

NAVIGATING THE ONLINE APPLICATION

Online applications are becoming more common as technology advances. You will often hear employers asking you to apply online instead of submitting a hard copy of your application and resume. While the meaning of ‘apply online’ can take many forms, *for the purposes of this article applying online means going to a company website and filling out their application form and submitting your resume through the site.*

However, there are other definitions for applying online which can include:

- Process and send your entire application from the site
- Download an application form from the website, complete, and send via email, or print off and post
- A requested application form is sent to you by email which you complete and return by email.



Why should it be used?

According to employers, with these online applications, they can advertise to a wider, more diverse candidate pool, find matches for hard-to-fill positions, easily share resumes of qualified candidates with hiring managers, and shorten the time between the need for a new employee and the date the employee starts on the job.

Online applications *won't* go away employers say, so figuring out how to navigate them is important. Businesses state that using the company's own online application system is the fastest way to get your resume into the right hands. Typically, applications submitted online go directly into the employer's applicant database. A hiring manager who needs to fill a position enters key words to search the database and find the applications of people who are the best fit for the job. Those results become the candidate pool.

How do I fill out an online application?

So how do you make sure that your name and resume show up in that candidate pool? A recent survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers asked employers for their advice on how to make an electronic application outstanding. Here's what they, along with other sources, recommended:

- Follow directions. Be careful to enter the correct data in the correct field, and complete all fields –even those that aren't required.
- Tailor your application information to the position. Don't copy and paste text from your generic resume.
- Use key words, buzz words, and industry verbiage. Employers search on key words when they're looking for people to fill specific positions. Select key vocabulary from a company's brochure, website, advertising etc. Applications can be screened out and may never be read by a real person if critical keywords are missing.
- Create a skills inventory section even if the application doesn't require it. You might put this in a comments section. Another use for the comments section is to demonstrate that you've done research on the company and the industry.
- Include numbers and statistics if they are available. (Example: One of only 15 students to manage a school fund worth over \$100,000; Sales experience enhanced leading to an increase in sales of 20%).
- If the company offers an optional assessment test online, take it.
- Include a strong objective. Match this to the specific position(s) available at this organization.
- Some sites won't allow re-entry into your application, so it must be completed in one sitting.
- Some sites might ask you to register before allowing access to the application form. Make careful note of any user names or passwords/PIN numbers.
- Be professional. Electronically submitted information is governed by the same laws of copyright, defamation, discrimination, etc. as other forms of written communication.



See reverse side for more tips

Additional Tips on Applying Online

- Keep a paper record of each document submitted in an application. This should include: answers to any questions, details of whom you applied to and when, any difficulties encountered during the application process and the name and contact details of anyone from the organization with whom you have spoken or corresponded.
- Before hitting the submit button, print off the completed application and proofread (spell check and grammar check) at least three times. Have an error-free application because this application serves as the employer's first impression of you.
- Make any changes and print off a final copy as a reference and as proof of application - even online applications can get lost.
- Follow up your electronic application with a personal e-mail to the recruiter to let them know that your resume is now available online. A follow-up phone call is acceptable if the ad does not say, "No phone calls."



When sending applications via email:

- Make sure your resume can hold its own in a very simple format. Documents that include unusual fonts, fancy bullets, complex photographs, graphics or documents that have been created using specialized software may be problematic and not convert well in an electronic application.
- Limit attachments to the essentials - only what the recruiter has requested from the following range: application form, CV, cover letter, sample of written work, scanned copies of references, academic transcripts etc.
- Request a receipt of application acknowledgement either in your cover letter, or by setting up an automatic recipient received message through your computer.
- Select a title for each attachment such as Resume for J Smith, Cover Letter for J Smith, References for J Smith.



As stated earlier, applying online is becoming more and more common, so taking note of these tips will help guide you through that process. The main things to remember when applying online are to fill in all sections of the application, use key words, and proofread!

If you need any additional help, contact your Career Services Center.

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