses. In some cases, conducting references via phone is not an option.

**Here are a few items to keep in mind when collecting references via email:**

Pros:

* This method can be particularly effective with applicants who have references who live in another country/different time zone.
* It is also beneficial for documentation purposes to have record of what was asked and when, along with the reply.

Cons:

* Not everyone will respond via email. Some people may not even open emails from people they do not know, while others will not be comfortable putting this type of information in writing.
* When people reply by email, they often have time to carefully consider what they want to say. (Whereas with phone references you have the opportunity to receive an immediate off-the-cuff response.) In some cases, they may even contact the applicant for input before responding to your email request.

**Creating the reference check questions/templates:**

Be sure to ask the same questions of all references – use a standard set of questions regardless of how the reference will be contacted. It is typical for your follow up questions to vary depending on the responses provided from each reference.

Samples reference check questions are available here:

[Faculty](http://hrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Faculty_Reference_Check_Form.docx)

[Staff](http://hrs.wsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Staff_Reference_Check_Form-2.docx)

Create a word document that contains the reference check questions to attach to the email.

Leave adequate space for the reference to provide a response.

Personalize the questions to include the candidate’s name and any details the reference might need to know to assist them in his/her response.

**Sample email reference request:***(Language below may be modified to fit your needs)*

Dear <reference name>,

My name is <your name> and I work at Washington State University. Your contact information has been provided to me by <applicant’s name>.I am writing to conduct a reference check for <name of applicant> who is being considered for a <position title> position within our <department/area/college name> at Washington State University.

I have attached a word document that contains questions about <applicant’s name>. Please provide as much detail as possible. I appreciate you taking time to complete this reference for <applicant’s name>; your responses will assist us in making a hiring decision. Please provide your response by <DATE>.

Sincerely,

<your name>