Job Application Strategies

Unit: Communication Skills

Problem Area: Demonstrate Written Communication Skills

Lesson: Job Application Strategies

■ **Student Learning Objectives.** Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1 **Identify sections of an application letter.**

2 **Describe tips to complete a job application.**

3 **Explain the difference between a written and an online job application.**

■ **Resources.** The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

"Cover Letter Template," *Job Star Central.* Accessed April 8, 2010. <http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/clet-ex.php>.

Doyle, Alison. "Job Application—Job Application Form," *About.com: Job Searching.* Accessed April 9, 2010. <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/a/sampleapp.htm>.

Doyle, Alison. "Top 10 Cover Letter Tips," *About.com: Job Searching*. Accessed April 8, 2010. <http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobapplicationletters/a/applettertemplate.htm>.

Hansen, Randall S. "A Job-Seeker's Guide to Successfully Completing Job Applications," *Quintessential Careers.* Accessed April 8, 2010. <http://www.quintcareers.com/job_applications.html>.

"Job Application Quotes," *Think Exist.com.* Accessed April 9, 2010. <http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/job_application/>.

"Letter of Application," *Illinois State Board of Education.* Accessed April 9, 2010. <http://www.isbe.net/ils/career_develop/family/la_3CJ.pdf>.

■ Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

✓ Overhead or PowerPoint projector
✓ Visual(s) from accompanying master(s)
✓ Copies of sample test, lab sheet(s), and/or other items designed for duplication
✓ Materials listed on duplicated items
✓ Computers with printers and Internet access
✓ Classroom resource and reference materials

■ Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

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

■ Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare the students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. A possible approach is included here.

Tell the class the following is a famous quote by Stanley J. Randall: "The closest to perfection a person ever comes is when he fills out a job application form." Ask the class what the quote means. Facilitate a discussion of the quote to introduce the topic of print and online job applications processes.

CONTENT SUMMARY AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1: Identify sections of an application letter.

Anticipated Problem: What are the sections of an application letter?

I. An *application letter* is something used to expand the information on the application. It includes the following sections:

 A. Contact information

 1. It is necessary to use the correct name and gender of the addressee in the application letter, if known.

2. It is important to use the correct title of the person to be contacted.
3. It is essential to submit the letter to the person at the company who is respon-sible for reviewing job applications.

B. Applicant personal information

1. Name and address
2. Home and cell phone numbers
3. Email address

C. Salutation

1. Common **salutations** (formal greetings) in a professional application letter include:
   a. Dear Sir
   b. Dear Madam
2. When the exact person and/or gender is not known, the applicant may use the salutation "To Whom It May Concern."

D. First paragraph

1. It explains why the letter is being written.
2. It explains the position sought in the job application.
3. It states where the applicant found the information about the position.
4. It states any contact the applicant has at the company.

E. Second paragraph

1. It may be expressed in bullets rather than in a block format.
2. It expands on the résumé or the information in the job application.
3. It explains how someone's abilities are related to the job requirements.
4. It adds supporting statements about the applicant's abilities and experiences.

F. Last paragraph

1. It states how the applicant will follow up after submitting the job application.
2. It states the time frame for follow up; one week is common.
3. It states the type of follow up the applicant is planning to check on progress, such as:
   a. Email
   b. Phone call

Teaching Strategy: *Use VM–A and VM–B to introduce the elements and paragraphs of a typical application of letter. Assign LS–A and LS–B.*

Objective 2: Describe tips to complete a job application.

Anticipated Problem: What tips can be used to complete a job application?

II. Tips to complete a job application

  A. Gathering information

    1. The applicant should review his or her résumé and cover letter for the specific job.
    2. Phone numbers, addresses, and titles of previous employers and references will be needed.
    3. Personal information (e.g., Social Security card and driver's license) will be needed.

  B. Adapting application responses for the position

    1. Application questions should be answered honestly.
    2. "Job ended" rather than "fired from a position" is appropriate for an application.
    3. Blank spaces on a job application should be avoided. When the question does not apply or is irrelevant, the phrase **not applicable** or n/a should be used.
    4. References may be from professional and volunteer sources, depending on the application. Students and recent graduates may use teachers as references.
    5. Applicants should list skills they possess that transfer to the position on the job application.

  C. Keeping the job application appearance professional

    1. The applicant should follow all the instructions on the job application.
    2. The applicant should type or complete the job application neatly with blue or black ink.
    3. The job application and the résumé should be consistent.
    4. The application should be mailed flat by using a large enough envelope to avoid folding.
    5. The job application should be proofread for errors.
    6. The job application should be signed when required.
    7. The most recent job and education should be listed first on the application.

  D. Following up with the prospective employer

    1. It is best for the applicant to follow up one week after the submission of the application.
    2. The applicant should ask about progress on the application and when the interviews will be conducted.
    3. The applicant should request the application be kept on file after the interviews have been conducted.

Objective 3: Explain the difference between a written and an online job application.

Anticipated Problem: What is the difference between a written and an online job application?

III. Job applications: in person and online

A. Job applications help an employer screen likely candidates for job interviews. Differences between print and online application forms are:

1. Neatness: Completing a job application online can be neater if the person has poor handwriting.

2. Preparedness: Filling out a job application online requires an applicant to have all the information on hand.

3. Personal contact information: Avoiding the use of a provocative or question-able email address (e.g., "partyanimal") when submitting a job application is essential. A professional email address is necessary for all job applications.

4. Attachments via email: When attaching a letter of application or a résumé, the following guidelines should be used:

a. A letter of application should be professional and should follow formats for mailed letters of application.

b. The application and résumé should be kept in a simple, less fancy font and design than may be appropriate for a print version.

c. The letter of application should be formatted to fit one email screen.

d. The file should be sent in MS Word or as a portable document format (*pdf*). A pdf document allows most computers to process it.

5. Kiosk guidelines: Some companies use an in-store *kiosk* (a small, portable or semi-permanent booth or station used to vend goods or services) for appli-cants to complete a job application with a specific format and questions. Many kiosk-based job applications allow employers to retrieve common information from all applicants.

a. A kiosk may be a computer on a desk.

b. A kiosk may be a freestanding structure or may be attached to a wall.

c. It should allow for all applications submitted to look similar.

d. It may administer employability pre-assessments for some companies (e.g., Wal-Mart) as part of the job application process.

B. Background checks: 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:

1. Verify his or her social security number and other pertinent personal information
2. Conduct a **credit report** (a record of finances) check
3. Analyze the work history
4. Review the driving record
5. Research any criminal history

> **Teaching Strategy:** *Use VM–G to facilitate a discussion of the differences between a written job application and an online job application. Use VM–H to discuss the elements of a background check.*

■ **Review/Summary.** Use the student learning objectives to summarize the lesson. Have students explain the content associated with each objective. Student responses can be used in determining which objectives need to be reviewed or taught from a different angle.

■ **Application.** Use the included visual master(s) and lab sheet(s) to apply the information presented in the lesson.

■ **Evaluation.** Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives for the lesson. Various techniques can be used, such as student performance on the application activities. A sample written test is provided.

■ **Answers to Sample Test:**

Part One: Matching

1. b
2. g
3. e
4. f
5. a
6. d
7. c

Part Two: Short Answer

1. The content of the three suggested paragraphs of a letter of application are:
    a. First paragraph
        (1) Explains why the letter is being written

       (2) Explains the position sought in the job application.

       (3) States where the applicant found the information about the position.

       (4) States any contact the applicant has at the company.

  b. Second paragraph

       (1) Expands on the résumé or the information in the job application.

       (2) Explains how one's abilities relate to the job requirements.

       (3) Adds supporting statements about one's abilities and experiences.

  c. Last paragraph

       (1) States how one will follow up after submitting the job application.

       (2) States the time frame for follow up.

       (3) States the type of follow up the applicant is planning to check on progress of the application, such as: email or phone call

2. The five items that are typically part of a background check are:

  a. Social Security number and other pertinent personal information

  b. Credit report

  c. Work history

  d. Driving record

  e. Any criminal history

Part Three: True/False

1. F
2. F
3. F
4. F
5. T
6. T
7. T
8. T
9. F
10. T

Name _____

Job Application Strategies

▶ **Part One: Matching**

Instructions: **Match the term with the correct definition.**

a. application letter
b. background check
c. credit report
d. kiosk

e. not applicable
f. pdf
g. salutations

_____1. An inquiry that requires written permission to verify an applicant's social security number, work history, and other information

_____2. Formal greetings

_____3. Something used when a question is irrelevant

_____4. A document that allows most computers to process it

_____5. Something used to expand the information on the application

_____6. A small, portable, or semi-permanent booth or station used to vend goods or services

_____7. A record of the finances

▶ **Part Two: Short Answer**

Instructions: **Answer the following.**

1. Explain the content of the three suggested paragraphs of an application letter.

   a. First paragraph:

   b. Second paragraph:

c. Last paragraph:

2. List five items that may be part of a typical background check.

▶ **Part Three: True/False**

Instructions: **Write *T* for true or *F* for false.**

_____1. List jobs and education in the order they happened on a job application.

_____2. Follow up with the prospective employer the day after submitting a job application.

_____3. Type or complete the job application neatly with red ink.

_____4. List all skills and hobbies on the job application.

_____5. References may be from professional and volunteer sources.

_____6. Use "job ended" rather than "fired from a position."

_____7. Gather personal information (e.g., social security card and driver's license) to complete a job application.

_____8. Know the phone numbers, addresses, and titles of previous employers and references to complete a job application.

_____9. If possible, submit the letter of application to a person you know at the company.

____10. Use the correct name and gender of the addressee in the application letter, if known.

APPLICATION LETTER ELEMENTS

An application letter is often utilized to expand the information on the application.

◆ Contact information

- It is necessary to use the correct name and gender of the addressee in the application letter, if known.

- It is important to use the correct title of the person to be contacted.

- It is essential to submit the letter to the person at the company who is responsible for reviewing job applications.

◆ Applicant personal information

- Name and address
- Home and cell phone numbers
- Email address

♦ Salutation

■ Common **salutations** (formal greetings) in a professional application letter include:

● Dear Sir
● Dear Madam

■ When the exact person and/or gender is not known, the applicant may use the salutation "To Whom It May Concern."

PARAGRAPHS IN A LETTER OF APPLICATION

◆ First paragraph

- It explains why the letter is being written.
- It explains the position sought in the job application.
- It states where the applicant found the information about the position.
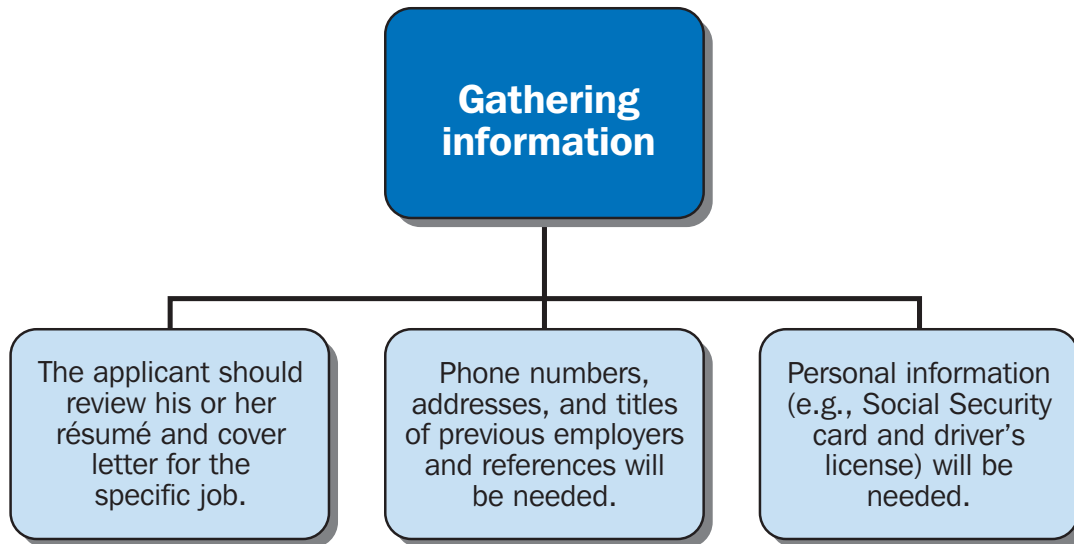- It states any contact the applicant has at the company.

◆ Second paragraph

- It may be expressed in bullets rather than in a block format.
- It expands on the résumé or the information in the job application.
- It explains how someone's abilities are related to the job requirements.
- It adds supporting statements about the applicant's abilities and experiences.

3

♦ Last paragraph

■ It states how the applicant will follow up after submitting the job application.

■ It states the time frame for follow up; one week is common.

■ It states the type of follow up the applicant is planning to check on progress, such as:

● Email
● Phone call

GATHER INFORMATION TO COMPLETE A JOB APPLICATION

Gathering information

The applicant should review his or her résumé and cover letter for the specific job.

Phone numbers, addresses, and titles of previous employers and references will be needed.

Personal information (e.g., Social Security card and driver's license) will be needed.

Fresh tips

RESPONDING TO JOB APPLICATION QUESTIONS

- ◆ Adapt the answers of the job application to the position.

- ◆ Answer questions honestly.

- ◆ Use "job ended" rather than "fired from a position."

- ◆ Leave no blank spaces on a job application.

- ◆ When an application question does not apply, use "not applicable" or n/a.

- ◆ References may be from professional and volunteer sources.

- ◆ Students and recent graduates may use teachers as references.

- ◆ List skills that transfer to the position listed on the job application.
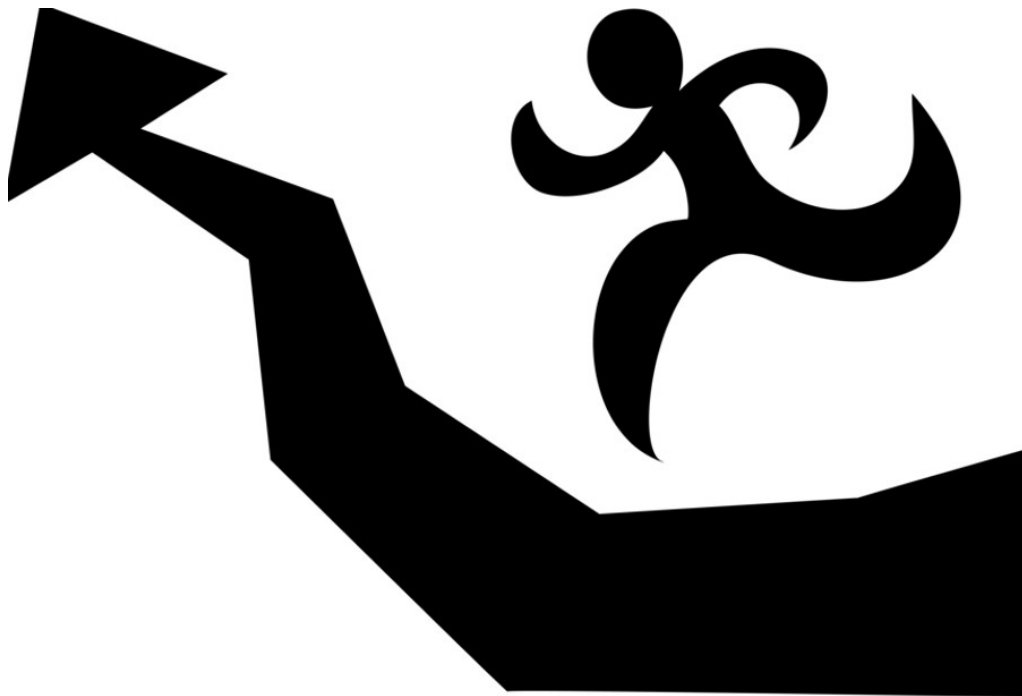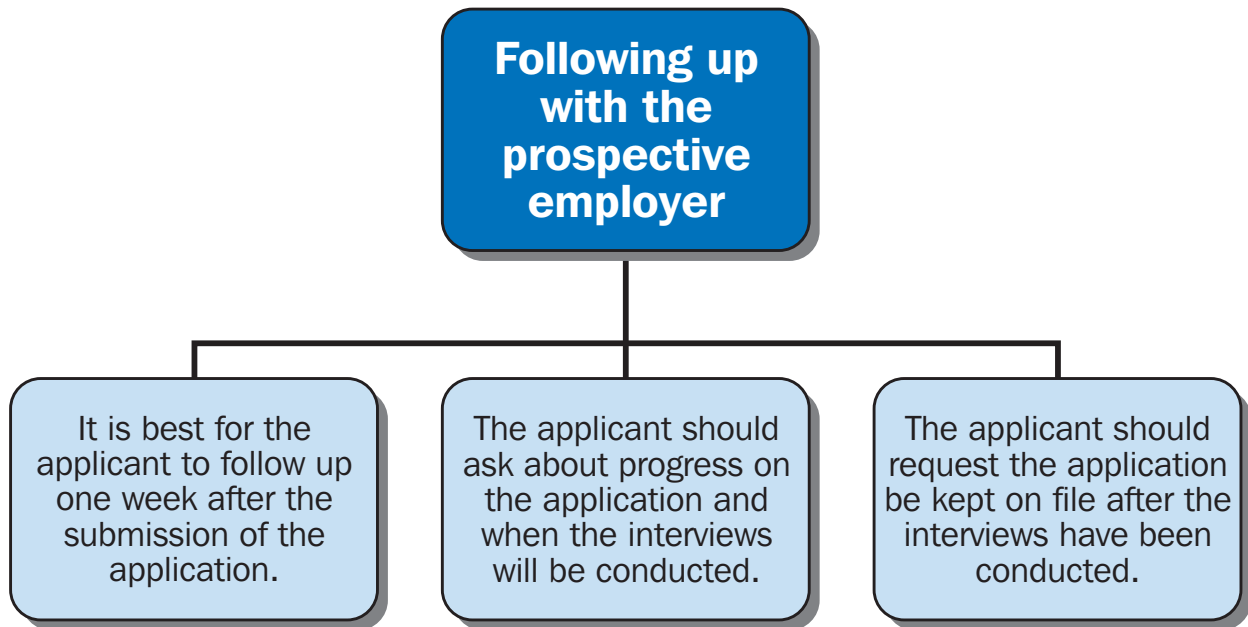
CREATE A PROFESSIONAL LOOKING JOB APPLICATION

♦ Follow all the instructions on the job application.

♦ Type or complete the job application neatly with blue or black ink.

♦ Keep the job application and résumé information consistent.

♦ Mail the job application flat by using a large enough envelope to avoid folding it.

♦ Proofread.

♦ Sign the job application, if required.

♦ List the most recent job and education first on the application.

FOLLOW UP THE SUBMISSION OF A JOB APPLICATION

Following up with the prospective employer

| It is best for the applicant to follow up one week after the submission of the application. | The applicant should ask about progress on the application and when the interviews will be conducted. | The applicant should request the application be kept on file after the interviews have been conducted. |

ONLINE AND KIOSK JOB APPLICATION PROCESSES

Job applications help employers screen prospective employees and help determine who receives a job interview.

- ◆ Neatness counts.

- ◆ Preparedness is important.

- ◆ Personal contact information: Avoid the use of a provocative or questionable email address.

- ◆ Attachments sent via email should be pdf documents.

- ◆ Kiosk-based job applications allow employers to retrieve common information from all applicants, including employability pre-assessments.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

Following the submission of a job application online or at a kiosk, a background check is often completed and a summary report is then sent to the employer. A background check requires a written permission from an applicant to:

♦ Verify his or her social security number and other pertinent personal information

♦ Conduct a credit report check

♦ Analyze the work history

♦ Review the driving record

♦ Research any criminal history

Name _____

Write a Letter of Application

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice writing an application letter.

Objectives

1. Identify the elements of a letter of application.
2. Evaluate the letter of application for effectiveness.

Materials

♦ lab sheet
♦ writing utensil
♦ paper

Procedure

1. Brainstorm some of your ideas regarding an application letter. Then locate the template for a letter of application at the following Web site: http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobapplicationletters/a/applettertemplate.htm.
2. Follow the template guidelines to complete an application letter.
3. Determine a real (or create a fictional) company name, address, and contact person.
4. Use your personal information, abilities, and experiences.
5. Select a job position you may consider in the future.
6. Research the job requirements for the position you selected.
7. Draft a letter of application.
8. Proofread the letter for typographical and formatting errors and for effectiveness.
9. Have two other students proofread the letter for errors and for effectiveness.
10. Make any needed edits and print a second copy.
11. Submit the application letter to the instructor for feedback.
12. Make any necessary edits and print a final copy. Submit it to your instructor.

Write a Professional and an Informal Letter

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to write two letters. One letter is to the Human Resources Department, and the second letter is an informal one explaining application letter information to a friend.

Objectives

1. Write a professional letter.

2. Write an informal letter.

3. Compare and contrast a professional and an informal letter.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ paper

♦ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Locate and print the "Letter of Application" at
   http://www.isbe.net/ils/career_develop/family/la_3CJ.pdf.

2. The Web site includes:

   a. Procedures
   b. An "Application Planning Sheet"

    c. A rubric for a letter to the human resources person

    d. A rubric for an "Informal (Friendly) Letter"

3. Follow the instructions in the procedures for each letter.

    a. Write a professional letter of application by following the cover letter template at http://jobstar.org/tools/resume/ctemp.php.

    b. Then adjust the tone and format to write an informal (friendly) letter explaining to a friend how to write a letter of application.

4. Complete the "Letter of Application Planning Sheet."

5. Evaluate both letters (using the rubrics) and make any needed corrections.

6. Share your letters with two other students; ask them to proofread your letters. Make any necessary corrections.

7. Submit the letters, planning sheet, and rubrics to your instructor.

Practice Completing a Paper Job Application

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to practice filling out job application forms.

Objectives

1. Gather information needed to complete a job application.

2. Complete a job application form.

Materials

- ◆ lab sheet
- ◆ paper
- ◆ pen with blue or black ink
- ◆ pencil

Procedure

1. Access and read the short article at http://www.quintcareers.com/job_applications.html.

2. Open and print the four-page "Sample Job Application." The sample form is located at the bottom of the article. For the purposes of drafting the document and obtaining feedback, you should print two copies.

3. Read the job application, and list any information you need to gather before completing the form.

   a. Résumé
   b. Social Security number

  c. Driver's license

  d. References' contact information

  e. Other: _____

4. Draft the application, using a pencil to enter data.

5. Proofread your application and make any necessary changes.

6. Ask two classmates to review your application.

7. Then fill out the job application forms neatly using black or blue ink. Follow all the instructions on the application and use the tips discussed in class.

8. Submit the completed job application to your instructor.

Gather Information to Fill Out an Online or Kiosk Job Application

Purpose

The purpose of this activity is to complete a sample job application form before applying for a job online.

Objectives

1. Identify possible answers to complete the sample online job application form.

2. Evaluate the usefulness of completing a sample form before applying online or using a kiosk.

Materials

♦ lab sheet

♦ paper

♦ writing utensil

Procedure

1. Download and print the sample job application form at http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobappsamples/a/sampleapp.htm. For the purposes of drafting the document and getting feedback, print two copies of the application.

2. Read the application and determine which information must be gathered prior to filling out an online or kiosk application.

3. Answer the following questions about your data gathering:

   a. What information did you need to gather before filling out the sample form?

b. In what ways might your job application be different if it were completed online?

c. List the information you would take to a kiosk to complete a job application.

4. Draft the application using a pencil to enter your data.

5. Proofread your application and make any needed changes.

6. Ask two classmates to review your application.

7. Then fill out the job application forms neatly using black or blue ink. Follow all the instructions on the application, and use the tips discussed in class.

8. Submit the completed job application to the instructor. Complete the job application form.