

FINDING WORK

Applying For a Job

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Applying for a job can take many forms but the purpose is the same — landing you an interview! Some employers will want you to apply in person and complete an application by hand; others may require that you complete an online application. Some employers may only hire through an employment agency while others ask that you email their corporate office. The application process itself can include both completing the company's application form as well as submitting your resume and cover letter. Employers will use these documents as screening and selection tools. Asking all candidates for the same information standardizes the job application process. Follow the instructions given for the process and be sure to meet the deadline for submitting applications if one is given.

No matter which application method the prospective employer asks for you to use, this will be their first impression of you and will be the deciding factor if they select you for an interview.

THE JOB APPLICATION

Many employers require drug screenings and background checks, so be prepared to consent to these. These conditions may be revealed in the job application or as part of the interview process. Some employers even require credit checks as conditions of employment.

The job application form can take time and effort to complete. If you are completing one by hand, be sure that your handwriting is legible and neat. If possible, pick up the application and take it home with you to complete and take it back to the employer. Whether using a paper form or completing an online application, the following tips will be relevant. Make a master list of dates and descriptions of your jobs and education in chronological order. Organizing your education, work history, awards, certifications, etc. will help you fill out the application without leaving out any important details.

Tips to Complete a Job Application

- Use a professional email address. Set up a separate email account for job-related purposes.
- Make sure you have no spelling or grammatical errors. Proof your document and, if possible, have someone else review it before you submit it.
- Submit your application to the correct person or department. If you are responding to an ad, send your application to the person or department referenced in the ad. If there is no name or department given, you may send it to the Human Resources department or Hiring Manager.
- Include a phone number where you can be reached.
- Write descriptions of your previous experience that include accomplishments.
- Include part-time employment, volunteer work and other valuable non-paying experience in your work history.
- Choose references carefully and ask permission to use them. Inform them of the positions for which you are applying. References should be individuals who can speak to your character as well as your work ethic and abilities.

Mistakes to Avoid

1. Not reading the instructions closely and overlooking the intent of the questions. Read carefully and don't rush. Follow directions!
2. Not completing all of the questions on the application. Your resume may include the same information, but an employer may look only at the application.
3. Giving vague, generic statements about your experience and skills. Instead, list and explain the skills and experiences you have for this job.
4. Listing qualifications that you do not have. Never be dishonest on an application.
5. Applying for a job for which you are clearly not qualified. If the position requires 6 months experience or a certain degree, do not waste time if you don't possess those requirements. However, if those are preferred qualifications and you do have the other skills or background required for the position, consider applying.
6. Not explaining gaps in employment. Red flags appear when a hiring manager sees extended time periods of no employment or educational activity. Find a way to explain why you were out of the workforce and what you were doing with your time.

Be prepared to take an aptitude or screening test when completing an online application and allow time for this.

THE COVER LETTER

Your resume (UT Extension Publication W 936-C) is intended to give facts about your education and employment history, but your cover letter should convey more of your personality. It is the place to showcase your skills and tell why you are interested in the position. Ideally, it should make you stand out from other job seekers. A good cover letter will convey that you know what the company does and how you meet the company's needs. Hiring managers are impressed if you can show that you have done your homework about the job and the employer. Visiting the company's website is a good place to find out information you can use in your letter. You will need to tailor a unique cover letter for each job for which you apply.

Spend time composing your letter; it can make a difference between getting an interview and being rejected. Most employers are more likely to pay attention when a cover letter is included with an application. Some hiring managers won't interview a job seeker if a cover letter is not included, especially if one is requested with the job posting.

Use the Cover Letter Template to compose your letter.

COVER LETTER TEMPLATE

Your Name
Street Address
City, State Zip Code
Phone Number
Date

Individual's Name*
Job Title
Name of Organization
Street Address
City, State Zip Code

**Similar to your job application, address your cover letter to a specific person if at all possible. If you do not know the specific individual who will be reviewing the applications, address your letter to the job title of the recipient (Office Manager, Human Resources, or Hiring Manager).*

Dear _____:

In a few sentences, describe the position for which you are applying and how you found out about it, why you're interested in both the job and the company, and what makes you a good fit.

Sell yourself in the next paragraph. Include something about yourself that makes you a match for this position. Explain why you want to work for this employer. Briefly summarize your talents, experience and achievements. Remember, the reader will consider this an example of your writing skills.

Mention that your resume is enclosed and indicate your desire to meet with the employer. Advise them of your flexibility to meet. Include day and evening contact information. Let them know that you will follow up (if you have the contact information for the specific person). Finally, thank the employer for his/her time and consideration.

Sincerely, (Your Signature in blue or black ink or signed electronically)

Your Name

Enclosure

Even if it's not required, a cover letter is an opportunity to show your credentials for the job. Before you send it, check for typos and grammatical errors. Read your letter out loud. Have someone else proof it for you. If you are emailing your cover letter, be sure to include an email signature with your name, phone number and email address. Providing this information in the email will make it easier for the recruiter to get in touch. Email the letter to yourself to be sure the formatting is perfect.

APPLICATION VIA EMAIL

One of the most common ways to apply for jobs today is by completing an online application and/or sending your letter of application (cover letter) via email. The best way to use email to apply for a job is by following the application instructions you have been given and only sending a resume and cover letter by email if the employer requests them.

When you send your resume, it is important to also include a concise cover letter (which can be your email message) when you apply. The intent of the email is to let the recipient know the same information as in a traditional cover letter:

- Why you are writing
- Which job you are applying for
- What your qualifications are for the job
- What you have to offer the company
- How you will follow up or how the recipient can get in touch with you

Tips for Writing an Email Application Letter

Your email should not be lengthy. The tips below can help you understand what to include.

- **Subject line:** Hiring managers receive a lot of emails; make it easy for them to filter messages. Include your name and the job title for which you are applying in the subject line of the email.
- **Salutation:** If at all possible send your email to a specific person. If you don't have a name, then open with "Dear Hiring Manager" or with the more formal, but outdated, "To Whom It May Concern."
- **First paragraph:** Explain why you are writing. Mention where you saw the job announcement, the date it was posted and how you found out about the opening. If you were referred by a friend or someone with the company, mention that here.
- **Middle paragraphs:** This is the section where you pitch your skills and experience. Tell why you would be a good fit and what you can offer the company. Highlight your most relevant jobs and responsibilities as well as your accomplishments. Don't duplicate what is on your resume.
- **Final paragraph:** Thank the recipient for reading your email and for considering your application. Mention that your resume is attached.
- **Closing:** Use a polite closing, such as "Sincerely" to end your letter and then type your name.
- **Email signature:** You can include your email signature with your contact information. List your name, phone number, email address and, if you have one, your LinkedIn profile URL.
- **Attach your resume:** Attach your resume to the email message in the format requested by the employer. If no format is specified, send it as a PDF or Word document.

**If you choose to attach a separate cover letter, be sure to introduce yourself, tell where/how you heard about the opening, state that the cover letter and resume are attached and end with a polite closing.*

Are you a SNAP recipient interested in finding a job that can help you be self-sufficient? If so, contact us. UT Extension offers Skill Up Tennessee, a program designed to help eligible SNAP participants gain the skills, training, work or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment.

To find out more about this program check out skillup.tennessee.edu

Skill Up Tennessee is UT Extension's SNAP Employment and Training program. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Employment & Training (SNAP E&T) is a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and states to provide training and employment services to eligible SNAP participants. Skill Up Tennessee is offered through a partnership with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development.

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