

Guide to completing applications forms

Writing and submitting an application for a job is, along with the interview, a fundamental part of the recruitment process. Completing a great application is your first step towards being offered the job. After all, without an application (whether by form or CV) you won't be offered an interview, so it really is your chance to make a great first impression on the employer.

Organisations are increasingly asking jobseekers to apply using their own forms or online portals. This is especially prevalent in large organisations, where a high number of applications are received. By asking all candidates the same questions on these forms employers can ensure that all applications are assessed against the same standards and important information is not missed.

These top tips to completing application forms will help you to navigate your way through the process.

1. Show how you meet the requirements of the role

The application form is there for you to show the employer why you are suited to that role.

Many employers will have a job description and list of selection criteria for a role. These will detail the qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge needed to carry out that role.

You should use these documents to identify what the employer is looking for in an applicant, and then make sure to detail how you meet their expectations by outlining your relevant qualifications, experience, skills and knowledge in your application. Avoid including information that is not relevant to that particular role.

Large employers are likely to use computer programmes to initially review applications and these will be set to lookout for key words and phrases relating to qualifications, skills and experience. Therefore, you should always make sure that you explicitly state them on the form.

2. Ensure there are no gaps on your application

If there are any periods of time missing from your application, such as the time between school and university or a career break, highlight these rather than leaving them blank. Recruiters will want to see a full chronological history of your education and work experience. Be prepared to discuss reasons for any gaps in the interview.

3. Check your details are correct and complete

Take care to check any answers are correct and up-to-date, especially those relating to qualifications and employment dates. If you cannot recall the details don't guess, find a way to look them up. Most employers will check these details at reference stage so it's important that you keep your records accurate.

4. Language, spelling and grammar

When writing the content of your application make sure you don't use 'text speak' or jargon. If using acronyms or abbreviations ensure that you explain what they mean.

Remember to consider the length of your answers. Employers will be looking for quality, not quantity. Make sure to keep your writing concise and clear, with the most important information listed first.

Many on-line applications forms will not include a spell check. A good tip is to write your answers into a programme such as Microsoft Word, then run the spell and grammar check, before copying and pasting the final version into the on-line form. The benefit of this is that, should the employer's website or portal experience technical difficulties, your work is saved elsewhere.

Finally, once you have completed the application read it aloud to yourself to check that it makes sense and flows nicely. If possible ask a friend or colleague to proof read it for you too.

5. Give yourself time

Completing applications forms can be time consuming. Allow yourself plenty of time and do not leave it until the last minute to submit your application. It is extremely frustrating, not to mention stressful, to find that you are suffering technical difficulties a few minutes before the deadline for applications has closed.

6. Keep records

If you are applying for several roles, make a record of which applications you have submitted and when, along with any other relevant information. It is also a good idea to keep copies of the applications for you to refer to in preparation for interview.

Next Stage – the Interview! Read our [guide to interviews](#).