

Tips on filling out Job Applications

1. Go alone. Taking a friend or parent with you makes you look insecure.
2. Realize that the receptionist/secretary may be evaluating you while you are obtaining your application. If you seem impatient or unprofessional, it will result in a poor first impression.
3. Never use a pencil to fill out an application. Felt tip pens are generally too bold and neon-colored or glitter pens are unprofessional. Use a black ballpoint pen to complete applications. Be sure to take one (or two or three!) with you so you won't have to borrow a pen from the employer.
4. Before you begin to write on your application, take a moment to look it over. Notice how much space is provided for items like addresses and phone numbers. For example, you don't want to put your street address, city, state, and zip code on one line, only to notice that city, state, and zip code go on a separate line. Reviewing the application form before you begin filling it out will help you avoid making major errors.
5. Follow directions carefully. The directions may specify that the form be typed, printed, or filled out with black ink only. Pay attention to the details.
6. Don't make any mistakes. But if you do, make corrections as neatly as possible.
7. Leave nothing blank. If a question does not apply to you, indicate so by using a dash (--) or N/A (not applicable).
8. Most applications instruct that schools and past employment be listed in reverse chronological order (i.e. most recent experience first), but read the directions carefully, because every application is different.
9. Some "old-fashioned" applications ask for details on the elementary school attended, so be prepared.
10. Often, there is room to list only one school, one high school, and one college. If so, list only the most recent one you attended in each category.
11. Some applications ask for your major course of study. For grade and high schools, answers such as "general" or "college prep" are appropriate.
12. Some applications have an open question for "Other Qualifications." Take advantage of this opportunity to list such things as your leadership qualities, computer skills, ability to work with a team, language skills, or other special knowledge and abilities you possess.
13. Applications may ask for a date of graduation. If you haven't graduated yet, you might consider stating your projected graduation date. This shows that you have a specific goal in mind, and that you intend to achieve it. However, be aware that inquiries on applications that ask for dates of attendance and completion of elementary, high school, and even college can be considered unlawful because it could disclose your approximate age. If this concerns you, then indicate that you completed the schooling but mark a dash where it asks for the completion date.
14. The work experience section often asks for more detail than a person can provide off the top of his/her head, and even more information than is found on the résumé. This could include names of supervisors, addresses, phone numbers, dates of employment, starting and ending pay, etc. Have your master application completed and with you when filling out job applications so that you have this required information at your fingertips.

15. Never ask the receptionist to use a phone book, pen, or any supplies. You should bring all the necessary items with you when completing an application.
16. Some job applications ask for all jobs held in the past 10 years; others allow you to list only your most recent jobs. If you have more former jobs than the form has space for, no problem—stop when you run out of space. The exception to this is if those other jobs are pertinent to the position you are applying for. In that case, attach a separate sheet of paper describing your work experience using the same format that is on the job application.
17. If you have had only two jobs, and the form has spaces for three, place “N/A” on the top line of the third space. You don’t need to place “N/A” on every line in the section for the third job—that would make it look cluttered.
18. When listing your work experience, be sure to include all positions that you held. Don’t omit a job just because you don’t think it is related to the position you are applying for. Employers like to see continuity in work history and sometimes a job you might feel is unrelated to the position you’re applying for will actually show off some of your transferable job skills.
19. If you are currently employed, use the term “present” for the ending date on your current job. For example: 08/05 to present.
20. When asked for “Reason for Leaving” a job, write “N/A” if you are still employed.
21. When asked for “Reason for Leaving,” use phrases such as “summer job” or “to pursue other opportunities” to present a positive impression.
22. When asked for “Reason for Leaving,” answering “got fired” or “boss was a jerk” places you in a bad light. Rather, consider stating “personal reasons” or “the company’s philosophy did not match mine.” These answers will still draw a red flag with an employer, but at least you won’t automatically get placed in the “file pile.”
23. Sign and date the application form. Without a signature, your application form will be deemed incomplete and ineligible for consideration. Also, be aware that by signing the application form, you are attesting that your responses are complete and truthful to the best of your knowledge. When you sign, your integrity is on the line.
24. Proofread, proofread, proofread!
25. Check for neatness. Messy, unorganized applications give the impression of a careless applicant who is not serious about the job.
26. Lastly, take copies of your résumé and cover letter with you and be sure to submit it with your application form. This will show the employer that you mean business!