
15 Practical Tips for Completing a Job Application Form

In many job applications, especially in the public sector, you may be asked to fill out an application form instead of submitting a CV. This helps employers compare candidates fairly by collecting the same information from everyone. To give yourself the best chance of success, follow these 15 tips:

1. Start Early

Plan-ahead, so you have enough time to complete, review, and submit your application before the deadline. Rushing at the last minute often leads to mistakes.

2. Practice First

Download or print a copy of the application form to practice filling it out. This helps you avoid errors when completing the final version.

3. Read Instructions Carefully

Before you begin, take time to read the entire form and any instructions. Following them closely shows attention to detail.

4. Review Supporting Documents

Read the job description and person specification thoroughly. These documents explain what the employer is looking for and should guide your responses.

5. Type If You Can

If possible, complete the form electronically. Keep font size and spacing consistent. If you must handwrite it, make sure it's neat and legible. In both cases, use consistent verb tenses throughout.

6. Don't Leave Blanks

If a question doesn't apply to you, write "N/A" (not applicable). Leaving sections blank can look careless.

7. Organise Your Work History

List your jobs in reverse chronological order (most recent first), unless the form asks for a different format.

8. Tailor Your Experience

When describing your responsibilities and achievements, link them to the skills and qualities mentioned in the person specification. Show how your experience matches the role you are applying for.

9. Show Your Impact

Employers want more than a list of duties. They want to see how you made a difference in your previous employment. Highlight measurable achievements you have had, which demonstrate your value and potential. Focus on outcomes not just tasks. Use numbers to quantify success. Highlight problem solving by saying the challenge you faced, the action you took and the result you achieved. This can be both solo or as part of a team.

10. Write a Strong Personal Statement

If the form asks for a personal statement, explain why you're applying and how your knowledge, skills and experience match the job. Back this up with practical examples. Use short, clear paragraphs and refer directly to the person specification. Make sure you have addressed each point in the person specification in your statement.

11. Understand the Questions

Some questions ask for specific facts (closed), while others let you explain more freely (open). Stay within any word limits and keep your answers focused and clear.

12. Explain Your Motivation

Tell the employer why you're interested in their organisation. You could mention a personal connection, a current issue that inspires you, or a particular project they're involved in.

13. Proofread Carefully

Check your spelling and grammar before submitting. Don't rely only on spellcheck, read it yourself.

14. Get a Second Opinion

Ask a friend or family member to review your application. They might spot errors or suggest improvements you missed.

15. Keep a Copy

Save a copy of your completed application. It's useful for preparing for interviews and learning from any feedback you receive.