JOB SEARCH TOOLKIT:

Tools & Techniques You Need for a Successful Job Hunt

The following section is entitled: **Chapter 4: Completing Job Applications**

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The full text of the Job Search Toolkit is available at: ***FirstFind.org>>Look for a Job***.

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Chapter

4

Completing Job Applications

Part 1

Completing a job application is often the first step to getting a job interview. Employers look at paper applications carefully to decide who to interview for a job opening. It only takes a few minutes for the employer to put an application in a "yes" or "no" pile. But most applications today are completed online. Many employers use software that automatically sorts these applications to decide who should be called for an interview. Online applications also increase the competition for a position since more people can fill them out without ever visiting the workplace. Whether hard copy or online, it is very important that you take the time to fill out job applications correctly.

Job applications ask for lots of information. Some of this information is easy to remember, like your name and address. Other information is harder to remember, like the dates and address of previous jobs you have had.

How can I get ready to fill out applications?
Use the Personal Data Form at the end of this Chapter (or in Appendix A) to put all the information you will need on a few sheets. The Personal Data Form looks a lot like many applications. Filling out the form is practice in completing a job application. The Personal Data Form will help when you sit down to fill out an application on paper or online. If you don't fill in all the information on an online application, the application software may not let you go to the next question. And if you need to include information you don't have with you, the software can time you out of the online application process, and you will need to start all over again.

Complete all the information on your Personal Data Form and carry a copy with you. You should neatly write or type all of the information using a blue or black pen. Carry at least two (2) copies with you. You may meet a potential employer who does not have an application form handy. You can offer a copy of your Personal Data Form, and that potential employer will have all the information needed. You will look smart and well prepared.

You can also save a copy of the Personal Data Form on a thumb drive, or in your email account. Sometimes you can open this file on the same computer you are using to complete an online application, and use *Copy* (Ctrl-C) and *Paste* (Ctrl-V) commands to move the information from your Personal Data Form to the application. This will save time and you will be sure that the information you post on the application is correct.

Here is an explanation of all of the boxes on the Personal Data Form:
Name - Don't forget to spell your name correctly. If you have a very common name include your middle initial or name. Your friends might know you as Sarah Jones, but the name on your Personal Data Form might be Sarah M. Jones.

Address - Write your complete current address, including zip code and any apartment number. If you don't have a permanent address, you can use a post office box or another address where your mail can be held for you.

Phone: Cell and Home- If you don't have a phone, ask a family member or friend if you can use his or her phone number. Write this number on the application with a note like "this is my Aunt's Phone where I receive calls." Don't forget your area code. Put the right number, cell or home in the right box.

Email Address – If you don't have an email address you need one. You don't need to own a computer to have an email account and you can get one free. Ask for help from someone who has an email address and sign up with gmail, hotmail, yahoo or any other free service. Make sure you remember your password and address, write these in your Record of Applications Completed and/or your notebook. Also make sure you know how to open your email account and use it.

Whether you are picking out a new email, address or already have one, the address should be business-like and preferably have your name in it. Since email addresses are unique and cannot be used by more than one person, your name may already be taken. tsmith@gmail.com, for example, won't be available. But an address that combines your name and part of your address or a middle name is fine. Avoid adding something that indicates your age like terrismith1985@gmail.com. If you need to add a number, use your street address or telephone area code. terrismith914@gmail.com works. A cool or cute email address does not. If you usually use mightyfinedude@gmail.com – don't! Save it for messages to your friends. Start a new account for your job search, something like tomsmith@gmail.com. There are lots of combinations and the email service you choose will give suggestions.

If you already have an email address and get a lot of mail, including spam or advertisements for services, it's a good idea to set up a new email address that you use just for your job search. This way emails from potential employers won't get lost in a long list of announcements about the best online shopping deals.

Social Security Number - Be sure to include the correct number. If you do not have a Social Security Number, you can apply for one online at http://www.socialsecurity.gov/online/ss-5.html, or call 1-800-772-1213.
All U.S. citizens and immigrants with permanent status can apply for a social security number.

Anyone who has applied for a green card or refugee status or has a work or student visa can also apply for a social security number.

Position Title - There are a few different ways you can complete this section:

- Write the job that you identified in the **What Kind of Job Are You Looking For?** section of this manual.
- You can change the title to match a job you want to apply for.
- If you are interested in any job available, you can write "any."

Date available - Write down the date you can start working at a new job. Be honest here. If you cannot start immediately, do not write "as soon as possible."

Starting wage - You can write "any" or find out what the job pays and write that down.

Hours available for work - What days and hours can you work? Only write down days and times that you will be able to get to work. Don't say you can work any time if you can't catch a bus to get you to work at night!

Education - Gather all of the information you have about when and where you went to school. Make sure the dates and names you use are the right ones. These may be checked.

Employment History – This section is very important. The employer wants to know about your work experience. They want to know where you have worked, what kind of skills you have, and how long you've kept a job. Read the instructions carefully. You will usually list your current job first. If you are not working, then you should start with the last job you had.

Here are some tips for completing this section:

- Make certain that you have the correct name of the supervisor and the address and phone number of every place that you worked. It does not look good if you cannot remember the name of the person or company where you used to work, no matter how long ago.
- If you worked for a company that moved or is no longer in business, make sure you write that down. Don't assume that everyone knows that information.
- Make sure that the dates when you worked at a job are correct. The employer may check a reference and not hire you because of incorrect information. The employer can also fire you later if the information or dates are wrong.

- If you have not had a paying job, you can include volunteer work. This information will demonstrate skills and responsibilities. Leave the information about pay blank for this volunteer work.
- If you have worked "off the books" (taxes were not deducted from your pay), write it down. Employers still want to know that you were a handyman for your cousin or you babysat for your sister.
- Don't skip the reason for leaving a job. If you were fired from a job, find a way to explain. For example, if you were fired for a poor record of attendance you can write, "Could not meet schedule requirements."
- If you have a job now and want to apply for another job, you may not want your current employer to know you are looking for work. You may want to circle "no" after the question "May we contact your present employer?" on an actual job application. But if the job you have now is ending, such as a seasonal job or if a company is closing or moving, ask your boss if he is willing to be contacted.

Volunteer activity- The Personal Data Form includes a section about volunteer experience. Answer all of these questions. This will help you think about other skills you may have that you can include in your resume or talk about in a job interview.

References - A reference is someone who can say that you were on time, dependable and good at completing assigned tasks. References can be previous employers, clergy, teachers, or people from community organizations. Write down your references on your Personal Data Form.

Part 2

You have completed all of the information on your Personal Data Form. Make sure to bring it with you when you go to apply for a job in person and have it in front of you for online applications. Here are some rules to follow when you are ready to fill out an application.

Do's and Don'ts When Completing Job Applications

DO

- Write neatly. When typing use upper and lower case letters and correct punctuation. You don't want to be identified as *betsy landmark* with an address of *2 main stret*, *yankers, NewYOrk.*
- Use ink. Do not use pencil. Bring your own blue or black pen. Have two in case one runs out of ink.
- Have your Personal Data Form with you

- Read any instructions for each section or each page if you are completing an application online. The application may be slightly different than your Personal Data Form.
- Answer all of the questions. For online applications you usually have to answer all questions to get to the next page. Follow instructions to click "next" or "submit" to get to the next online page or section. If you can't move ahead or seem stuck on a page, look for the sections highlighted in red that show missing information or items not put in the correct format. For example you may be asked to type in your phone number as 914-555-1234, so if you type in (914)5551234 the answer will not be accepted and you will have to go back and make a change.
- Ask for a new hard copy application if you make too many mistakes on the first one. Make sure that it is readable!
- Sign the application.
- Explain titles or job duties in employment history that may not be clear.
- Ask for clarification for questions you do not understand.

DON'T

- Lie.
- Leave any questions blank.
- Make up job titles or jobs.
- Make mistakes with dates of employment.
- Say you can work any shift or schedule if you can't.
- Tell the employer that the application has illegal questions on it.
- Fill it out at home and then bring it back looking worn and torn or folded into a small square.
- Just attach a resume and write "see attached" in big letters if you are asked to complete the application.
- Have someone else fill it out.
- Put down someone else's phone number for contact without explaining that it is not your own personal phone number.
- Hand in the application, or click **submit**, without checking what you wrote.

Other types of questions on a job application

Both paper and electronic applications can include questions or sections that test an applicant's honesty or skills. These may also be called *assessments* and will be specific to the job you are applying for. For online applications these questions, or assessments, can take a long time to complete. Here are some examples of those types of questions.

Some employers ask questions to identify candidates who may steal or cheat. You might see questions like:

- What is the total dollar value of merchandise or goods you have taken without permission from your employers over the past three years?
- Over the past three years, how many times have you arranged for you or someone you know to get a product or service for free or at a discount without permission?

Other questions ask about how you work with co-workers and customers. These questions may look like this.

- In other jobs, how many times have you said or done something that may result in a customer not coming back?
- How many times have you found yourself in a loud argument with a supervisor, coworker or customer in the last three years?
- Do you agree or disagree with statements such as, "At work you simply can't help everyone and get your own job done."
- If you are assisting a customer who is hard to understand, what would you do?

How else can I prepare for the application?

Even if you don't know what kind of questions you will see on an application, you can prepare by doing simple things that will help:

- Read (books, magazines or newspapers) for at least 30 minutes every day. This will build your vocabulary and improve your spelling.
- You may see some word problems and basic arithmetic questions on the applications as well. There is a good math review website at http://www.gcflearnfree.org/math. Use flash cards to review addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. You can find these at toy or chain drug stores. Free flash cards are available online at factmonster.com/math/flashcards.html. There are also free math flash card apps available for smart phones. If you brush up on your math skills, you will be better prepared for such questions.

What is all the fine print at the end of the application?

At the end of the application you may be asked to read a lot of information written in small print, and then to sign, or click a box, that you have read and agree with all of the information. Here are examples of what you may see.

- Applications usually contain a statement that the application is not a contract of employment. This means that you do not have the job just because you complete a job application.
- Reference Checks: Applications will probably have a statement that says that you know that the employer will check your references, employment and education history. The employer may also conduct other background checks, such as checking training certifications or licenses .
- Pre-employment drug testing: Some employers want to give you a drug test before they hire you. If so, you will probably be given a long consent form to sign. The forms are long because they explain the testing process and excuse the employer from responsibility if there are any problems with the test.
- Credit check: Applications for jobs that require you to handle money (like a cashier) may include a pre-employment credit check. If so you will be asked to sign a longer consent form. By law, a potential employer has to tell you if he makes an employment decision based upon a credit report. If you are denied a job because of poor credit, an employer has to tell you why and you have a right to respond or contest the credit report.
- Questions about whether you are male or female and your race and ethnicity. These are collected for statistical purposes. The information is kept separately. Employers can't use the information to make decisions about who to hire.
- Many applications include a questionnaire to determine employer eligibility for The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). These include questions about public benefits like food stamps, disability payments, welfare and military status. Just like questions about gender and ethnicity this information is kept separately and cannot be used to make an employment decision.
- Finally, there is often a statement that says that the information that you provided is correct. **You must sign and date the application.**

Special Tips for Completing Online Applications

If you have never used a computer to fill out an application, you may want to practice doing so. Find a friend, relative, or a staff person at a library or other community agency to sit with you at a computer with Internet access. Find a website of a very big employer (Home Depot, FedEx or Costco, for example). You can often find applications under "Careers." Once you find the online application, you can answer the questions.

When you finish, you may want to actually apply for the job (you will be asked to submit the application). Don't submit the application unless you really want to apply for the job. You don't want to fill out a false application just for fun. You may want to work for the company in the future.

Some applications are easier to follow than others. For many online job applications you cannot go back and change information after you put it in, so you must take your time and read all of the questions very carefully. It's a good idea to have someone help you complete your first online application. Be careful not to take too much time and be timed out on a page. You can avoid this by being prepared with your Personal Data Form and creating a log-in on the company site and saving your work before it is submitted so you can go back later to finish.

Things to remember include:

- Give yourself plenty of time. Online applications will take at least 30 minutes and up to an hour and a half.
- Read all of the instructions carefully – that's how you will know how to move to the next page or part.
- Write down your user name and password for each application. You will probably not be able to make "password" or "12345" your go-to online application password. The application will have instructions for password requirements which may include minimum and maximum lengths, letters, numbers and symbols. Also be aware if the user name and password are *case sensitive*; if so you will have to use the same upper and lower case letters each time.
- Write down any other identifying information the employer provides. You can usually go back and add to and finish applications if you have to stop or want to change something. You may also be able to apply for additional jobs at the company or, for businesses with multiple locations in your area, the same job at another location. But you must know your log in information to do this.
- Look for "Careers" or "Jobs" at the top of the company home page or at the bottom in a list of information about the company.

Keep Track of Applications You Complete

It will be important to keep track of all of the applications you complete, whether they are online or in person. Use the Record of Completed Job Applications at the end of this chapter (and in Appendix C). Keeping track will help you follow up and answer to calls by remembering where you applied. This record will also provide a place where you can keep log in and password information for online applications.

Here's a sample of what you would write in the Record of Completed Job Applications:

Record of Completed Job Applications			
Employer	Job Title	Date	Form of Application/Next Steps
Main Street Restaurant	Cashier	10/30/16	Paper and gave to manager, Joe Franklin. He told me to call back in a week if I had not heard from them.
Home Depot	Cashier	11/01/16	Log in, my email address, password, Working914!. Received email with reference number 4369065.

Make A Good Impression

Employers may receive hundreds of applications for job openings. With paper applications they often start by skipping over applications that are hard to read, not filled out completely, or not signed and dated. Then they read the remaining applications to look for the best candidates to interview. If the application is online, the software has a system that will screen in the same way, looking for a good match with the job requirements. Follow the guidelines here and increase your chances of landing on the yes pile!

Following Up

After you complete an online application you will get an email with any instructions for following up or additional tests to take. Follow these instructions. You can also go to the business where you have completed the online application and ask to see a manager. Only do this once or twice **if you the person you talk to tells you to do so.** Always get the name and title of any person you talk to. When you return to the employer you walk in and say, "I was here last Friday and Ms. Larkin told me to come in on Wednesday about the job as a cashier." Never go repeatedly and ask the same question or demand a job.

If a company has multiple stores you can apply more than once to the same position in different locations. You can also apply for different jobs at the same and/or different locations. For example when you go online to apply for a job at ShopRite you may see that there is an opening for a Produce Clerk and Grocery in New Rochelle and Yonkers. You can apply for each job separate online and check back in person to New Rochelle for the Produce and Grocery jobs and to Yonkers for the Grocery position.

The full text of the Job Search Toolkit is available at: FirstFind.org>>Look for a Job.

Personal Data Form

Name					
Address					
Phone-Cell			Phone-Home		
Email			Social Security Number		
Employment Desired					
Position Title					
Date Available		Starting Wage Desired			
Available for Work (circle)	Full time Weekend	Part time On Call	Temporary	Seasonal	Rotating Shifts
Education					
Circle the last grade level you completed through high school 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 GED/TASC Name/ Location of High School attended					
College	Major		Graduate ___Yes ___ No	Degree Earned	
Other	Major Subject		Completed Course of Study ___Yes ___No	Degree or Certificate Earned	
Military Service and Training					
Foreign Languages					
Occupational License, Certifications, Registrations, Professional Affiliations, etc.					
Employment History (list most recent employment first)					
Employer Name/Organization					
Address					
Dates Employed		From: Month/Year		To: Month/Year	
Job Title/Major Responsibilities/Skills, Knowledge and Abilities					
Supervisor/Leader		Contact? Yes No		Phone	
Reason for Leaving				Ending salary	

Employer Name/Organization			
Address			
Dates Employed	From: Month/Year	To: Month/Year	
Job Title/Major Responsibilities/Skills, Knowledge and Abilities			
Supervisor/Leader	Contact? Yes No	Phone	
Reason for leaving		Ending Salary	
Employer Name/Organization			
Address			
Dates Employed	From: Month/Year	To: Month/Year	
Job Title/Major Responsibilities/Skills, Knowledge and Abilities			
Supervisor/Leader	Contact? Yes No	Phone	
Reason for leaving		Ending Salary	
Volunteer History			
Volunteer Activity/Organization			
Dates Volunteered	From: Month/Year		To: Month/Year
Title/Major Responsibilities/Skills, Knowledge and Abilities			
Supervisor/Leader	Contact? Yes No	Phone	
Volunteer Activity/Organization			
Dates Volunteered	From: Month/Year		To: Month/Year

Supervisor/Leader	Contact? Yes No	Phone

Volunteer Activity/Organization

Dates Volunteered	From: Month/Year		To: Month/Year

Title/Major Responsibilities/Skills, Knowledge and Abilities

Supervisor/Leader	Contact? Yes No	Phone

Other skills, knowledge, and abilities not listed above acquired through hobbies or interests.

References

1. Name	Relationship	Phone/email
2. Name	Relationship	Phone/email
3. Name	Relationship	Phone/email

Complete the question below if you are applying for a job that is not in Buffalo, New York or Rochester, NY. Individuals outside of New York State can check with their state department of labor to see if employers can ask about criminal convictions.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? ____Yes _____ No If yes, explain

Record of Applications Completed			
Employer	Job Title	Date	Form of Application/Next Steps