



APPLICATION FORMS

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A compilation organized
by TQM Consulting in association with
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Application Forms – General Guidelines

Application forms, though not used as much in today's workplace, are still an important job search tool that employers use. Some employers require an application form as the first step in the selection process. They are used to compliment your resume or cover letter and allow the employer to gather specific information they need as well as keep consistency in format to "screen" applicants. Companies may receive hundreds of applications each year, so to make yours stand out, you need to do everything possible to create the "perfect" application. The following are some general guidelines for completing these sometimes tricky forms.

Visual Impact¹

- Fill out the application neatly with no errors in grammar or spelling.
- Print clearly with no abbreviations.
- Use black or blue ink.
- Respond to all questions possible.
- Use "N/A" (not applicable) if the section does not apply to you.

Follow Directions

- Read the entire application before you complete it.
- Pay close attention to what is being asked and how you respond.
- Read and honour sections that say "Do Not Write Below This Line" or "Office Use Only".

Be Positive

- During your job search you want to present a positive, honest picture of yourself.
- Look for ways to show you are the right person for the job.
- Think of what you would look for in an employee, if you were the employer.

Be Honest

- You must be truthful on an application form. The information you provide may become part of your permanent employment record. False information can become the basis for dismissal. Only provide information the employer is seeking or is necessary to sell your qualifications.

¹ Taken from the Creative Job Search website (<http://amby.com/worksite/cjs/cjsbook/tools2.htm>, accessed Aug/08). The information has been slightly altered by the Kamloops Work Search Centre staff to improve readability.

Important Sections & How to Respond

Qualifications

Many applications have limited space to display your skills, experience and accomplishments. Increase your chances of gaining an interview by carefully selecting what you will include on the application. Display your qualifications that meet the specific needs of the job. Advance knowledge of the company, its products or services and especially the skills needed to do the job will help you choose the appropriate information to include.

Position Desired

When answering the question “Position Desired”, never leave it blank or use the responses “Any” or “Open”. Employers will not try to figure out where you fit in their organization. If the job is an advertised job, or if you are looking for a specific position, enter that job title. When you are not applying for a specific position, state the name of the department in which you wish to work. If you are interested in more than one job, fill out more than one application.

Salary Requirements

When asked about salary requirements, it is best to give a salary range or to respond with “negotiable”. Use one of these responses even if you know the wage. Remember you never know what the future holds and you could negotiate a higher salary. Questions about salary may be “knockout” questions used to reduce the number of applicants.

Reason for Leaving

Choose your words carefully when responding to this question. Some responses carry negative connotations and may provide a swift way for the employer to eliminate your application from consideration. Make sure to give a positive response.

Illegal Questions

Applications may contain questions that are tricky or even illegal. These may include questions about age, gender, disabilities, health, marital status, children, race and arrests or convictions. You need to decide how you will respond. If the question doesn't bother you, answer it. If it does, you may want to use N/A or a dash (-). However, beware you may get screened out by having too many unanswered responses.

Tips for Completing Application Forms²

The following are suggestions on how to fill out application forms:

- If possible, consider taking the application form home. At home, you can fill it out where you are comfortable and able to take your time.
- Bring a pen so you don't need to borrow one to fill out the form. Use correction fluid, such as Wite-Out®, for fixing minor errors. Be sure to use it sparingly.
- Write out responses using a separate sheet of paper before completing the application. An alternative is to obtain a second application.
- Double check grammar, spelling and content before handing it in.
- Be prepared to fill out the application form on the spot if asked. Some employers want to see that you can complete the application form on your own. Also be prepared for an on-the-spot interview.
- Conduct a follow-up call in a week or so to check on the status of your application.

Common Information Requested on Application Forms

Personal Information - Name, address, city, province, phone or contact number, social insurance number

Education - Schools/colleges attended, degrees/diplomas, graduation dates

Position Applied for - Title of the job you are applying for (hours/days available to work, when you can start work, etc.)

Employment Information - Names, addresses, phone number of previous employers, supervisor's name, dates of employment, salary expectations and reason for leaving

References - List of 3-4 references (business references usually preferred) including full names, job titles/relationship, addresses and phone numbers

Resumes – Attach a current resume to your application even though much of the information may be the same.

² Taken from the About.com website (http://jobsearch.about.com/od/jobapplications/a/jobapplication_2.htm accessed Aug/08). This information has been altered by Kamloops Work Search Centre Staff to improve readability.

On-Line Job Applications

With many more businesses having their own websites and regularly using modern technology, it is more common for employers to accept resumes, cover letters and application forms on-line. Some employers only accept on-line applications. (See our handout “*The Online Job Search*” for more detailed information). On-line applications have their benefits:

- Ability to review detailed job opportunities
- File an electronic copy of your resume or cover letter
- Apply for jobs posted on their site
- Request automatic e-mails delivered to you whenever a job matching your skills and interests becomes available
- Change any information that needs updating including address, phone number, experience and education.

On-Line Via Job Sites

Websites such as Monster, Thompson-Okanagan Job Shop, Job Shark and hundreds of others allow you to post your resume on their site. You either fill out a profile or create a resume using their resume “wizards”. Some sites will let you upload an existing resume as well.

On-Line Via Company Websites

This information is usually located in the “About Us” or “Career” section of the employer’s website. Setting up a profile, filling out an on-line application form, or sending your resume/cover letter to them, allows you to gain access to jobs that may not be advertised in the newspaper or Job Bank. It also allows you to do some preliminary research on the company, as well as gather any information needed for an interview such as company background and mission statement.

On-Line Application Forms

Many companies allow you to fill out an application form on-line. It looks like a regular application form except you fill it out on the computer and send it electronically. This method usually allows you to attach or send an electronic resume with your application form.

E-mailing Your Resume/Cover Letter

This method allows you to instantly send your resume/cover letter to employers. Either write your cover letter in the body of the e-mail message, or attach a copy of your documents in Word or RTF format (never use obscure programs).

Things to Watch When Applying On-Line³

- 1. Unprofessional e-mail addresses**
Whether it's the candidate for a management position who lists his e-mail address as cuddlygiggles@hotmail.com or the applicant for almost any position who writes from worksucks@yahoo.com, an e-mail address can and be held against you if it conveys an image contrary to what a company is looking for.
- 2. Always complete the "subject" line**
The subject line helps get your e-mail through to the right person so you can be considered for the right job. If the job listing doesn't say what to put in the subject line, use the job title.
- 3. Using obscure software**
Always attach a Word document or an RTF (Rich Text Format) file that can be read on most types of computers.
- 4. Ignoring instructions**
For example, don't paste your entire resume into the first box on the form then say "see above" in the boxes that follow. The employer may be looking for specific information in each part of the form.
- 5. Trusting the spell check to catch typos**
Make sure you read your document twice before sending it.

Note: The disadvantage of electronic resumes and application forms is that you don't actually get to meet the hiring manager or person in charge of hiring. You don't get the chance to show them your bubbly personality or charming smile. That is why it is so important to be aware of how you are filling out electronic application forms or sending your resume/cover letters electronically.

As well, some employers prefer that you fill out an application form in person. Kamloops employers who follow this procedure include Wal-Mart, Toys R Us and Pollard Banknote, just to name a few.

³ This information was taken from the MSN Career Builder website (www.msn.careerbuilder.com). Accessed Aug/08