



How to Complete an Application Form

Whitley Academy Careers Advice

Employers receive countless job application forms to sift through - to show you're perfect for the role and get an interview, you'll need to demonstrate personality and confidence.

While for some jobs you will be asked to send just a CV and cover letter, many graduate roles require you to fill in an application form instead.

You'll need to complete most job application forms online via the company's website, but paper forms are still accepted in some cases.

Before you start

When you find a job, you'd like to apply for, don't start filling in the application form straight away. Take some time to prepare, as this will make the task much easier.

Gather together all the information that you'll need, including details of your academic achievements, employment history and contact information for your referees.

You'll make a great first impression if you do your research - find out the aims of the company you're applying for, the sector they operate in and who their main competitors are. Browsing their social media channels is a good place to start.

Study the job description so that you can refer back to the specific skills and qualities that the employer is looking for as you complete the form.

Finally, read the instructions carefully to ensure that you complete the correct sections of the form and know when the deadline is.

What to include on an application form?

The application form should make the employer want to meet you to find out more and demonstrate your skills. Typical sections of an application form include:

- **Personal information**
 - Give basic details, such as name and email address.
- **Educational background**
 - Provide information on your academic achievements, including the institutions you've attended, courses taken and qualifications gained.
- **Work experience**
 - List your employment history and describe your main duties and responsibilities in each role, emphasising those most closely related to the job you're applying for.
- **Competency-based questions**
 - Give specific examples of times when you've demonstrated the skills required for the role.
 - Avoid being vague, and don't waste space writing about skills you have that aren't relevant - see example questions and answers for help.
- **Personal statement**
 - Write a well-structured, well-argued case that you are the right person for the job, again referring to the person specification set out in the advert.

Don't be afraid to sell yourself. Demonstrate your passion for the company or job and any past achievements you can relate to the role. When writing your answers, always consider what skills employers want and how you can show that you have them.

Most application forms will also require you to provide details of at least two people who can provide references. You may sometimes be asked to attach a CV and cover letter as well.

Never lie on your job application form. Not only is this dishonest, but there can be more serious consequences - for example, altering your classification from a 2:2 to a 2:1 is considered degree fraud and could result in a prison sentence.

Style tips

Refining your writing style will improve the quality of your application. Employers are looking for confident applicants who can convince them of their capabilities - demonstrate your suitability by giving short, to the point and positive answers.

You should also:

- use power verbs such as transformed, delivered, achieved and inspired
- choose descriptive words like effective, consistent, determined and adaptable
- focus on answering the questions and avoid waffling or being too vague
- select appropriate examples of your achievements from past experience
- demonstrate enthusiasm for the role
- ensure your spelling and grammar is correct.

Ask somebody else, such as a careers adviser, parent or friend, to read through your application form. A second pair of eyes will help pick out errors that you may not have spotted.

Disclosing personal information

You're not obliged to give details of your age, ethnicity, gender, religion or sexual orientation on an application form, and shouldn't be asked for them. Only provide information that you feel will support your application. However, you might be asked to provide these details on a confidential equal opportunities form.

Usually the last page of an application, or completely separate, this form is used solely for monitoring the employer's commitment to equality and diversity. It shouldn't be seen by the people involved in recruiting for the role or used in the selection process.

Apply for jobs online

You'll complete the majority of job application forms online. On most employers' websites registering your details means you can save your work as you go, meaning you don't have to finish the form in one sitting.

Typing your answers into a word processor, before copying and pasting them into the application form, is easier than typing directly into the web browser. You'll need to double-check your formatting as you copy and paste - for instance, if you've gone over the word count, the online form may simply cut off the ends of your answers - but going about your application this way means you won't risk losing your progress if your logged-in session times out.

Print the completed application form out and read it through before you submit, as it's much easier to spot spelling and grammatical errors on a printed page rather than on screen.

Finally, ensure that you have attached any requested documents, such as your CV, and click submit to send your application. You should receive email confirmation that your form has been received.