JOB APPLICATIONS

Most people are familiar with job applications. Years ago, all job applications were simply printed forms on which job seekers wrote their names, addresses, and phone numbers, along with summaries of their education and previous experience. Today, employers use either printed forms or online forms.

Paper Job Application Forms: Some small employers still use printed forms, which you can obtain at the employer's office or download from its website. Many downloadable applications are in a type of plain document format ("PDF") that can be completed on a computer, but some downloaded forms must be completed by hand.

Here are two important tips for completing an application by hand. First, be sure to ask the employer for two copies of the blank application form, or print two copies of a blank downloaded form. You will be filling out the application form with an ink pen, and it is very easy to make mistakes, so it may be handy to have a blank backup form. If you make a mistake and need to start over, be sure to use a copy of the blank backup form, and keep the original blank form in case you need another backup.

Also, if you are given an application form at the employer's office, don't complete it right there unless the employer asks that you do so. Instead, thank the person who handed it to you, and then take the form home or to someplace where you can complete it privately. When you have filled out the application, make a copy to keep.

It is helpful to have some time and space when completing an application form by hand. For example, you might need to look up addresses or phone numbers of previous employers, or you might want to get someone's advice about how to respond to a question. You will also probably need two other documents: your resume, which you might need to help ensure that you are completing the application accurately, and a cover letter, which you should attach to the completed application form before mailing or taking it to the employer.

But sometimes you might be asked to complete a job application at an employer's office, and if the opportunity is unexpected, you might not have a resume with you. To be ready for this type of situation, download and print a Pocket Job Application from the PITTworks website. Then complete it, fold it up to the size of a business card, and carry it with you so you won't have to rely on your memory for all the details about your education and past jobs.

Online Job Application Forms: Most employers today use online applications. These call for the same information as printed forms, but they are filled out using a computer and keyboard rather than a pen. If you need to improve your computer skills or learn how to type on a keyboard, please consider taking one of the Basic Computer Skills classes offered through Pitt

Community College's Human Resources Development program, or one of the free classes listed on the PITTworks calendar or at the Goodwill Community Foundation's Learn Free - Computers.

Just as with a printed application, it is usually helpful to have a resume you can refer to when completing an online application. Many online applications also offer the opportunity to upload a resume and cover letter. Here's a tip: Before uploading, save your documents as PDFs, which are more likely to retain their proper formatting than uploaded Microsoft Word documents. And just as with printed applications, keep a paper copy of your online application if possible.

After submitting an online job application, many employers ask supplemental questions. These may include a few questions about training and experience, which the employer uses to screen out people who do not meet the job's minimum qualifications. But many employers require applicants to complete longer assessments containing a hundred or more supplemental questions. These are typically timed tests designed to evaluate applicants' honesty, reliability, and problem solving skills. Some of these long assessments can be a little intimidating. But as with all your job search communications, be honest while still being careful to put your best foot forward.

More tips on completing job applications can be found at GCF Learn Free - Job Applications (gcflearnfree.org/jobapplications/).

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