



# DCCC Career Services Center

## Key Points to Filling Out a Job Application

- 1. Gather The Information You Need** - Prepare a personal data sheet with information that might be required on a job application: names, addresses, and phone numbers of previous employers; names of supervisors; starting and ending dates, starting and ending salaries, and specific qualifications and job duties for each previous job. It will be helpful to list names, titles, and contact information for your references as well. Also, be sure you know your social security and driver's license numbers. You can refer to this data sheet as you fill out the application to reduce the potential for errors.
- 2. Read And Follow Directions Carefully** - Remember to read all of the instructions thoroughly. Think of the application as your first test in following instructions.
- 3. Complete The Application As Neatly As Possible** (this applies to paper applications) - Neatness and legibility count since the application is a reflection of you. Write out responses using a separate sheet of paper before completing the application, or get two copies of the application and use the first as a rough draft. If possible, have someone proofread the application to make sure you have no grammatical or spelling errors. Be sure to *PRINT, avoid abbreviations, and use a blue or black ink pen.* Consider using an erasable pen or taking some "white-out" to correct minor mistakes. Don't forget to *sign* your form.
- 4. Respond To All Questions** - One of the reasons employers have you complete an application is because they want the same type of information from all job applicants. If there are questions that do not apply to you, simply respond with "Not Applicable" or "N/A." This shows the employer that you did not overlook anything.
- 5. Target Your Qualifications** - Just as with your résumé and cover letter, look for ways to target your qualifications to the specific requirements of the job. When prompted to list job duties and/or skills, list your most relevant ones first. Doing so will quickly show why you are more qualified than other applicants for the position. As space allows, include relevant experience from all sources, including previous jobs, school, clubs and organizations, and volunteer work.
- 6. Be Honest** - It's important to be truthful on an application. The information you provide will become a permanent part of your employment record when hired. False information can even be a basis for dismissal from a job. However, don't volunteer more information than the employer is seeking or is necessary to sell your qualifications.
- 7. Reasons For Leaving** - When stating why you left a job, avoid terms like "*Fired,*" "*Quit,*" "*Illness,*" or "*Personal Reasons.*" Using these negative terms may give the employer a reason not to interview you. Look for statements that don't immediately throw up a red flag such as, "*Job Ended,*" "*Career Change,*" "*Moved,*" or "*Returned to School.*"
- 8. What If I Have Gaps In My Work History?** – Gaps in your work history are sometimes unavoidable for various reasons. If you have gaps for more than one year, be sure to provide an explanation such as; "*Job Search,*" "*Education,*" "*Family Care,*" etc. These are all legitimate reasons that can be further explained in an interview.

9. **What If I Have a Criminal Background?** If you have a criminal background, be sure to answer only the specific question that is asked. For example, if the application asks if you've been convicted of a crime, you don't need to put down an arrest that did not result in a conviction. Explain your answer briefly if asked about convictions or arrests if giving more information about the offense may be helpful. If you have a serious offense on your record, write "*will discuss in interview*" on the job application (choose the most appropriate response on online application).
10. **Salary Requirements** - If a job application asks about salary requirements, you should avoid being too specific unless required to do so. You may be eliminated from consideration because of your response. Instead, respond with "*Open*" or "*Negotiable*" if possible. Employers often use this question as a screening device, and you don't want to be eliminated from consideration based on your answer. You may consider using these responses even when the wage is posted.
11. **Position Desired** - Never leave this question blank or reply "*Any*" or "*Open*." The employer typically won't try to figure out where you fit in their organization. If the job is an advertised job or you're looking for a specific position, enter the job title. If you don't know the job title, state the department in which you want to work. If you're interested in more than one job, fill out more than one application, unless directed otherwise.
12. **Illegal Questions** - Some applications may contain questions that are tricky or even illegal. These may include questions about age, sex, disabilities, health, marital status, race, or religion. It's up to you how you respond to these questions. Generally, if the question doesn't raise a problem, answer it. If it does, you may want to use "*N/A*." But be aware that you may be screened out if you use N/A too often.
13. **References** - References are an important part of your job search, so choose them carefully and be sure that they can talk honestly and positively about your qualifications. Before you list someone as a reference, be sure to talk to him or her about your job search and get their permission. Offer to provide the people serving as your references with a copy of your résumé, and notify them if you suspect they might be receiving a call from a potential employer. It's a great idea to send them a copy of the job posting and be sure to keep them updated on your job search.

#### **Additional Application Tips:**

When you visit a prospective employer, make sure to put your best "self" forward. Dress appropriately; even for those jobs that might seem less important. Be prepared for all kinds of job applications, from simple one-page applications to multi-page ones; and realize that some paper applications will be clean and crisp copies while others will appear to be photocopied a few too many times. Also, realize that some online applications can be problematic. Regardless, take your time and carefully read instructions, always keeping in the back of your mind the goal of the application -- getting you an interview.

When you've completed your paper application, if at all possible, return it to the person in charge of hiring. Inquire about an interview at that point, and ask if you may call within the next few days. Let them know if you are definitely interested in the position. If you have not heard from the employer within a week of submitting your application, you should follow up with the employer. There's truth to the "squeaky wheel" cliché. Ask for an interview -- and ask to have your application kept on file.

**Websites:** [www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips\\_application.html](http://www.worksmart.ca.gov/tips_application.html)  
[www.employmentspot.com/employment-articles/filling-out-a-job-application/](http://www.employmentspot.com/employment-articles/filling-out-a-job-application/)  
[www.thebeehive.org/jobs/career-coach/apply-job/fill-out-job-application](http://www.thebeehive.org/jobs/career-coach/apply-job/fill-out-job-application)