

Professional Reference List Tips

If you haven't thought about who you would like to have as professional references, start thinking about it now. It will be easier on you if you prepare your list ahead of time, rather than rushing at the last minute. Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Remember that prospective employers want to hear about your **professional** experience, not what Aunt Suzie or Cousin Darryl has to say about your last golf game.
2. Think of people who **know you and your work well**, and would be willing **and available** to speak to your work experience and achievements. This can include leaders, managers, supervisors, clients, vendors, and colleagues. Don't forget leaders in the community if you are actively involved.
3. Your list may initially start with 7-10 or more people. Consider the different aspects of your background, your expertise and the type of work you are pursuing. This will also help you narrow your list down to 3-5 core individuals.
4. Ask the person for permission. Don't assume that someone will be a reference for you.
5. Provide them with your **current** resume to have on hand when they are called by the hiring company. Share the types of jobs you are pursuing so they can be aware of your interests.
6. It doesn't hurt to ask them what they plan to say about you. If you don't believe they will be a strong reference for you, you may need to consider someone else on your list. You want a reference to help you land the job, not eliminate you from a job.
7. Ask them how they want their contact information listed on your Reference List. Make sure to double-check phone numbers! If they change jobs or companies, get their **current** information -- the last thing you want is an unreachable reference. *When companies start doing reference checks, an offer is usually imminent.*
8. Thank them!!! Don't forget they are also a networking contact for you! Ask who they know!
9. Periodically update them on the status of your job search. Keep it positive and brief. This gives you an opportunity to stay in touch, while gently reminding them that you are still looking.
10. Notify them when a prospective employer is planning to check references so you can review the company and position with them and they can tailor their responses. References don't want to be caught off guard with an unexpected call. They won't appreciate it, and the prospective employer may have second thoughts about you.
11. When you land that next opportunity, follow-up with your references to thank them again. This is a professional courtesy that often gets missed. A hand-written note provides an extra personal touch.
12. Stay in touch with your references! Just because you landed a job, doesn't mean the networking stops.
13. Ask what you can do for them. See how you can assist them to show you appreciate their support and encouragement. Pay it forward.