

Ask for a reference, then acknowledge the help accurately

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All people, organizations, events and dates in the activities are fictional. Write on paper or in a local document. Do not send the emails, use real contact details or supply a real CV. No product account is needed.

A. Ask Alex for a reference

You are **Rina**. You are applying for a **Service Coordinator role at Cedar Bridge**. Alex supervised your work on an **equipment-register handover project in 2025**.

Fact	What you know
Your request	Ask whether Alex is willing to be a professional reference: someone the recruiter may contact about your work.
Your deadline	The recruiter has asked you for reference contact details by 12 November 2026 .
Contact process	If Alex agrees, the recruiter may contact Alex. You do not know the contact date or length of the conversation.
Permission	Alex has not agreed yet. You have not shared Alex's details.
Background	After Alex agrees, you can send your current CV and the job description. Neither is attached to this practice email.
Reader's choice	Alex may be unable to help. No letter has been requested.

Write a short email with a subject line. Remind Alex of your shared work, ask for agreement, explain the known process and offer the background. Ask which contact details Alex would prefer you to share if willing.

Before comparing answers: Circle the request. Underline what must happen by 12 November. Does your email distinguish your deadline from any commitment Alex has made?

Draft here or use a separate sheet.

B. Alex agrees and sends useful notes

Continue the situation. Imagine Alex has replied:

Hi Rina,

Yes, I am happy to speak with the recruiter about the equipment-register handover project. Please use my work email address. I have also sent you my notes from the project in case they help you check the details.

Best,

Alex

These additional facts are supplied for the exercise:

- You used Alex's project notes to correct the **start date of that project entry in your CV**.
- You are still checking the other entries in your CV.
- The notes did not check or approve your whole CV.
- You have not yet shared Alex's contact details. No recruiter conversation has happened.
- Your purpose now is to acknowledge Alex's agreement and thank Alex for the notes. You have no new request.

Write a brief reply in the existing conversation. A new subject is optional. Connect the help to its actual effect without claiming the application or CV is complete.

Before comparing answers: Mark one phrase about Alex's contribution and one phrase about your own progress. Remove any invented result, such as getting the job, receiving a positive reference or finishing the whole CV.

Your reply

C. Change the answer and the result

This is an **alternative version of B**, not a later message after it. Replace B's facts with these facts:

- Alex cannot act as a reference this time. You still have not shared Alex's details.
- Alex sends an **old project checklist**, not project notes.
- The checklist helps you identify **two project dates that need verification**.
- You have **not changed those dates in your CV yet**. You are still checking them.
- You want to acknowledge Alex's answer and thank Alex for the useful checklist. You have no new request.

Optional planning card: Before writing, make short notes from C's facts. This is a support tool, not another message to send.

What your reply must reflect	Your notes
Alex's answer about being a reference	_____
The help Alex actually provided	_____
What that help enabled you to do	_____
What remains unfinished	_____

Write a new reply. You cannot simply change the document's name in B: Alex's answer is different, and identifying something to check is different from correcting it.

Transfer check: Is there any sentence left that thanks Alex for agreeing to be a reference or says you corrected a date? If so, revise it. Keep the appreciation specific without pressuring Alex to reconsider.

Draft here or use a separate sheet.

Teacher notes

Reveal each model only after the relevant writing attempt.

This follow-on activity is for adults who can read a short workplace situation and write a short email, with support if needed. It develops two connected decisions: ask before sharing reference details, then thank the person for the help they actually gave. It is not assigned a proficiency level. Allow about 30-40 minutes as a planning estimate, adjusted to the learner; tasks can be split across sessions.

Purpose and readiness

The task focuses on meaning, consent to be a reference and accurate acknowledgment. It is workplace writing practice, not employment-process advice. Local recruitment procedures vary; use only the fictional process supplied here. Learners do not need to discuss their own applications or employment history.

Before starting, check whether the learner can explain **reference**, **recruiter**, **CV**, **contact details**, **project notes** and **verify**. In this activity, *verify* means check whether information is correct; it does not mean the information has already been corrected. Read a fact card together or paraphrase instructions when useful.

Keep the models hidden until the learner has attempted the corresponding message. For support, offer these optional openings after discussing the facts: "Would you be willing to...?", "If you can help...", "Thank you for...", "It helped me...", and "I am still...". They are choices, not a required script. Record whether the learner used a frame, oral rehearsal or independent writing; do not treat these as identical performances.

Suggested sequence

1. Read A together. Have the learner identify the shared work, request, deadline and unknown contact timing. Write first, then compare with model A.
2. Read Alex's B reply and the new facts. Let the learner write the acknowledgment before revealing model B. Ask who did what and what remains unfinished.
3. Cover B's facts and reveal C. Have the learner name three changes before writing: permission, kind of help and stage of progress. Compare with model C only after the attempt.
4. Invite one revision that improves factual clarity, then reread the message. Discuss smaller language issues after the meaning is accurate.

Possible answers A and B

These are possible answers, not required scripts.

A. Ask before sharing details

Subject: Reference request - Service Coordinator application

Hi Alex,

I hope you are well. You supervised my work on the equipment-register handover project in 2025. I am now applying for a Service Coordinator role at Cedar Bridge.

Would you be willing to be a professional reference for this application? The recruiter has asked me for reference contact details by 12 November 2026 and may contact you about our work together. I do not yet know the contact date or how long the conversation would take.

If you are able to help, I can send my current CV and the job description. Please let me know which contact details you would prefer me to share. I understand if you are unavailable.

Thank you for considering it.

Best,
Rina

The date belongs to Rina's task of supplying contact details. Alex has not agreed to a call or a deadline. The conditional offer of background does not pretend documents are attached or details already shared.

B. Thank Alex for the actual help

Hi Alex,

Thank you for agreeing to speak with the recruiter and for sending your project notes. The notes helped me correct the start date of the project entry in my CV. I am still checking the other entries.

I appreciate your help.

Best,
Rina

Alex has agreed to speak, but the model does not claim a conversation has happened or predict what Alex will say. It gives Alex credit for the notes and Rina credit for the correction. It does not add another request or say that the whole CV is approved.

Possible answer C and transfer discussion

C. Refusal and useful help can coexist

Hi Alex,

I understand that you are unable to be a reference this time. Thank you for sending the project checklist. It helped me identify two project dates to verify. I am still checking those dates before changing them in my CV.

I appreciate your help.

Best,
Rina

This answer acknowledges the refusal without implying permission or asking Alex to reconsider. "Identify" and "still checking" describe the supplied stage of work. "Corrected" would overstate the result. It is still possible to thank Alex for useful help.

Planning-card discussion key: Alex cannot be a reference; Alex sent an old project checklist; Rina identified two dates to verify; checking those dates is unfinished and the CV dates have not changed. Ask the learner to point to the supplied fact supporting each note. Short phrases are enough at this stage. If the learner confuses finding a possible problem with fixing it, compare "I identified a date to check" with "I corrected the date" and ask which action the facts establish. Do not infer that the date is wrong merely because it needs verification.

Use the card if managing the changed facts is preventing the learner from drafting. For less support, cover it and let the learner plan freely. Record support used; neither approach establishes a validated proficiency score. In B, Alex's actual work email address is intentionally absent because the task is to acknowledge the reply, not forward contact details. Do not ask the learner to invent an address.

Meaning checklist and feedback

Check	Where to look
The initial request identifies shared work and the new role.	A
Permission is requested before contact details are shared.	A; C must not imply permission.
12 November is the contact-details deadline, not an invented call appointment.	A
Unknown contact timing stays unknown; no attached files or letter are invented.	A
The acknowledgment matches Alex's actual yes or no.	B and C
The contribution is named accurately: notes in B, checklist in C.	B and C
The outcome matches the facts: one date corrected in B; two dates identified for verification in C.	B and C
Pending work remains pending. No approved CV, completed reference or job offer is invented.	B and C
The thank-you reply contains no accidental new request.	B and C

Accept other natural wording, greetings and sign-offs that preserve these meanings. A learner does not need to repeat every negative fact. Ask a focused feedback question rather than replace the entire email: "What did Alex agree to?", "Which part of your CV changed?", or "Have you verified those dates yet?" These checks are teaching prompts, not a validated scoring system or a promised outcome.

About this resource

This original linked exercise was prepared for EmailBetter using its owned [reference-request lesson](#) and [colleague thank-you lesson](#). It transparently reuses their principles and some request language, while introducing the Rina/Alex sequence, reply facts and a transfer from agreement/correction to refusal/verification. It is not adapted from TORUS, ESL United or an external worksheet.

The earlier **Ask for Information at Work** pack practises a requested item, deadline and reason with a sentence frame. This follow-on expects learners to manage another person's answer and changing progress across an exchange; it is not a replacement for that beginner activity.

This resource was prepared with AI assistance and editorially reviewed for consistency. It has not been classroom-tested. No proficiency level, teacher endorsement or learning improvement is claimed. The estimated session length and optional support are planning suggestions, not validated measures.