

Submitting Résumés & Applications Online

How do employers use the online application process to find candidates?

Human resource professionals utilize technology to aid in the task of screening potential applicants for positions that need to be filled within their organizations; therefore **the first “look” at your resume may not be with human eyes**. When you submit your resume online, it will often enter a database with the resumes of other applicants interested in the position. A search engine is then used (akin to Google or Yahoo, but specific to their company database) to scan the resumes for skills, qualities, or minimum qualifications that fit the position requirements. Those applications that yield the best results are then reviewed by a real person, and decisions about interviews are made by the organization.

So how do you improve your chances that your resume will be seen?

1. **Realize that the job search process is an active process!**

Do not simply submit resumes to major job boards and wait for a response, this will limit your success in getting an interview. In addition to your online applications, attend a job and internship fair, professional conference, or network with industry professionals.

2. **Make sure that you address specific skills the employer is seeking in your resume!**

If the employer seeks a candidate with “excellent verbal and written communication”, your resume should address “communication skills” or the “ability to communicate effectively by both written and verbal means”. Make sure you use the same key words that employers use in their description of the position; this will improve the chances that the employer’s search engine will return your resume as a match.

3. **Ensure that you submit your resume in a format that employers want!**

If an employer requests that you submit your resume through e-mail as a Word Attachment, then this is what you should do.

How do I fill out an online application?

A 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 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 to the position. Don’t just submit a 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.
- 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.
- If the company offers an optional assessment test online, take it.
- Include a strong objective. Match this to the specific position(s) available.
- 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.

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, 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. The best way is to save it as a PDF.
- Limit attachments to the essentials - only what the recruiter has requested from the following range: application form, CV, cover letter, sample of written work, 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*

Online applications that require you to cut and paste your resume to a text box:

1. Simply cutting and pasting a Microsoft Word document to a text box does not produce a well formatted resume. In order to cut and paste your resume (or parts of your resume) to a text box you need to write your resume as a Plain Text document using the Windows Notepad program.
2. Since Notepad does not use tab stops, all information on the resume is formatted off of the left margin.
3. Use spacing to separate key sections of the resume.
4. Use capitalization in place of bold face characters to highlight information (titles, degrees, etc.)
5. Replace bullet points and borders with symbols found on a standard keyboard (* , - , _ , = , etc.).

