References and Recommendation Guidelines

Pick your references carefully.
Select people most relevant to the position you are seeking and those who can speak to your skills and abilities the best. Begin by making a list of all possible references and gradually narrow it down to 3 to 5 who you think will be the best fit. Try to diversify who you select, so a potential employer can get a more holistic sense of you.

Ask in advance.
Verbal references – Schedule a time to meet with a potential reference if they are in close proximity to you. If not, contact them by making a phone call. When you speak with them, ask if they feel comfortable serving as a reference for you and inquire about the way they would prefer to be contacted by the potential employer.

Letters of recommendation – Make sure to give the reference at least 3 to 4 weeks notice and provide them with the details of the position, the company name, address, contact person and other pertinent information. Gently remind them of the approximate deadline by which you will need it completed. It may be helpful for the reference to have a copy of your resume.

Maintain consistent format.
When creating your reference sheet, use the same heading you use with other professional documents (resume, cover letter, etc). The actual listing of references should resemble the following format:

Mr. David Boucher
Customer Service Manager Business R US
1234 Success Drive
Business City, MI 55555
david.boucher@business.com
(800) 657-5988 Ext. 524

Keep references informed.
Advise your references when you have applied for a position and that the employer may contact them. Include the position, company name, contact person and other pertinent information in your communication with them. Let them know when you have interviewed with a company, as it is often after the interview that reference calls are made. This head's up will ensure they are not caught off guard with an email or phone call from a prospective employer.

Show appreciation.
Send a personal note or email thanking your references for the support. You may also want to call each reference individually to check in and reiterate your appreciation. Being gracious and polite is extremely important as your behavior is a reflection of your professional demeanor.

*Note: Your references/recommendations should only be provided upon request from an employer, either during the application process or an interview.