

Job Application Strategies

A JOB APPLICATION is the official paperwork you fill out when you are seeking employment. The employers review all of the applications to narrow the field and eventually hire one applicant for the job. In this unit, you will learn how to fill out written and online applications in a way that boosts your chances of receiving the job.



Objective:



Describe how to complete a job application.

Key Terms:



- application letter
- background check
- credit report
- kiosk
- not applicable
- pdf
- salutations

Job Applications

Job applications allow employers to compile information on job candidates, enabling them to begin the process of hiring a new employee. They usually request information about the employee's work history, education, and skills, as well as personal information (e.g., name, address, and phone number).

APPLICATION LETTER

An **application letter** is an item used to expand the information on the application. It includes contact information, personal information, a salutation, and a few paragraphs of additional information.

Contact Information

If known, use the correct name of the addressee in the application letter. Also, use the correct title of the person you are contacting, and make sure you are using the correct gender if you are addressing it to “Mr.” or “Ms.” Then submit the letter to the person at the company who is responsible for reviewing job applications.

Personal Information

The letter should include your personal information, such as your name and address, home and cell phone numbers, and email address.

Salutations

Common **salutations**, or formal greetings, in a professional application letter include “Dear Sir” and “Dear Madam.” If you do not know the exact person who will be reading the letter, you may use the generic salutation: “To Whom It May Concern.”

Paragraphs

Use the first paragraph to explain why the letter is being written. For instance, explain which position you are seeking and where you found the information. You could mention an ad in the newspaper, or you could name a contact you have at the company. For example, if a friend who currently works for the company suggested you apply for the job, include that information in your application letter.

You may express the second paragraph in bullets rather than in block format. It should expand on the information in the job application. Explain how your abilities are related to the job requirements. This section allows you to add supporting statements about your abilities and experiences.

In the last paragraph, state how you will follow up after submitting the job application. It is common to use a follow-up timeframe of one week. Explain how you plan to follow up, such as email or a phone call.

COMPLETING A JOB APPLICATION

Before you begin a job application, gather some information. Review your résumé and cover letter for the specific job. Gather the phone numbers, addresses, and titles of previous employers and references. Also, have your personal information ready, as well as identification (e.g., Social Security card and driver’s license).

- ◆ Answer application questions honestly. For example, it is appropriate to write “job ended” rather than “fired from a position.” Yet do not leave blank spaces on an application. Use the phrase **not applicable**, or n/a, which indicates that a question does not apply or is irrelevant.

- ◆ Use references from professional and volunteer sources, depending on the application. If you are a student or recent graduate, you may use teachers as references. However, list any skills you have that would transfer to the position. Make sure to list your most recent job and education first on the application.
- ◆ Keep the job application appearance professional. In addition, follow the application instructions. Type or complete the application neatly with blue or black ink. Also, make sure the job application and résumé are consistent.
- ◆ Proofread the application for errors, and sign it when required.
- ◆ Mail the application flat by using a large envelope to avoid folding.
- ◆ Follow up with the prospective employer one week after the submission of the application. Ask about the progress on the application and when the interviews will be conducted. After the interviews, request that your application be kept on file.

WRITTEN AND ONLINE APPLICATIONS

Job applications help an employer screen candidates for job interviews. There are several differences between print and online application forms. For instance, online applications may be neater if you have poor handwriting. Also, filling out an online application requires you to be prepared and have all the information on hand.

Email

A professional email address is necessary for all job applications, whether you submit them online or in written form. Avoid the use of a provocative or questionable email address, such as “partyanimal@email.com.” It is more professional to provide an email address that uses your name.

Guidelines

There are several guidelines for attaching a letter of application or a résumé in an email. Follow formats for mailed letters of application, and make sure the letter is professional. Use a simple, less fancy font and design than you would for printed versions. Format the letter of application to fit one email screen. Then send it in MS Word or as a **pdf** (portable document format), which allows most computers to process it.



FIGURE 1. Have all of your information, such as references' phone numbers, on hand before you begin to fill out an online application.



BROADENING AWARENESS...

AMAZING ASPECTS: Making an Impression

A standard job application does not give you much room to make an impression on the potential employers. You are answering standard questions, without being able to show your personality and special skills. So it is important to present your best image in the areas you can control.

Have black or blue ink pens on hand to complete job applications. Do not use other colored pens, pencils, or felt-tipped markers. Take your time and print neatly. Carefully consider your responses and look up words before writing on the application. This helps you avoid having to cross out writing and prevents errors. Have all information on hand, including the names and contact information of references and former employers.

Remember that people other than the “boss” may have a say in the hiring process. If you go into a business to request an application, dress as though you were going on an actual interview. Do not walk in wearing ripped jeans and a tank top. Put away your cell phone, and be polite to the employee who gives you the application. In some cases, the employer may ask the receptionist or clerk about his or her first impression of you, or the manager may want to speak to you in person. The same rules apply if you are returning an application in person.

Kiosk

Some companies use an in-store kiosk for applicants to complete a job application with a specific format and questions. A **kiosk** is a small, portable, or semi-permanent booth or station used to vend goods or services. Many kiosk-based job applications allow employers to retrieve common information from all applicants. A kiosk may be a computer on a desk, a free-standing structure, or a unit attached to a wall. It allows all applications submitted to look similar. Some kiosks may administer employability pre-assessments for some companies (e.g., Walmart) as part of the job application process.

After completing the job application, many kiosk-based and online services conduct a background check with a written summary sent to the employer. A **background check** is a data inquiry that requires written permission from an applicant to access certain personal information. The check usually includes verification of your Social Security number and other pertinent personal information. The company may check your **credit report**, which is a record of finances. In addition, the check may analyze your work history, review your driving record, and research any criminal history.

Summary:



Job applications allow employers to compile information on job candidates, enabling them to begin the process of hiring a new employee. An application letter is something used to expand the information. It includes contact information, personal information, a salutation, and a few paragraphs. Remember to use references

from professional and volunteer sources, depending on the application. Keep the job application appearance professional. Write neatly, and proofread to avoid errors. Some applications are completed online or at a computer kiosk. After completing the job application, many kiosk-based and online services conduct a background check with a written summary sent to the employer.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What content should be in the three suggested paragraphs of an application letter?
2. When should you use the term “not applicable” on a job application?
3. How and why should you follow up with an employer after submitting a job application?
4. What are kiosks, and what do they have to do with job applications?
5. List five items that may be part of a typical background check.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Review online job applications. Do not submit a completed application, but look at the questions on the form. Does the application request any information not mentioned in this unit? Does the application require any sort of test, such as math problems for a job that requires the worker to make change?

Web Links:



Application Letter

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobsearchglossary/g/letterofapplication.htm>

Application Tips

http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_application.html

Searching for Jobs

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobapplications/qt/jobapplicationtips.htm>