

APPLICATION FORMS AND CVs

Why are Application Forms and CVs so important?

Creating the right first impression can go a long way, so it's essential that you put time and effort into your CV or application form. Employers often receive hundreds of applications per vacancy so tailoring your CV to each role that you apply for is key. Online application forms enable companies to standardise applications and sift them between the 'maybes' and the 'not suitable'. Generally, more people fall at this stage than at any of the other stages of the recruitment process put together. Often this isn't just down to minimum academic achievement criteria – instead, it's because applicants don't take this part of the process seriously enough. We have outlined below some simple rules to follow to help you stand out from the crowd. Don't forget – a CV or application form is your ticket to an interview – so sell yourself well!

Top Tips

Tailor your application

Recruiters are not naive – most realise that you will be applying to a number of different companies. However it is very easy, when completing a number of very similar application forms, to 'copy and paste' answers across. However it is essential that you tailor your application to each company and show that you want to work for them, in that industry and in that particular role.

The employer also wants to see how you will fit into their company – and this means that you need to think carefully about the types of attributes, interests and qualities they want to see, and then make sure that these are demonstrated in your own application.

For example, an employer looking for future managers will be looking for leadership qualities on application forms. Changing a sentence from 'key member of the hockey team' to 'I personally led the senior hockey team to their first cup victory in five years' (as long as this is true!) will make sure that you are bringing these skills to an employer's attention.

You should always make sure to include as much relevant information as possible in your CV. This should include your education history, your previous work experience, your address and other contact details, as well as your hobbies and interests and two references. To make sure that you don't overload the reviewer, the information should be presented on a maximum of two pages and be as concise and relevant to the particular position you are applying for as possible.

Stand out from the crowd

All organisations want to recruit the best people they possibly can, but this is becoming increasingly difficult to judge based on academic results alone. This means you need to demonstrate that you are more than 'just' your academic grades. Use all areas of your life to demonstrate who you are – ranging from any work experience and internships you have done, through to any extracurricular activities you are involved in – for example community action, sport, debating, music etc. These come in particular use when answering questions on forms and will give you an opportunity to show off your additional skills and experience at the same time. Don't be scared to sell yourself and your achievements hard – as long as you are careful not to come across as too arrogant.

Be clear and concise

Taking two or three sentences to answer a question that could have been answered in one risks an employer glossing over your answer completely. Your sentences need to have purpose and to be as concise as possible to keep the reader interested – make sure every sentence ticks a box in the reviewer's mind.

For example if you have been working in your spare time for a supermarket, please do not put that down on your CV/application form, but the employer does not need a two page description of what that role entails as that won't make you stand out from other people who have done similar part-time jobs. However, if you were given any extra responsibility or received some excellent feedback from a customer or from a manager, then that is worth noting.

Accuracy is key. Spelling and other grammatical errors do not have a good impact. When employers are receiving so many quality applications, you don't want to be shooting yourself in the foot by showing a lack of attention to detail. We recommend that you prepare your answers in a word document first so that you can utilise spell check (as this isn't often available in application forms). However, it's important to make sure that you proof read your answers and take your time to make sure they're perfect.

Show off your transferable skills

Be sure to demonstrate situations when you have had to use skills which are directly transferable into the job that you are applying for, and which will show reviewers why you would be good at that job. Demonstrate your problem solving, teamwork, workload management and analytical skills, as well as your ability to cope with high pressure situations. These will give employers confidence that you can adapt these skills to their work environment.

Send a covering letter

If there is an option to send a covering letter with your application, then you definitely should. This gives the very first impression of you so make sure it's good. Employers like them because it can often give a bit more insight into your personality before an interview. In general you should aim for the following.

1. Briefly describe your situation – i.e. which course you are studying, why you are now looking for a job and which post you would like to apply for.
2. Explain why you want to work for that particular employer – i.e. ahead of competitors.
3. Explain why the employer should be interested in employing you – pick out what makes you different.

For more tips on how to approach writing a CV, please click [here](#).

For more tips on application forms, please click [here](#).

For more information on writing covering letters, please click [here](#).