

Express Entry reference letter kit

What IRCC lists, two fill-in templates, self-employed proof and a final check before you upload.

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QUICK ANSWER

An Express Entry reference letter is a letter from each employer, on company letterhead, that proves your work experience. IRCC's lists include your name, job title, dates of employment, hours worked per week, annual salary and benefits, your main duties, the company's address, phone and email, and the name, title and signature of your supervisor or HR officer. Your duties must show the NOC lead statement and most of its main duties.

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What IRCC requires in an employment reference letter

IRCC asks for proof of work experience, "such as a reference or experience letter from an employer", for every job you claim in your profile. The elements below are the ones IRCC lists on its public pages for employer reference letters. Your personalized document checklist in your IRCC account has the final word. Use one letter per employer.

The letter itself

☐ Printed on official company letterhead

The company's name and logo at the top. A plain sheet with a stamp is weaker and invites questions.

☐ Company contact details: full address, phone number and email

Officers can call or write to check. Use a working general line and a company email, not a personal Gmail.

☐ **Date the letter was issued**

For a current job, get it close to your application date so the dates and salary are current.

☐ **Name, job title and signature of your supervisor or HR officer**

The person must be able to confirm your work. A colleague at your own level is not a signatory.

☐ **Signatory's direct phone or work email** Good practice

Not always listed by IRCC, but it makes verification easy and costs nothing.

About you and your job

☐ **Your full name, as in your passport**

If the company knows you by another spelling, fix it or explain it in a **letter of explanation**.

☐ **Every position you held at the company, with dates for each**

A promotion is a new position: list both titles with their own start and end dates.

☐ **Exact employment dates (from and to)**

Day, month and year. For a current job, write "to present" or "currently employed".

☐ **Number of hours worked per week**

This is how IRCC counts full-time and part-time experience. Missing hours is one of the most common gaps.

☐ **Annual salary plus benefits**

State the amount, currency and period (per year, month or hour), then any benefits such as health insurance or bonus.

☐ **Your main duties and responsibilities**

Five to eight concrete duties that match your NOC, written about your real job (see below).

☐ **Work location**

City and country (or address). It matters for Canadian versus foreign experience.

☐ **NOC code** If applicable

IRCC lists it "if known" for some programs. If the employer adds one, it must match your profile.

Language

☐ **Certified English or French translation** If applicable

If the letter is in another language, upload a certified translation plus a scan of the original.

Match the NOC duties without copying them word for word

IRCC's program pages say you must show that you performed **the actions in the lead statement** of your NOC job description and **most of the main duties** listed (IRCC's instructions to officers add all of the essential duties). Open your NOC 2021 profile and write each duty about your real job: your tools, clients, products and numbers. A letter that pastes the NOC text unchanged looks generic and can make an officer doubt it. If your real duties don't match the NOC you chose, the fix is a different NOC, not a different letter. Check a category draw fit with the **category checker**.

Employment reference letter sample (employer or HR)

For a current or former employer. Give this to HR or your manager as a draft: they must check every line, put it on letterhead and sign it. Never sign it yourself.

[Company letterhead: company name, logo, full address, phone number, email, website]

[Date: DD Month YYYY]

To: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Subject: Employment reference letter for [Your full name as in passport]

This letter confirms that [Your full name] has been employed by [Company legal name] at [work location: city, country] from [start date: DD Month YYYY] to [end date: DD Month YYYY / present].

Positions held:

1. [Current or last job title], from [start date] to [end date / present]

Employment status: [full-time / part-time], [number] hours per week

Salary: [amount and currency] per [year / month / hour]

Benefits: [e.g. health insurance, annual bonus, paid leave / no other benefits]

Main duties:

- [Duty in your own words, matching the NOC lead statement]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]

2. [Earlier job title at the same company], from [start date] to [end date]

Employment status: [full-time / part-time], [number] hours per week

Salary: [amount and currency] per [year / month / hour]

Benefits: [benefits]

Main duties:

- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]

[Your name] [is currently employed with us / left the company on DD Month YYYY].

For any question about this letter, please contact me at [direct phone number] or [work email].

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Full name of signatory]

[Job title, e.g. Human Resources Manager / Direct supervisor]

[Company name]

[Company stamp or seal, if the company uses one]

- Hours and salary must match your pay slips, contract and tax records. Officers compare them.
- Delete position 2 if you held only one role. Add more blocks if you were promoted more than once.
- Write duties as actions ("prepared monthly financial statements for 12 client companies"), not adjectives ("hard-working, reliable").

When HR won't list duties: letter from your supervisor

Some companies only confirm title, dates and salary. A common approach is to upload that HR letter together with a signed letter from your direct supervisor that describes your duties. IRCC's lists accept a supervisor's name, title and signature, and the officer decides what the evidence proves. Upload both letters, plus a short **letter of explanation**, in the same file.

[Company letterhead, if the supervisor may use it. If not: supervisor's full address, phone and email at the top]

[Date: DD Month YYYY]

To: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

Subject: Confirmation of duties performed by [Your full name as in passport]

I, [Supervisor's full name], am [supervisor's job title] at [Company legal name], [company address]. I [was / have been] the direct supervisor of [Your full name] from [DD Month YYYY] to [DD Month YYYY / present], while [he / she / they] worked as [your job title].

From my direct knowledge, [Your name] worked [number] hours per week and performed the following duties:

- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]
- [Duty]

I am writing this letter because the company's human resources policy is to confirm only [job title, dates and salary], as shown in the attached HR letter dated [DD Month YYYY].

You can contact me at [phone number] or [email] to confirm this information.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
[Supervisor's full name]
[Supervisor's job title]
[Company name]

Attached: [proof that I work or worked at the company, e.g. business card, my own employment letter or ID badge]

- If your supervisor has left the company, they can still write it: they state the period they supervised you and attach proof they worked there.
- Some applicants have the supervisor sign it before a notary or commissioner of oaths as a sworn statement. It is not an IRCC requirement, but it can add weight.
- Keep the HR letter in the same PDF so the officer sees the dates and salary confirmed by the company.

Part-time work, several jobs or a current job

IRCC counts skilled work in hours: 1 year full time is 1,560 hours, which is 30 hours a week for 12 months. Part-time work counts if it adds up to the same total, and hours above 30 a week don't count. That's why every letter must state hours per week.

If you worked part time or held two jobs at once, get one letter per employer, each with its own hours. If your hours changed over time (for example 20 hours a week, then 40), ask the employer to list each period separately.

For your current job, the letter should say you still work there. Dates that stop in the past make it look as if you left.

- Run your numbers in the **FSW points calculator** and the **CRS calculator** before you ask for letters, so you know which jobs matter.
- Canadian Experience Class: self-employed time and work done while studying full time don't count.

| Self-employed: what to upload instead of a reference letter

Self-employed work can count for Federal Skilled Worker selection points, but not for the Canadian Experience Class (except some physicians under a temporary public policy). There is no employer to write a letter, so you build the proof from third-party documents. IRCC doesn't publish one fixed list for Express Entry: these are the documents applicants commonly use. Follow your document checklist.

Proof the business exists

☐ **Business registration or licence**

Government registration, GST/VAT or trade licence showing your name and the dates.

☐ **Professional licence or membership** If applicable

If your occupation is regulated where you worked.

Proof of the work and income

☐ **Contracts or letters from clients**

Clients describe the work you did for them, the dates and what they paid. This replaces the duties part of a reference letter.

☐ **Invoices and matching payments**

A sample across the whole period, with bank statements showing the money coming in.

☐ **Tax returns or tax assessments**

One per year claimed. They show the income was declared.

☐ **Your own signed description of duties**

Written to match your NOC lead statement and main duties, backed by the documents above.

| Before you upload: final checks

Match your profile

☐ **Job titles and dates match your profile and application**

A month's difference between the letter and your form is enough to raise questions.

☐ **Hours and salary match pay slips, contract and taxes**

Keep these as backup, and upload them if your checklist asks or the letter is thin.

☐ **Duties fit the NOC code you claimed**

Lead statement plus most main duties, in your own words.

Complete and readable☐ **One letter for every job you claim**

Including part-time and earlier jobs at the same company.

☐ **Signed, dated, on letterhead, with contact details**

Check the phone number and email actually work.

☐ **Translation and original in the same file** If applicable

Only if the letter isn't in English or French.

☐ **Clear colour scan, every page**

Combine pay slips or extra pages into one PDF per job so nothing gets lost.

Reference letter dos and don'ts

DO

- Ask early. HR departments can take weeks, and your ITA gives you only 60 days to apply.
- Give HR a draft built from the template so nothing is forgotten.
- List each promotion as its own position with its own dates.
- Keep pay slips, contracts and tax records that back up the letter.
- Tell your signatory that IRCC may call or email to verify.

DON'T

- Don't paste the NOC description word for word.
- Don't sign or stamp the letter yourself, or edit it after it's signed.
- Don't claim hours or duties you can't back up: misrepresentation makes you inadmissible to Canada for 5 years.
- Don't leave out hours per week or salary.
- Don't use a "to whom it may concern" character reference with no dates, hours or duties.

What if you can't get a reference letter

Companies close, refuse, or stop answering. IRCC's general rule for a document you can't get is to write a letter explaining why, gather documents that support it, combine them into one file and upload it in place of the missing document. The officer may then ask for more, give you more time, accept the file without it, or decide on what you sent.

Use our **letter of explanation templates** (there is one for a missing reference letter) and back it with the strongest proof you have: contract, pay slips, tax records, bank statements showing salary, a letter from a former supervisor, and your attempts to get the HR letter (emails, dates).

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