

1: Job Search Guide / Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development

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This article is designed to provide you with the critical information you need to successfully complete a job application. Should filling out an application be a stressful event? When are job applications used by employers? For many part-time, entry-level, and blue collar jobs, employers use applications to screen potential employees; they use the information from the applications to determine who they are going to call for a job interview. For other types of jobs, applications are simply the paperwork the Human Resources department requires of all job applicants; employers often ask you to complete an application after they have invited you for an interview. Why do employers use job applications? Many employers use applications as a way of standardizing the information they obtain from all job-seekers, including some things that you would not normally put on your resume. Your goal is to complete the application as completely and honestly as you can – all the time remembering that the application is a key marketing tool for you in the job-hunting process. Remember that some employers will use your application as a basis for deciding whether to call you for an interview. So, armed with this knowledge, here are the ins and outs for job-seekers when it comes to successfully completing job applications. You probably will also need addresses and phone numbers of previous employers, as well as starting and ending salaries for each previous job. Read and follow instructions carefully. Always take a few minutes to review the entire application. Some applications ask for information differently – and all have specific spaces in which you are expected to answer questions. Think of the application as your first test in following instructions. Complete the application as neatly as possible. Remember how important handwriting was in school? Neatness and legibility count; the application is a reflection of you. Tailor your answers to the job you are seeking. Just as with your resume and cover letter, you want to focus your education and experience to the job at hand. Give details of skills and accomplishments, and avoid framing your experiences in terms of mere duties and responsibilities. Show why you are more qualified than other applicants for the position. Include experience from all sources, including previous jobs, school, clubs and organizations, and volunteer work. One of the reasons employers have you complete an application is because they want the same information from all job applicants. As with any job search correspondence, never offer negative information. Your goal with the application is to get an interview. Providing negative information such as being fired from a job just gives the employer a reason not to interview you. Always answer questions truthfully. For example, many applications ask your reason for leaving your last job. Do not add specific salary requirements. It is way too early in the job-seeking process to allow yourself to be identified by a specific salary request. Employers want to see that there are people who will provide objective information about you to them. Pick your references carefully – and make sure you ask if they are willing to be a reference for you before you list them. Where do you get references? From past employers, to teachers, to family friends. Most young job-seekers have a mix of professional and character references, while more experienced job-seekers focus on professional references who can speak of your skills and accomplishments. Keep your application consistent with your resume. Make sure all dates, names, titles, etc. Proofread your application before submitting it. Be prepared for all kinds of job applications, from simple one-page applications to multi-page applications. Some will be clean and crisp copies while others will appear to be photocopied a few too many times. Regardless, take your time and do the best you can, always keeping in the back of your mind the goal of the application – getting you an interview. Hansen is founder of Quintessential Careers , one of the oldest and most comprehensive career development sites on the Web, as well CEO of EmpoweringSites. He is also founder of MyCollegeSuccessStory. Hansen is also a published author, with several books, chapters in books, and hundreds of articles. Hansen is also an educator, having taught at the college level for more than 15 years. Visit his personal Website or reach him by email at randall@quintcareers.com.

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