

How to Complete a Job Application

Introduction

There is a cliché that says you should treat job hunting like a job. Focus daily on doing the right things to position yourself for the job or career you want. Plan ahead and know places where you want to pursue employment. Don't let a bad application stand between you and the job. Since every presentation represents who you are, never miss an opportunity to make a good impression on a potential employer. An attractive job application is the first step to getting your foot in the door for an interview. This information will help if you need to brush up on your skills to complete a job application.

Take Time to Do it Right

Completing a job application correctly takes time if you really want to be considered for a job. First, ask if you can take the application home. Taking an application home allows you to spend more time collecting any information you will need and to review the application when you are finished. If you cannot take the application home, then be prepared to spend some time at an employment office in order to complete the application in detail.

First Things First

Know what you have to offer a potential employer. The best way to determine your worth is to make an assessment of your technical skills, educational background, and work experience. What are you trained to do? What skills have you acquired? What have you done on a job or through volunteer work? Potential employers will want to know about your work history and abilities. Highlight job experiences and work responsibilities that have helped you to advance your personal development and work ethics, such as communication skills, organizational abilities, and dependability.

Prepare Your Resume



Laying out a resume will help you to sort out your experience and educational background. It will help you to be consistent with information such as dates, times, and locations. You don't want to include conflicting information that may give the impression that you are not being entirely truthful. The resume can be used as an attachment to your completed application to provide more information about you. However, don't assume an attached resume will substitute for answers to questions on the application. You may need to prepare more than one version of your resume so that each one is appropriate for the job you are pursuing.

Know What Job to Pursue

Know what job you want to pursue. Have a goal in mind. You should guide the job search instead of randomly applying for every available position. Seek out positions that closely match your qualifications and skills. A goal is also valuable if you are offered an interview. Knowing what jobs you are most interested in and best qualified for gives you confidence and a sense of direction for interview questions. Moreover, your time will be better spent focusing your energy on doing a quality job and completing applications that are likely to end in job offers.

Before You Start, Get Prepared

If possible, pick up the application well in advance of the closing date when applications will be received. Make an extra copy to use as an initial draft, and complete a rough draft before you do the final version.

Always read through the application first to make sure you understand the questions and to verify what you will need to complete the application. Make sure you are prepared to answer each question as completely as possible. This may require you to gather a few documents and other information that includes:

- A current resume that details education and experience. A good substitute for a resume is a personal data sheet. A personal data sheet contains organized personal information that most applications will ask you for in advance.
- Personal identification such as a state driver's license or identification card, a social security card, and an emergency contact number.
- Name and contact information of at least three possible references, including former supervisors, colleagues, or friends that are knowledgeable about your skills, character, and work experience.
- Names and locations of schools you attended.
- Degrees and certifications you have earned and the year you completed your education or training. Some employers will also ask for a copy of your school transcripts.
- Chronological listing of your work history beginning with your most recent job.



Application Dos

When completing a job application, here are some helpful practices to assist you in making an impressive presentation:

- Follow directions carefully.
- Type or neatly print and use an ink pen.
- Answer all questions on the application completely.
- Answer questions honestly.
- Be careful of punctuation and grammar.
- Keep the application neat!
- After you have completed the application, proof read before submitting.

Application Don'ts

- Avoid volunteering any negative information, but be truthful on questions asked. Don't specify a salary. Write in the word "negotiable" in the salary area.
- Also, don't assume it is okay to include someone's name as a reference. Ask the individual first!
- Don't forget to follow up within a week or two to check the status of your application.

Online Job Applications

Companies are using Internet-based applications as technology continues to develop. Don't be surprised if you are asked to complete a job application online. As with written applications, you will need basic personal data, educational background information, and your employment history for the online application. Have a data sheet and/or a resume on hand. It's a good idea to have your resume in an electronic format in case you are asked to cut and paste it into the application or upload it to a website. You may need an e-mail address also with online applications. If you do not have one, you can sign up for an e-mail address at Yahoo, Microsoft's Hotmail, Google's Gmail, or with your local Internet service provider.

Here are some additional tips to help you complete an online application.

- Don't be surprised to find job placement test questions included in online applications.
- Review each page of an online application for completion and possible errors before moving on to the next page. Use spell check.
- If possible, save the application. You may be able to use parts of it for future applications.
- Read the fine print before final submission.
- Most agencies will verify having received your application by sending an e-mail reply.
- If you have difficulty with the online application, contact the agency's human resources department. Contact information is usually provided on the application.



Summary

Always be prompt with meeting deadlines for job applications. Be sure to follow guidelines carefully when completing an application in hard copy or online. Agencies do screen and usually have more than enough qualified applications to choose from. Don't lose out on the job you want because of negligence and/or an unattractive presentation.

Make sure your application is received on time. Make sure you have responded to all of the questions and that your application is free of errors. Also, make sure there is a thorough description of what you have to offer the potential employer. Most importantly, take time to review the application once you have completed it. If possible have someone else look it over before you submit it to the appropriate person or office. As you go through the process, feel confident that you have a good chance of getting the job.

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