

What about generic letters of recommendation?

An individual might offer to write a generic letter of reference for you, perhaps addressed "To whom it may concern" or something similar. Is this useful?

- If a potential employer requires letters of reference with your application (typical for positions in academia, for example), it is preferable for the reference letter to be written directly to the recipient, rather than a generic "to whom it may concern" letter.
- An individualized letter is generally taken more seriously.
- However, if you are uncomfortable about asking a reference to write a number of personalized letters, or if your reference will be out of reach (on sabbatical, assignment abroad, etc.) during your job search, a "to whom it may concern letter" could serve your purposes.
- Be aware that in general, employers will consult references after screening resumes and interviewing. Some potential employers prefer to call your references and speak directly with them. So while a letter written in advance by your reference, and offered to the employer by you at the time of the interview (along with your reference list), doesn't hurt, it is not necessary to solicit these.

University of St. Thomas
Career Development Center
www.stthomas.edu/careerdevelopment