

# APPLICATION FORM

## SELF-HELP PACK

*A self-help pack for adults who want to complete application forms successfully*

*Produced by the IAG Gateway at Connexions West of England*

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# **APPLICATION FORMS**

Application forms can seem a real nuisance. They take hours to complete and often ask for information which is in your carefully prepared CV.

## **Why do companies want you to complete an application form?**

- Application forms provide information in a standard format which can easily be compared.
- They can ask for information not usually included in a CV.
- They can discourage those who are not seriously interested in the job because of the time involved in completing them.
- A good application form can get you an interview even if you are not the most qualified candidate.
- Selection panels usually use the person specification as criteria to short-list for interview and the application form gives you an opportunity to convince them that you will add value to their company.

## **What do employers want to know about you?**

Employers are looking for evidence that you have the skills they are seeking. Carefully read the employer's job description/profile and match your experience to the skills and knowledge they require. You should use a variety of examples and you can draw on evidence from all aspects of your life if relevant.

In addition, they want to know:

- Why you want the job
- And that you want to do the job well for **their** company

The big, blank box (often called personal statement) on application forms is an opportunity to market yourself powerfully.

## **Research**

1. Read all the items enclosed with the application form: the job description, the person specification and the background information on the company.
2. Find out about the company you are applying to by looking on their website or asking questions.
3. Think about examples from your own experience which meet the job requirements and use these to demonstrate your skills and qualities.
4. Photocopy the application form before you start so you can complete a draft version.
5. Have all this information ready and your CV for reference before you sit down to start the application form.

# **COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM**

## **GETTING STARTED**

1. Read the application form through noting any specific instructions.
2. Write clearly and neatly, in block capitals if you have to and in black ink if this is specified. The personal statement could be done on a word processor and added as a separate sheet to the form.
3. Answer all the questions. Write 'not applicable' for questions that are not relevant to you.
4. Write concisely, avoiding repetition.
5. Try to use key words from the job & person specification to show your suitability. The clues are there.

**Examples of good words to use:** achieved, active, developed, evidence, experience, impact, individual, involved, planning and transferable skills.

**Examples of words not to use:** always, awful, bad, fault, hate, mistake, never, nothing, panic and problems.

## **PREPARING YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT**

Most application forms have a large blank box, sometimes a whole page, asking for additional information to support your application:

This is the most important part of the form and gives you the opportunity to stand out from the crowd and convince the employer that they should interview you. Here's your chance to provide evidence that you meet their criteria by giving specific examples of your achievements. Use the following formula to make this easier:

- S** – situation (briefly set the scene)
- T** – task (what was the task you were doing)
- A** – action (what action did you take)
- R** – result (did you successfully achieve the task)

Don't assume that the recruiter knows anything about you – you have to tell them about yourself and this includes all skills relevant to the post even those gained through leisure, family or voluntary activities. It should include a statement of your motivation for applying for this particular position.

If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper and write '*continued on an additional sheet*', on the form. IF THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FOR LABELLING EXTRA SHEETS - write your name and the title of the job you are applying for at the top of each one. Please note that some employers are very particular in the way that additional sheets are presented so please read the guidance notes carefully before starting this. There may also be a limit on the number of sheets that you can attach often a maximum of one sheet of A4 is set.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT CONTENT**

Say why you are applying for the job  
I am applying for the job of ..... because .....

Outline your skills, experience and qualities and support with STAR examples.

*The skills I have are ...*

*These skills were gained when.....(examples of your specific experience)*

*I also have experience in...*

If there is a person specification make sure you show how your skills and experience meet those in the specification.

Sometimes using bullet points or sub-headings helps to make your statement clearer and easier to read.

Address any gaps by saying that you like to learn.

*- I enjoy learning new skills and being given fresh challenges*

*- Personal and professional development is very important to me and I would be happy to learn new skills and improve my knowledge.*

Close with a general statement such as...

*I hope that you will find me a suitable applicant for the position of... and would welcome the opportunity to discuss my application further with you.*

## **CHOOSING REFEREES**

You will normally be including a current/most recent employer or tutor. Always ask the person you nominate as a referee before including them on the form so they can be prepared if contacted by the recruiter.

## **ONLINE FORMS**

Treat these as you would a hard copy but be aware that the document may be electronically scanned for keywords for short-listing so it is even more important to ensure that you use phrases from the job & person specification.

## **FINAL CHECK**

Always carry out a final check for spelling, grammar, sense and presentation. Ensure that the finished version shows you in your best light. Get a person you trust to read it through for you. Don't forget to include any additional information or certificates which are requested. Sign and date it and put it unfolded in an envelope. Keep a copy for reference.

## SUMMARY

### TOP TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION FORM



- ✓ Complete your form in plenty of time – don't do it the night before the deadline!
- ✓ Read everything you can about the job & company.
- ✓ Have a copy of your CV, the job advert and job description handy for reference.
- ✓ Photocopy the original form. You can then make any mistakes on a draft version where it doesn't matter. Write in pencil on the draft so you can correct your mistakes or try different things. Only complete the original form when you are certain every detail is correct.
- ✓ Read the form carefully before starting and note instructions.
- ✓ Write neatly and clearly – block capitals are often best. Be concise and avoid repetition.
- ✓ Answer every question. If the question does not apply to you, write 'Not Applicable' or N/A.
- ✓ Address the points that are outlined in the person specification – this is what the employer is looking for.
- ✓ If you need more space, use a separate sheet of paper and write '*continued on an additional sheet*', on the form. Label the separate sheets according to instructions or with your name and post applied for.
- ✓ Keep a copy of your completed application form for yourself. It will help you prepare for an interview and save time when filling in other application forms.
- ✓ Check the form thoroughly and don't forget to sign and date it.
- ✓ .Don't forget to include any additional information or certificates which are requested.
- ✓ Put the form and covering letter unfolded in an A4 envelope and make sure you post or deliver it in time to meet the deadline.