



Filling Out Job Applications

Even under the best of circumstances, job hunting is a stressful proposition. You're bound to fill out countless applications, so here's how to reduce the stress and get it down to a science.

- 1) Have your basic information ready.** Most companies will ask you to complete an application form, whether or not you have a résumé. When you fill out the form completely and neatly, that's a reflection of the work they can expect from you. Standard questions will include previous employment, schooling and references. You'll be asked to list special training and certifications. To save time and prevent errors, write down critical information beforehand, such as dates of employment, names of supervisors, addresses and phone numbers of past employers—and take it with you.
- 2) Prepare for specific questions.** If the form asks for your areas of interest, this is a good place to spotlight your specific talents, volunteer involvement, continuing education, awards and internships. If you were in the military service, emphasize the duties you performed that relate to the job for which are applying.
- 3) Be selective on what you include.** There are several questions that no employer has the right to have on an application. For example, civil rights legislation has barred questions on race, color, gender, age, religion and national origin. Marital status, number of children or questions about your private life should not be asked on an application either. If any of these questions appear, simply leave it blank. Questions concerning your medical history are inappropriate on an application unless they are directly related to the job for which you are applying. You may answer these if you wish, but be careful of divulging too much information.
- 4) Honesty is always the best policy.** Don't ever falsify your application. You might be tempted to stretch the truth a bit here or there, and almost every employer will expect a little fluff from applicants, but stick to the facts to make your case. If asked for the **reason you left** a job, use positive phrases like: "to take a job with more responsibility," "moved," "seasonal," "business closed," "job or contract ended," "temporary work," "laid off," "reorganization," "returned to school," "or "career change." Avoid negative words like "fired," "quit," "absenteeism," or "tardiness."

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