

REFERENCE SHEET TIPS



- Maintain the same format as your resume.
- Copy the heading of your resume and paste it into a new document. This can be used not only for references but also for cover letters and thank you emails.
- Professional references are the preferred type of reference. Professional references can be former bosses, co-workers, vendors, and customers.
- Have a minimum of three professional references that relate to the work history you have listed on your resume.
- Have your list of references available at the interview, but don't offer the list until the potential employer requests it.
- When creating your list of references, call all your references to get their permission to be on the list. Tell them the name of the job you are applying for and suggest a few top skills they may want to talk about.

Creating and Utilizing a Strong Reference List (April 19, 2016)

We've all heard the saying, "It takes a village." While most often applied to building community and raising children, this adage can be widely applicable to many other life endeavors including the job search process. You probably already seek at least a little guidance during a search, and there are probably a few people in whom you confide either your progress or your concerns. In doing so, you are already creating a village even if you've not looked at it that way.

Go big on this concept, and put support in place for all aspects of your search. Not to be glossed over is the attention you give to creating your reference list. Your references are the part of your support team willing to sing praises about your professional experience and personal characteristics to a potential employer. You not only want that; you need it!

Of course, there are some do's and don'ts for both the creation and utilization of your references. Lindsay Olson's article, "[10 Common \(and Corrosive\) Job Reference Mistakes](#)" provides key considerations. Olson suggests aiming to compile a list of three to five people. After identifying those whom you'd like in that role, consider the following guidelines:

It is your job to make sure the references are prepared. After choosing those who can speak well and specifically to your job experience, ask their permission to be used as a reference. No matter how strong your relationship or how great of an employee/coworker you are, it is important to ensure those whom you want as references are comfortable with the role. You want references eager to help and speak to what you can offer the next position. You do not want someone who will do no more than verify you are/were an employee at the company.

Educate your references about the role, or roles, for which you are applying. Fill them in on what skills and duties are required so they can prepare and make the connections as to why you are a good fit for that job. Also, keep them updated as you apply for positions. Confusing your references or catching them off guard will reflect poorly on your candidacy.

When compiling your references, consider supervisors, colleagues, employees and clients. Have different kinds of references prepared so you can provide the kind the potential employee finds most useful. Use those with whom you most recently worked. Details about your work can easily be lost as time goes on. And, if the majority of your references are not current colleagues or supervisors, your potential employer might question why this is the case. A previous supervisor with whom you have kept in consistent touch and can speak to your abilities and characteristic as they are in the present is acceptable among a list of current references.

Ensure all contact information is up to date. This is an easy endeavor if you follow the previous advice to ask permission to use someone as a reference. Asking permission not only provides an opportunity to verify the information you have, but it also gives references the opportunity to give the contact information *they* want used, perhaps a personal phone number rather than an office line.

Do not use valuable space on your resume to state, "References available upon request." Both providing and receiving them should be assumed. Do make sure you have your list ready should it be requested at an interview, but do not offer or send it to your potential employer unless someone asks for it. No matter how it feels, you are not alone in your job search! Strong references are a key part to building your job search village, so give it the time and consideration it deserves to best support your efforts!

Olson, Lindsay. "10 Common (and Corrosive) Job Reference Mistakes." *U.S. News & World Report*. U.S. News & World Report LP. 2016. Web. (15 April 2016)

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REFERENCE SHEET SAMPLE

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PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

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Michael Simons (former supervisor)
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