

CAREER TOOLKIT

Your Professional References, Step by Step

A simple way to line up people who can speak to your strengths

How to use this guide

Type into the boxes on a computer or print it and write by hand.

A References sheet is a **separate page (1 page only)** you bring to interviews or send when asked — it's not part of your resume.

Keep it consistent & save everything with the right filename

Use the exact same name on your references sheet, résumé, cover letter, and LinkedIn — skip nicknames, and pick one version of your name to use everywhere.

Use the same clean, professional email address on every document, like `firstname.lastname@gmail.com`. Skip nicknames, numbers, and old addresses from when you were younger. This may require you to set up a new account.

Save two versions of this sheet: a Word document (.docx) you keep editing, and a PDF you actually send when asked — a PDF keeps your formatting locked in place (Hint: go to File > Save As > PDF).

Name your files clearly: FirstLast_References.docx and FirstLast_References.pdf.

BEFORE YOU START

1. Who makes a good reference?

A good reference is someone who knows your work and can speak honestly and positively about your skills, work ethic, and character. Think about asking professors, supervisors, coaches, advisors, or club leaders you've worked with **and** who you think will give you a good reference. It is critical to ALWAYS ASK PERMISSION BEFORE you use someone as a reference. If the person agrees, immediately send a thank you note. Then, email your references your updated résumé and the job description whenever you give an employer their contact information. This step is an important professional courtesy and helps your references better prepare for a phone call or email from a potential employer.

DO	DON'T
✓ Choose people who can speak to your skills, work ethic, and character	✗ List someone without asking them first
✓ Use professional contacts when possible: professors, supervisors, advisors, coaches	✗ Use family members or friends unless they know your work professionally
✓ Ask permission before listing someone as a reference	✗ Wait until the last minute to ask
✓ Ask at least 2–3 weeks in advance when possible	✗ Assume they remember exactly what you worked on together
✓ Remind them how they know you — don't assume people remember every detail	✗ List more than 3–4 references — quality matters more than quantity
✓ Send your resume and the job description after they say yes	✗ Forget to send them your updated information
✓ Keep formatting clean and consistent	✗ Use a different font or size than your cover letter
✓ Send a thank-you note after they help you	✗ Forget to follow up and thank them
✓ Send a “heads-up” email with your résumé and job description to your references, notifying them you shared their contact information with a potential employer	✗ Assume they will know the details of the job you applied for OR instantly remember you WHEN an employer reaches out to them, which may be many months later

SEE IT IN ACTION

2. Sample references sheet

Here's what a finished references sheet can look like. Use it as a model for formatting — not something to copy word for word.

SAMPLE — SEE HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER**Jordan Rivera — Professional References**

jordan.rivera@email.com | (802) 555-0148

REFERENCE 1

Dr. Alicia Chen | Professor, Business Studies, Landmark College

Relationship: Professor and academic advisor

alicia.chen@landmark.edu | (802) 555-0122

REFERENCE 2

Marcus Webb | Office Manager, Landmark College Admissions

Relationship: Direct supervisor, Front Desk Assistant role

marcus.webb@landmark.edu | (802) 555-0177

REFERENCE 3

Priya Anand | Volunteer Coordinator, Putney Community Food Shelf

Relationship: Volunteer supervisor

priya.anand@pcfoodshelf.org | (802) 555-0199

REACH OUT**3. Asking someone to be a reference**

It's normal to feel nervous about asking. Most people are glad to help — and a short, clear message makes it easy for them to say yes. It's always best to make sure you are also comfortable with whom you select. Think about a professor, advisor, coach, supervisor or club leader that knows you and your strengths well. It may include someone you worked for, whether that work was a paying job or a volunteer position. After the person agrees, send your resume and a brief link to the job description to them.

Reference request — email template**Subject: Reference Request — [Your Name]**

"Hi [Name], I hope you're doing well. I'm applying for [jobs/internships] and wanted to ask if you'd be willing to be a reference for me. I really appreciated working with you as my [professor/supervisor], and I think you could speak to my [skills/strengths]. Please let me know if you're comfortable with this — I'm happy to share more details if helpful. Thank you! [Your Name]"

Draft your own message

Use the template above as a starting point and fill in your own details.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

4 Build your references sheet

List 3 people below. Once someone says yes, fill in their information here — this becomes your references sheet, ready to bring to an interview or send when asked.

Reference #1

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Relationship to you:

Email:

Phone:

Reference #2

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Relationship to you:

Email:

Phone:

Reference #3

Name:

Title:

Organization:

Relationship to you:

Email:

Phone:

Before you send your references sheet, check:

- ☐ Did each person say yes before you listed them?
- ☐ Did you thank each person?
- ☐ Does the formatting match your resume (same font, clean layout)?
- ☐ Did you notify your references an employer may be contacting them?
- ☐ Did you send your references the actual job description and your updated résumé so they are prepared?

Keep going

Landmark College has additional resources to support your career journey.

Career Advisors can help you with career planning, coaching, providing more in-depth “how-to” advice and resources as you grow your professional skills for life after Landmark.

Where can you make an appointment with a Career Advisor? Right here at this link:

<https://www.landmark.edu/academics/career-services>