Your list of references (not to be confused with letters of recommendation) is an important part of your application package. It is never included as a part of your resume, but prepared as a separate page. Sometimes you will submit this list with your resume and cover letter, but more often you will provide it to the employer upon request.

How many references? Three to five names are sufficient. Three very strong references are better than three strong and two mediocre ones. Strong references can make the difference between two equally qualified candidates, and a weak or neutral reference can defeat your candidacy. While the order in which you list them is not important, it is common to list the most recent reference first (such as a law school professor or an externship judge).

Who should be your references? Anyone who knows you in a professional or academic setting (rather than a personal contact). You want people who will immediately recognize your name and convey enthusiasm about you. A response to a reference call of “Who?” can damage your credibility. A law student is expected to list at least one law school faculty member, as well as a previous supervisor, legal or non-legal. You can also include an undergraduate professor if you graduated recently. Be sure you have an idea of what each person will say about you.

Before you type any names on your list, you must ask every prospective reference if they are willing to recommend you. Unless you receive an enthusiastic “yes!” - bypass that person and move to another. If they do agree to be a reference, provide them with an updated copy of your resume and information about the types of positions you’re seeking. You also might mention what information you would like potential employers to hear about you (e.g., writing skills, conscientious attention to detail, willingness to tackle difficult projects, etc.). Keep your references updated about your job search progress, as they can become valuable networking contacts. Inform your references about employers who are likely to contact them each time you use your list.

Below is a sample reference page. The header should be the same as your resume. Include the full name, title, address, email address and telephone number(s) of each reference. It also should include a brief notation of how each person knows you. Employers will usually phone a reference; an email address alone is not sufficient!
Professor Robert Smith  
University of California, Hastings College of the Law  
200 McAllister Street  
San Francisco, CA  94102  
(415) 565-9999  
smithr@uchastings.edu

Professor Smith was my Fall 2013 Evidence professor.

Sara A. Jones  
Executive Director  
Prison Law Services  
P.O. Box 8798  
Denver, CO  08790  
(666) 825-2789  
joness@pls.org

Ms. Jones was my supervising attorney during my Summer 2013 internship.

Mary J. Brown, Esq.  
Huge, Huge & Large LLP  
48 Embarcadero Center  
Palo Alto, CA  94202  
(650) 555-1212  
brownm@hhl.com

Ms. Brown supervised my work as a paralegal from 2010-2012.