# How to Complete a Job Application

***The job application is a written, structured one-way form of communication between the job applicant and the employer. The completed application will often make the crucial difference in whether or not an applicant is seriously considered for an interview and employment by the employer. When an employer reviews an application, four things are looked at: (1) the information given by the applicant, (2) the skills that the applicant claims to possess, (3) how clearly the applicant answered the questions, and (4) the appearance of the application.***

## The job application is used by:

**the employer . . .**

- To see if the applicant is right for the company and the job.
- To screen out applicants.
- To identify applicants who (1) match possible job openings, (2) have the ability to perform the tasks required on the job, and (3) demonstrate that they will do the job.

**the applicant . . .**

- To make a good first impression.
- To communicate to the employer (1) the type of job they desire, (2) their educational background and skills possessed, and (3) their employment history.
- **To get an interview**.

***Since employers use the application to screen out applicants, and applicants want to be screened-in (get an interview), it is critical that the applicant provides information that helps get the application placed in the "To-Be-Interviewed" pile.***

## To complete an application you will need to provide the following information about yourself:

- Personal Information
- Employment History
- Educational History
- Military Experience
- References

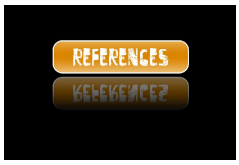
## Questions you do not want to answer

All of us have experienced one or more events in our work and/or personal lives that we would just as soon keep to ourselves. Occasionally, the application forces us to reveal that event. Remember, the job application is a legal document. Falsifying information or failing to reveal requested information either on the application or in the interview can be grounds for dismissal. Review the **JobShop Guide** ***How Do I Deal With Negative Information***.

## Illegal Questions

Laws are specific about what factors an employer cannot use in making hiring decisions. These factors are not supposed to be addressed on the application or in the interview. However, out-of-date job applications are used by some employers. These applications may still request this information. If such information is requested, it is best to leave the response blank. *Questions that address age, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, handicaps or other personal information are generally illegal*. There are situations, however, where asking one or more of these questions is legal and expected. For example, it is acceptable to ask an applicant their sex if the job is to model women's clothing. Also, some employers may request this information on a separate form. In these cases, the employer is required to state that the information is for data-gathering purposes only. If in doubt, indicate that you will complete the information after you have been offered employment.

## References




Employers contact references usually only after they have completed the interview, in order to document the information supplied by the applicant in their application and during the interview. Since the employer is seeking to confirm the information given in the application, it is critical that the applicant list references who can and will supply that information. Employers are interested in information that can be given by former supervisors and/or teachers. Before listing a person as a reference, you need to contact that person and ask their permission to list them as a reference.

- When you talk to the reference, make sure you will get a favorable recommendation. Ask what might be said to the employer when the employer calls or writes.
- If you know someone who is employed with the employer, be sure to ask if you can list that person as a personal reference. *Employers like to hire people who are known by their employees*.

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***Before proceeding further, locate the four-page* JobSearch Guides: *Sample Blank Employment Application* and the *Sample Completed Employment Application*. Complete one of the blank sample applications using the completed application as a guide. Fill out the application in pencil so you will be able to make changes and refine your answers. Be sure to answer every question.***

## Helpful hints for completing your job application

- Print your responses carefully. Appearance counts! When completing a real application use a ballpoint pen (not a pencil).
- You must enter a telephone number when requested. This needs to be a phone that is answered during the day, because this is when employers call. If you have a cell phone, be sure to provide that number on the application. If you don't have a telephone, ask a relative or friend if you can use their number. Make sure they agree and will take messages.
- If asked to provide an expected pay rate or salary, respond with either *negotiable* or your last pay rate. If you know what the job pays, and are willing to accept that rate, enter that amount.
- Provide accurate information on your prior employment. Get current and former employer addresses and telephone numbers from the phone book or by looking them up on the Internet.
- Give employment information on all jobs during the past twenty years, beginning with your current or last job. If you have a gap in your employment, place an asterisk (*) between the two jobs and explain the time-gap at the bottom of the page or in the space provided for Additional Information.
- Always give a positive reason why you left your jobs. Don't put, *The boss was a jerk*, or *I got fired for missing too much work*. It is better to say that *I wanted a job with more security*, or *I was laid off because of my lack of seniority*.
- You can explain terminations during the interview.
- If asked to list job duties and/or skills, be specific and relate them to the job that you are seeking.

*Employers make inferences (that are not always accurate) from the information supplied by the applicant. Therefore, think through every response, putting yourself in the employer's shoes. Ask yourself,"What impression will this response give the employer?"*

## Using the application in your job search

Nearly every employer requires a completed application as a condition of employment, even if they have a résumé on file. Many employers require a completed application before they will schedule an interview.

Step 1: Complete the **JobSearch Guide** ***Sample Blank Employment Application***. Answer every question by entering the response or N/A if not applicable to you. Use a pencil so that you can correct mistakes and refine your answers. Review your completed application with a spouse and/or friend to double check for accuracy, spelling, grammar and wording.

Step 2: If you have access to a typewriter (or you have a friend who does), type your responses on a second *Sample Blank Employment Application*. If you don't have access to a typewriter, then legibly print the responses on a blank *Sample Blank Employment Application* using a ballpoint pen. Make at least ten copies of your completed application.

Step 3: Have at least five copies of your completed *Sample Blank Employment Application* with you at all times. Place the applications in a folder so that they do not get wrinkled or smudged. A generic application can often substitute for a résumé.

Step 4: When an employer asks you to complete an application, use your completed *Sample Blank Employment Application* as a guide. Carefully transfer the information from your application to the employer's application.

Take your time completing the application. If you are pushed for time, ask to take the application home and return it the next day. If you make a mistake, and the mistake cannot be neatly corrected, ask for a new application and start over. ***Completing a sloppy, inaccurate application will result in your being screened out 99% of the time!***

Use the opportunity to tell the employer why you are the ideal person for the job. Tell them what they want to know about you; specifically, tell them what kind of job you want, the skills and training that you have to support that job and that you will be a good employee (honest, dependable, willing to learn and able to get along with others).

Step 5: When you give the completed application to the employer, ask for the next step in the process. Get the name and telephone number of the person who takes your completed application (get a business card, if available). Ask how often you need to update your application.

Step 6: If you have not heard from the employer in 30 days, return and ask if you can update your application. When a job opens up, employers usually review only applications filed within the last 30 days, so you want your application put into the "To-Be-Interviewed" pile.

Step 7: Review your completed *Sample Blank Employment Application* every week. Make corrections, additions and subtractions as needed.

## Internet resources

***www.livecareer.com/quintessential/job-applications*** -- Good information on completing the application.
***www.thebalance.com/how-to-complete-a-job-application-2058589***– More information on how to complete a job application.
***www.job-applications.com*** – Free, printable online job applications for over 1,000 companies like Walmart, McDonalds and UPS.