



Perfect Job Application

Introduction: Completing the “perfect” job application will put you a step ahead of many applicants. Next to the resume, it is the most important opportunity for the employer to check the credentials of a candidate. Employers use the application to check or “screen” many items - ability to follow instructions, spelling and grammatical ability, education and work experience, and other data relative to the job. A well done job application will help screen you in, rather than rule you out.

Helpful Hints:

- Many employers ask an applicant to complete a job application by printing or writing rather than typing. This tells the employer something about the applicant’s neatness and handwriting. If asked to do so, use a pen with black or blue ink. It is helpful to make a copy of the application, if possible, and complete a draft. If you can’t get a copy to make a draft, use an erasable ink pen. A single line through a mistake is neater than trying to erase or scribble out.
- Always follow directions to the letter. How carefully you follow instructions on your application gives an indication of what kind of worker you are. Be neat; keep the application clean--no stains, grease marks, etc. If you don’t understand something, ask!
- Read the entire application before you start to fill in the blanks. Answer all of the questions. If there is a particular section that does not pertain to you, write **N/A**, which means not applicable. Or write **Does not apply**. This lets the employer know that you did not just miss a question.
- Watch your spelling, punctuation and grammar. Be accurate--make sure your dates are correct.
- Be positive in describing your skills and abilities, including use of any machines or tools. Don’t forget to include unpaid volunteer experience. Include any special training that relates to the position for which you are applying under experience or schooling.
- It always helps to take your resume or your Career Portfolio with you when job hunting; these resources can save a lot of time and will help you fill out an application completely and accurately.
- Don’t forget to sign and date the application! Use your legal name, don’t use nicknames.

Problem Questions

How do you handle problem questions? Legally, employers cannot ask about your age (other than as a legal question based upon insurance, bonding, state and federal laws), religion, weight, height, national origin (optionally, information can be asked on an Equal Employment Opportunity form) or marital status.

If you have a problem question, write "See me." Be honest in filling out your application. Concentrate on the positives. The following may help you handle some problem questions.

A. Questions Concerning Disability

Employers cannot discriminate against individuals with a disability, but they may ask questions that pertain to your disability if these questions relate to the job description. In addition, the employer may want to find out what arrangements need to be made to accommodate your disability to the job description.

B. Questions Concerning Criminal Records

Employers cannot discriminate against applicants convicted of a serious crime (i.e., felony, homicide, etc.). However, they may ask on the application form if you were ever convicted of a crime and, if so, when. This question is asked in regard to an employer's need to have employees bonded (insured against a financial loss or theft by the employee). If your criminal offense is related in any way to the job description, such as theft, the company has the right to refuse to hire you. Failure to respond truthfully to a question regarding a criminal record leaves employees open to facing automatic dismissal should the employer learn about the criminal record. If you were arrested but not convicted, you should respond "no."

C. Questions Concerning Drug and Alcohol Abuse

An employer may ask if you have ever been a user of narcotics or drugs not prescribed by a physician. If so, the employer may not allow you in areas where you are tempted, i.e., a place where drugs are stored. Many companies now have programs to assist employees who have alcohol and/or drug abuse problems.

D. Other Problems

For pay desired, it is often best to say "open" or "negotiable" rather than to state a figure that is much higher or lower than the employer is considering. For position desired, it is best to list a broad career field rather than narrow it down and limit your options. If you were fired from a job or left because of a bad experience with an employer, it is best to explain that your expectations were not being met by the reality of the job. Should you get an interview, you will have a chance to more fully explain your situation.