

We all know how confusing filling in job applications can be but it is worthwhile spending time on them as this or your CV may get you the job. Remember badly completed application forms will end up in the bin. So it is important to get it right.

Research the company you are applying to and make sure you have read the job description in depth so you can adapt your application to the job you're applying for.

Before you start

- Make sure where possible you get a few photocopies of the application form so you can practice what you are going to write and also your handwriting. Local libraries and post offices have photocopiers and will charge a small amount per sheet.
- Use a good quality pen that is not going to run out halfway through or smudge easily. Try to use BLACK ink.
- Before writing on the copied application forms jot down notes on scrap paper.

During the form filling

- Doesn't use correction fluid for mistakes; simply put a clear line through the error.
- Don't rush.
- Don't have any distractions when filling in the form.
- Never leave blank spaces on the application form when you are required to complete all sections.

Once completed

- Ask a member of your family or a friend to check the completed application form
- Double check the form for spelling mistakes and errors
- Always retain a photocopy of your completed application form
- Never send additional information such as supporting statements unless the employer specifically requests them.
- Never submit your form uncompleted or blank with a "Refer to enclosed CV" note, you can however if you see fit send your CV as an extra.
- Equal opportunity monitoring forms are usually one-page documents which require details of ethnicity, age, number of dependents etc. The form is a legal requirement for public and community sector organisations, as well as large corporations with quality standards policies.

Useful websites:

www.thebigchoice.com,
www.coaching-life.co.uk,
www.netcomposites.com
www.bournemouth.ac.uk/careers

Key questions

What if I am applying for more than one vacancy from the same employer and have received two recruitment packs. Should I complete just one application form and send a copy for the other vacancy to save time?

Do not try to cut corners. If the employer has sent you two recruitment packs with different job descriptions and person specifications you are expected to complete separate application forms for each vacancy.

How much information must I provide on previous employment?

There are no rules on how far back you go into your employment history. Normally, you state the last ten years of your work experience, giving details of your job titles, responsibilities etc. In some instances, jobs more than ten years ago might have far more relevance. Summarise more recent ones and elaborate on relevant jobs.

What if I do not wish to reveal past salary details or health issues, as some employers request?

These are not trick questions. Employers who require full details on health, past convictions or even origins of birth, are usually governed by legislation and have to ask these questions.

What if the form does not have enough space to write my answers and the employer states that I should not submit additional pages?

You will have to follow the employer's instructions and ensure the answers are contained in the space provided. Select key elements you want to highlight in relation to the Person Specification / Job Descriptions.

Must I submit additional information with my application?

If the employer gives you the option to submit a supporting statement, make sure it is no more than two/three A4 pages, typed and labeled according to the employer's instructions. If the employer requires evidence of professional training or education, send photocopied documents, not your originals.

Must I enclose a cover letter with the application form?

More often than not, you will submit a cover letter, even if the employer does not request one. This is normal recruitment protocol. Your cover letter should simply quote the reference number, details of the position you are applying for with the usual salutations. Some employers might request more information, such as reasons you are applying, or salary expectations. Read the advertisement or instructions in your Recruitment Pack carefully to construct the appropriate cover letter. Alternatively, if the employer does not require a cover letter, it is not detrimental if you choose not to submit one.

BEST Training & NextStep provides information and advice on work and learning to adults 20+ across Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.

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