

How to Fill Out a Job Application

Picking it up: When you pick up or drop off an application, be prepared for an interview. You never know if they will have a few minutes and are in a hurry to hire someone. Also, dress appropriately because even though you may not get an interview that day, the secretary or person who takes the application may be asked by the interviewer what they thought of you. First impressions are important; you only get one time to make it.

Read carefully: Read the entire form carefully. Know what is being asked before filling out the form. Employers may use the application form to judge how well you follow instructions and how careful you may be as an employee.

Fill in the blanks: Answer all questions. Fill in the blanks completely, accurately, and truthfully. When something doesn't apply to you, write **N/A** for non-applicable. Check your answers for correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, completeness, and accuracy.

Ink/Type: Use blue or black ink or type the application. Print clearly. No funky colors.

Position: Avoid the word "anything." Put a specific job down to show you're not desperate and that you have a goal in mind.

Salary expected: Employers may use this question to screen out applicants. It is best to give a salary range or to respond with "negotiable." Use one of these responses even if you know the wage. This leaves you room to negotiate a higher wage.

Personal information: If you don't have a phone, give a number where messages can be left for you.

Education and training: List academic, vocational, and professional education and schools attended. Be prepared to attach copies of certificates or other documents. If you are planning to attend college, write "Plan to attend XYZ College" and when.

Work experience: Always list the most recent employer first. Give complete and accurate names, dates, addresses, phone numbers, job titles, dates of employment, etc. Use your resume as a guide. Make sure the information presented in the application agrees with the information in your resume. Explain gaps in your work history.

Special job-related skills: Use action verbs to list your special job-related skills, training, licenses, and accomplishments. List the types of equipment/tools that you can use. This will make you stand out from other applicants. The job description can provide clues about important skills.

Reason for leaving: Be careful when giving your reason for leaving a previous job. Even if your previous boss was a jerk, you should never be negative. Acceptable answers include: "school conflict," "conflicting hours," "better opportunities for advancement," "lack of work," "seasonal employment."

References: Most employers will call references, but they also may request a written evaluation by mail. Many employers can only tell dates worked and if they would re-hire you. Therefore, you may want to use teachers, counselors, principals, coaches, ministers, etc. as references. (Do not use relatives.) Be sure to ask for their permission and verify where they can be reached. Provide complete and accurate information about 3 (or more) people who can speak highly of you.

Last details: Sign (don't print) your name and include the current date. Check carefully that you have completed the application. Once you fill out an application, it is a binding document; any misinformation could be grounds for termination. If you are asked when you can begin work, be sure to allow enough time to give at least two weeks' notice to your current employer.