



The do's and don'ts of online job applications

The jobs market is almost entirely online these days. Platforms such as LinkedIn give you a professional profile to sell yourself with, while recruiters search job sites looking for suitable candidates.

It's certainly made it easier to find the right jobs, but the rise of online application forms has made applying for some jobs a little trickier.

Generally used by larger companies that want all candidates' information in the same format, rather than having to dig through 200 differing CVs, online application forms can be challenging and time-consuming. Yet done right and they could lead to the role of a lifetime, so follow these do's and don'ts to give yourself the best possible chance.

DO write an offline draft version first

Before you go filling in an application directly on an employer's website, take a note of the questions asked and write your answers in a Word document.

This way you'll ensure there are no spelling or grammar mistakes (though you should still double check this before you submit!) and you'll have a backup copy if something goes wrong.

DON'T get halfway through and then come back later

Online application forms can be time-consuming to say the least, so it can be tempting to partially fill it out before coming back to it later.

But this puts you at risk of losing your answers should something go wrong with the form (they can be temperamental) or worse, the employer seeing your semi-completed form.

DO try and answer every question

Just as an employer doesn't want to see a semi-completed form, nor do they want to see a submitted form with questions left blank.

So, make sure you have an answer for every question and that what you're saying is relevant, well-written and, most importantly, answers the question!

DON'T leave any blank boxes

Sometimes a question simply won't apply to you or your situation. Yet rather than leave it blank, enter 'not applicable' or 'n/a' instead.

This way the employer will know that the question doesn't apply to you, rather than think you can't think of an answer.

DO answer as concisely as possible

In many cases online forms will have a word limit for each answer box, so it's important to get the right information across as succinctly as possible.

It's not always easy, but try hard to reduce the waffle and focus only on the key points. You'll save space and your application will be all the more impressive for it.

DON'T proofread it yourself

Making sure there isn't a single spelling mistake or grammatical error in your application is vital – it's the sort of mistake that can cost you the entire application.

So, after you've proofread the final version yourself ask a friend to read it over too. Better yet, two or three friends. The more eyes you get on it, the surer you can be that you're submitting a perfect application.

DO tailor your answers

If you're deep in the midst of a job hunt, online application forms can all start to blend together and it can be tempting to use the same answers to similar questions.

But aside from this being a risky move – you might include the wrong company name, for example – you'll inevitably end up giving generic answers. Employers want to see that you really want to work with them, so unique, tailored answers are best.

DON'T forget to keep a copy to refer back to

It's tempting to just breathe a sigh of relief and forget all about your application once it's sent, but what about when you get invited for an interview?

It'll help your preparation to look back over your answers and refresh your memory about the job and your application, especially if you've been applying for jobs all over the place. So keep a copy on file for when that call comes – which it will!