Completing application forms

One of the ways employers will assess your suitability for the job is to ask you to complete an application form. Although many firms now have an online application form, some may still ask you to complete a paper form. Whether online or on paper there are a few basic rules to ensure you get it right.

- **Always** read through the form carefully and take notice of what they are asking. Never assume or put in information that is not asked for
- Make a rough copy of what is being asked and write this out either by hand or on the computer. Make sure you have all the correct dates for any exams, work experience or part-time work
- With a paper application – look to see if they want a certain colour of pen, many will ask for the form to be completed in **black pen** and may also request **BLOCK CAPITALS**
- Photocopy the form and fill in a draft copy before copying it onto the form you send
- With an online application print off a copy if you can. Some will be in Word or similar format; others will be an electronic image with boxes. Watch you don't get timed out on these
- Make sure you check the closing date and post in good time.

Making the right impression

- Make sure your spelling is correct and there are no crossings out. Bad spelling gives a poor impression
- Ask someone to check the rough copy for you, before you fill in the final copy
- Write clearly and neatly and make sure you keep the form clean
- Don't leave sections blank. If the question isn't relevant, you can either write 'not applicable' or put 'N/A' in that section. If you leave it blank the employer may think you have just missed it
- Double-check that any telephone numbers you have given to be contacted on (either for a mobile or a home phone) are correct
- Don't use 'text speak', it is not appropriate for an application form
- Check your mobile voicemail to make sure it is suitable for employers to hear
- Finally – make sure your email address gives the right impression; some that may appear funny for use with friends may give the employer a poor image of you.

    Most application forms are divided up into sections covering the different types of information they require for selecting candidates for interview. Let's look at these sections in turn.

Personal details

- You will be asked to give your full name, address with postcode, phone number, mobile phone number and email address. You should not be asked for your age on the application form
- You may be asked to add a job reference number - this should be on the advert, or job description.

Education and qualifications

- When you are asked to list your school, you will only need to write down the secondary school. Make sure you put down the full address
- There will be a section for you to write down your subjects and the grades you have achieved or are predicted to achieve. Remember to include all your grades. Employers want to know all the subjects you have studied, even if they are below grade C.

Employment

- List all experience, paid or unpaid including work experience
- Include any voluntary work that can also be evidence of the skills you have acquired
- If you are asked to describe your duties, make sure you can bring out the references to key skills as these are important to any job. Remember the key skills are literacy, numeracy, IT skills and problem solving.

Additional and extra information

This section can be phrased in a number of ways so make sure you read it carefully before completing it. Some may just ask why you want this position, whereas others will ask you to explain what you can bring to the job.

- Look carefully at the job description – what skills are they seeking? Now make a rough list of all the skills you have learnt from your various school subjects, or work experience/part-time work
- When mentioning any employment experiences don't just give the job title but explain what skills the experience taught you. For example serving customers developed your communication skills.

Remember that this is where you can sell yourself. You need to explain to the employer why you are the best person for the job.

References

You will be asked to provide the names and contact details of two referees. These are people who can support your application by explaining why you are suitable for the job. One should be from your school (a tutor of your head of year), and the second can be someone who knows you personally, but not a member of your immediate family or a friend. You must always ask the person before putting their name on a form.

Before you send the application form off

- Take a copy of the application form. If you are invited for an interview you will be able to read it through before your interview
- Make sure you have an envelope that is big enough to avoid folding the form. This can make it look messy
- Make sure you address the envelope correctly and use the correct amount of postage.