

Introduction to the Job Application

First impressions are important. Your appearance is important, even when submitting an application. Every time you make contact with an employer, dress as though you are ready to go to work. The employer may have a job that needs to be filled and want to interview you immediately.

Remember to bring everything with you that you will need when filling out applications. It does not create a business-like impression when a job seeker needs to borrow the employer's pens or telephone books to complete an application. Be organized. Bring the following items with you when you think you might be completing applications:

- Ball point pens (black or blue ink)
- Your fact sheet (See "Fact Sheet" below)
- Copies of your resume (See "Tips for Success," "The Resume")

Your completed application is a reflection of you. Make it a good one!

How to fill out an application:

It is important that you read the entire application form before you start filling it out. Read the instructions carefully and follow them exactly. Completing the application properly is very important, because the application is your first chance to present your skills to the employer.

Employers review the information on job applications when deciding who to schedule for job interviews. Remember that employers often judge the appearance of an application as a clue to how much importance you put on the quality of your work.

Here are some helpful tips to follow when completing applications:

1. Greet the receptionist politely when requesting or submitting an application. The receptionist's first impressions are often passed along.
2. Be honest in your answers.
3. Use blue or black ink pens. (Erasable pens are also helpful.)
4. Have all the information on hand that you might need to fill out an application, such as a fact sheet with the names and telephone numbers of your references and past employers. ([see "Fact Sheet" below](#))
5. Print clearly and legibly.
6. Fill out the form neatly and accurately.
7. Apply for a specific position, rather than entering "anything," or "open" for the desired position.
8. Leave no blanks.
9. Write "Does Not Apply" (or "N/A" for Not Applicable) in the space if the question does not apply to you.
10. Explain lengthy gaps in your work history, for example, "attending school."
11. Read and check the application for completeness before turning it in to the employer.
12. Be sure to sign and date the application.
13. Mail or turn the application into the correct person or place.

Personal Data

Employment applications request a wide variety of personal information ranging from your social security number for employment tax purposes to questions about your personal hobbies and interests. The following list provides examples of how to complete the most typical information requested on job applications:

1. In the **name** field, be sure to note in what order the employer wants your first and last names. Print neatly. If you have previously applied for a job with an employer, make sure that any name change on the application is noted.
2. Use an **address** where you can receive mail. You may also be asked how long you've lived at your current address.
3. Provide your **telephone number** with an area code. If you use a message number, make sure that everyone at that number knows what to say for you or that the message on a message machine is appropriate. For a business number, include an extension number if one is available.
4. Be sure that you meet the **health requirements** for the job. If a physical examination is a condition of employment, the employer must pay for it and can only request it after you are hired.
5. All applications ask for information about the schools you've attended. Usually you will need to list the city and state where the school was located and any degrees earned. List your **education**, detailing any special courses. Be prepared to provide transcripts, if requested.
6. If you have any professional **certification, licenses, or registrations**, list them. For example, you may be a licensed cosmetologist, dental hygienist, or have a special class driver's license.
7. List any **hobbies** or interests you may have. This will provide the employer with additional information about related skills.
8. If possible, **avoid** entering **birth dates** or school **graduation dates** on an application.
9. Some applications request information about prior misdemeanor or felony **convictions**. Read the application questions carefully and answer truthfully, adding "will discuss at interview." You can be fired for not telling the truth on an application.

Work Data

1. Always fill in the space for the "**Position Desired.**" Never write "any" or "will do anything!" A vague answer makes it difficult for the employer to visualize how your special skills will meet their company needs. It is acceptable to list more than one position, but do some research first so you know job titles used at the company.
2. In the **salary** desired field write "open" or "negotiable" rather than putting in a salary figure that might be too high or too low. The employer will look at the salaries paid previously.
3. In the **availability** field write "immediately," if you are available to start right away. If you are currently employed, indicate that you are available to start after giving two weeks notice. Giving two weeks notice makes it more likely that you will get a good reference from the employer. Be knowledgeable about the hours required for the job. New employees rarely have a choice about the hours and shift available.

Job Experience

1. Under **work experience**, the application form usually asks for your job title and dates of employment; the name, address, and phone number of the employer; and a description of your duties. Some applications also ask for your salary and your supervisor's name. Include part-time and full-time jobs. Make sure that the dates of employment don't overlap or conflict.
2. If asked for the **reason you left** a job, use positive phrases like: "to take a job with more responsibility," "moved," "seasonal," "business closed," "job or contract ended," "temporary work," "laid off," "reorganization," "returned to school," or "career change." Avoid negative words like "fired," "quit," "absenteeism," or "tardiness."
3. Employers are often interested in what you do outside of work because it reflects your interests and abilities. Highlight any **club activities, or volunteer work, or organizations** you belong to, that may relate to the job you are seeking.
4. List any **special skills, abilities, experience and/or training** that relate to the position you want. If you were in the military service, emphasize the duties you performed that relate to the job for which are applying. Have all appropriate forms available, such as certificates.
5. Always talk to your **references** before beginning your work search, to ask permission to use their names, addresses, and phone numbers on your application(s). Former employers, business acquaintances, teachers, and the clergy are all acceptable references. Be sure to keep your reference list updated and let them know when you find a job.

Mistakes To Avoid

Some of the most common mistakes that job seekers make on applications are:

1. Not following directions
2. Misspelled words
3. Crossed out writing
4. Not printed
5. Wrinkled or messy application form
6. Incomplete information or unanswered questions
7. Not applying for a specific position
8. Incomplete work history, or large unexplained gaps in work history
9. Overlapping or conflicting employment dates with no explanation
10. Application not turned in by the deadline
11. Use of troublesome words, such as "quit" or "fired"
12. Forgetting to sign the application

Fact Sheet

Most employers issue their own pre-printed company application to job seekers. Therefore, job application styles will vary widely from company to company. It is a good idea to prepare a fact sheet with all of your personal information before beginning your job search. Take your fact sheet with you when searching for work. That way, if an employer asks you to fill out an application you will have your information readily available to complete their application. Having your fact sheet on hand will save you time and help you prevent errors.

Prepare your fact sheet with the following information:

- Employment history including company names, addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of employment
- Volunteer work history with community organizations including organization names, addresses, telephone numbers, and dates of service
- Personal references including names, addresses, and telephone numbers
- Personal information such as education, and social security number

Your fact sheet is a useful tool for you, but remember not to turn it in to an employer. Keep your fact sheet up to date for future job searches.