

# Mastering Your Reference List: Quick Tips

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References validate your resume, back up your interview claims, and can ultimately land you the job. This handout covers some quick tips for building a strong, professional reference list.

## Types of References

- **Professional references** could be past or present supervisors, preceptors, or professors. They speak directly to your work ethic, skills, or academic contributions.
- **Personal or character references** could be mentors, community leaders, or volunteer coordinators who can vouch for your character and integrity. *Avoid using family members.*

## Reference Etiquette

- **Don't wait until the last minute.** Building your network is an ongoing process. Start brainstorming potential advocates before you even begin applying.
- **Always ask first.** Never list someone without their explicit permission. Once they agree, send them your resume and a copy of the position description.
- **Give plenty of notice.** If you need a written letter of recommendation, give the writer at least 2-3 weeks notice. Provide clear instructions on where to upload or mail the letter. *Never text a last-minute request.*

## Formatting and Submitting Your List

- **Follow directions.** Submit exactly the number and type of references requested. If unspecified, aim for 3 to 5 professional references.
- **Keep your reference list separate.** Do not include references directly on your resume. Create a separate, professionally formatted document that matches your resume's font and header. *Please see our "Reference Sheet Formatting Resource" for formatting suggestions.*
- **Ensure information is up to date.** Most employers prefer to contact references directly by phone or email. Make sure the contact information you provide is accurate.

## Close the Loop

- **Keep them updated on your progress.** Be sure to notify each reference as you are using their information, especially if a significant amount of time has passed since you first received their permission.
- **Say thank you.** Send a thank-you note to your references expressing gratitude for their time.
- **Stay in touch.** Touch base once in a while to let them know how things are going. Remember, you may need them as a reference again someday.