



Applying Online: Key In Your Candidacy

Top tips for completing online employment applications.

Completing online job applications is laborious but often necessary when applying for a job. As part of the hiring process, online applications allow companies to easily sift, sort, and store candidates' résumés and information. When required, they are your first test—and one that you must pass. Fail to follow instructions precisely, fail to proofread before you hit “Submit,” and you risk being ignored by the applicant tracking system (ATS) and jeopardize your chances for an interview.

Preparation is key

To start, read the job description carefully. Know what you're applying for and what's required, including relevant qualifications needed to fill the position. Have your employment history, contact information, cover letter, and references handy—you'll avoid the frustration of having to log in and out—even timing out—of the online application system to search for a missing phone number, address, or date. Have a copy of your résumé to refer to, and as a digital file to upload and from which you can copy-and-paste information.

Résumé import tools

Many online employment applications use résumé import wizards to automatically upload employment history and contact details directly from your résumé into the online application system. Résumé import wizards save time—you don't have to enter every detail manually. But they are not perfect and can upload some data incorrectly. You'll still need to review all the information for accuracy before submitting your application. Cover your bases: create a plain text résumé with no formatting. It can be read more easily by résumé import tools.

Pay attention when applying online

Look for “https” to make sure you're submitting your personal information on a secure site. Register, create a profile, read and follow all the instructions carefully. Are you answering questions correctly? Are all details accurate? Complete every field as requested. In cases where questions do not apply to you, “N/A” (“not applicable”) may be used. However, ATS won't understand answers like “See attached”

when you refer to the résumé you've uploaded. Be honest and thorough. Omissions from your personal or employment history create gaps that can generate an error in the application process or raise questions later on in your interview process. Fill out as much employment history as the application allows and match what's on your résumé. Spelling and grammar count, so take the time to proofread your work. Employment dates and salary information should be precise; no sugarcoating! Don't undermine your credibility and candidacy.

Create original cover letters

When you're filling out 10, 20+ online applications, creating a unique cover letter for each application can be tedious. But, an original cover letter tailored to the position you are applying for can make or break your candidacy. Streamline the process: create a few cover letter templates, then tailor the templates to each unique position.

Keywords are key

Keywords and keyphrases are what generate results in search engines like Google or Bing. With online application systems, recruiters use keywords to search résumés and locate qualified candidates. Job-related keywords highlight the most important tasks, technology, certifications, and proficiencies relevant to a certain position. The more keywords you include in your résumé, the more likely a recruiter will be to search for—and find—your application. (Read “Keywords: Key to Better Résumés”) So, boost your online visibility: frontload your accomplishments and most relevant experience and include plenty of keywords. Review and proof your completed online application carefully for grammar and accuracy before submitting. Then follow up in a week or so to ensure that your application was received by the right person.



i n a nutshell:

Online applications, like all job search-related documentation, require you to be thorough:

- **Have all critical forms and information, résumé and cover letter, handy in print and digital formats**
- **Make sure your skills and qualifications are a match for the position**
- **Follow instructions carefully; don't leave any blanks**
- **Proofread; spelling and grammar errors can cost you. And don't lie!**
- **Use a professional email address; nothing silly; follow up on your application**

Efficient and convenient, online applications are also permanent records. So be professional and precise when you apply. Once you “Submit,” you commit.