



## “What if my former boss won’t give me a good recommendation?”

We all make mistakes. Sometimes we make really bad mistakes. Worse, sometimes we make them at work—fighting, arguing, bullying, stealing, drug use. When you’re fired for any of these reasons, don’t expect a good recommendation from the boss. But without a reference, how do you get your next job? Here are some tips...

### 1. Tell the truth

If you lie to get a job, you can be fired again. So don’t leave that job off your application or resume. Include it. Under “Reason for leaving,” just write, “Please speak with me.” You don’t have to write out the details in your resume or job application. Instead, tell your story, in person, during your job interview.

### 2. But, don’t over-share, either

You need to rebuild people’s trust in you. Trust starts when you own up to your mistakes. But you only need to tell just enough of the story. Keep your remarks brief:

- “I said some things to a co-worker that I thought were funny, but they were actually inappropriate. I’ve learned to be more careful.”
- “A co-worker and I had a disagreement and we were both let go.”
- “I violated the company’s policy about \_\_\_\_.”

### 3. Don’t play the blame game

Maybe your former boss was impossible to work with. But he’s not applying for a job. This is about you. The hiring manager wants to know what kind of employee you’ll be?

- Will you be a reliable teammate?
- Will you make the effort to get along with everyone—even the people you don’t like?
- Will you follow company policies?

If you will, say so.

### 4. Don’t make excuses

I promise you, your interviewer won’t be interested. Instead of giving excuses like,

- “I was going to return the money after the weekend.”
- “That guy was trying to get me fired for months.”
- “You know those drug tests aren’t perfect.”

Instead, take responsibility. You might say, “I did it and wish I hadn’t, because look where I am now. I would never do it again.”

### 5. Show what you’ve learned from your mistake

Show that you know how to be responsible for your behavior and how to act in a workplace. You might say something like this...

- “I didn’t think it was that big a deal until I lost my job. It’s the toughest lesson I ever had to learn. If you hire me, I promise you this—I’ll do a good job for you every day.”