

Application Forms

How to Complete Graduate Application Forms

Many organisations and recruitment agencies use standard application forms (SAF) as a way of selecting people for interview. It enables them to get the information they require, rather than what you want to give them. Although the information requested can vary widely the same rules apply as with CV and letter writing. The application form should get the reader interested enough in you to want to meet you or recommend you for interview so that you can have the opportunity to sell yourself to them face to face.

Important: Put things in the right places as neatly as possible! Make several photocopies and put the original away in a safe place. Work on the photocopy first.

Remember:

- Completing a Graduate Application Form
- Companies use similar questions and sometimes give advice on how to answer them. They are looking for how you answer these questions and your self awareness. These questions are also designed to let you "sell" yourself, to demonstrate that you possess the skills and personal qualities an employer is looking for and to interest them enough to make the selector want to meet you in person.

These questions usually fall into six categories:

- State your key skills
- Show your organisational/planning skills
- Prove your leadership/teamwork skills (particularly management type jobs)
- Explain how you solved a problem
- Describe a conflict or challenge outcome

Difficult questions and how to answer them:

1. Describe an event where your organisational skills achieved a successful outcome.

You will need to think of an occasion when your organisational skills worked to your advantage.

Perhaps an example of work produced for your course/dissertation or through vacation work experience, charitable work or team work. Give proof of the event. Even something like running a successful children's party can be impressive as long as you mention success.

2. Describe an occasion when you led a group. How did you motivate the group to achieve the desired result?

This question needs to show motivation, teamwork, leadership skills, together with challenges and problems that occurred, how the group was organised and their roles and a clear action plan approved

by team members ensuring time deadlines and targets were successfully met. Think of a course project or university/college committee work for ideas.

3. Describe a problem that you encountered. Show how you dealt with it and produced a solution.

This is to show your analytical problem solving skills. Think of all the problems you have encountered - could be how you survived financially as a student by taking a part-time job. Show how you weighed up the options, made your decision and solved the problem.

4. Think of a conflict you dealt with and say how you handled it.

Look for simple day to day conflicts e.g. flat sharers arguing about who cleans the kitchen or persuading a friend to get a taxi home after drinking.

5. Tell us what attracted you to the company.

They want you to be specific and show knowledge of the company. This is why your research will be so important. Maybe there has been recent media coverage you can mention or some current financial issue. State what you think about the company and why its ethos suits you. Try and be complimentary without going over the top! Check the Internet for specific web sites.

6. What do you believe are your key skills? When and how have you best demonstrated these?

If you have done a realistic skills profile earlier in the workbook you should find these questions easy. Look for evidence in work experience and academic situations. Explain how well your communication skills were used and give a specific example.

REMEMBER - For completing any application form the three E's are vital:

- Enthusiasm – show your interest in the company by researching well
- Evidence what you say; give examples of successful achievement
- Employability (how useful you will be to that employer)

KEEP A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION FORM – you will need to refer to this if you get an interview)

EXERCISE – Tricky Questions Asked on Application Forms

Complete the Situation, the Action you took and the Outcome for the following three questions:

1. Show how as a group leader you directed the group to achieve a successful outcome.

The situation:

The action you took:

The outcome:

2. Give an example of how you tackled a complex problem, the research you undertook and the steps you took to solve it.

The situation:

The action you took:

The outcome:

3. Describe an event where your organisational skills achieved a successful outcome.

The situation:

The action you took:

The outcome:

How to complete the Personal Statement section on an Application Form

This section is the key to a winning application. This is where you have the freedom to write about 'you as a person'. You will need to analyse the job advertisement/job description closely to ensure that you use this large white space to the best advantage, but if it is well thought out, well written and well organised, using persuasive, assumptive language this section will provide proof of your important skills i.e.

- Communication
- Planning
- Organisation

- Flexibility
- Self-marketing
- Negotiation/selling

It is also a great opportunity for showing your self-confidence, enthusiasm and determination to be the winning applicant.

By using strong assertive phrases "I am a confident..." "When I attend for interview..." the recruiter/assessor will have a sense of a real, living person behind the words.

The following are guidelines on how to complete a standard multipurpose Personal Statement.

Look at the instructions on the application form and make a note of what is being asked of you. To keep you focused when composing this section, it might be an idea to think of suitable headings and to arrange the sections in paragraphs to break up the content and make it more interesting and readable. (Obviously you won't need the headings on the final copy.)

Why I want this job and what interests me about it (mention knowledge of employer gained from internet, annual report, glossy company brochure)

What I have to offer (fit your experience with what employer wants)

My personal achievements (what you have achieved in previous employment e.g. reached and exceeded sales targets; established/developed a new idea/product)

What the employer might want from me (analyse job advert/job description)

Final assertive paragraph (give confident assumptive reasons for wanting the job)

If you are handwriting this section, please write on a photocopied sample first to ensure your presentation, layout and content are absolutely perfect. There is nothing worse than running out of space and having to squash your answers!