



4. Job Applications

Are you ready to apply for a job? The job application is often your first step, although some employers prefer that you submit only a resume. Employers that require a job application do so to learn about your qualifications and compare you to other applicants.

Your application will likely be an employer's first impression of you so it's very important that you get it right. Employers may make assumptions about your work based on the quality of your application, so it must be completed neatly, fully and accurately.

If you are physically going to a worksite to pick up an application, you should take note of two things:

1. You never know who you will meet and with whom you will be speaking, so you should treat the situation as a business appointment. Dress appropriately and conduct yourself professionally.
2. Be prepared to complete the job application on the spot, as some employers may prefer or even require that. Be sure you have working pens on hand as well as all of the information you will need to complete the application, including details about your previous jobs.

To ensure your success, make sure you're familiar with the guidelines below.

Job Application Strategies

- **Follow directions.** Avoid having your application rejected because you filled it out wrong.
 - Read the entire application before you complete it.
 - Pay close attention to what is being asked and how you are expected to respond.
 - Do not write in sections that say "Do Not Write Below This Line" or "Office Use Only."
- **Fill out applications neatly and completely.** Make sure that your application creates a good impression by answering all the employer's questions.
 - Before you go to the job site, make certain you have all the information you might need to complete an application like names of previous employers, employment dates, addresses, telephone numbers, etc. Completing a [Pocket Resume](#) and bringing it with you insures that you will have the needed information. Use it as you fill out the application.
 - Do not use abbreviations, except for "n/a" (not applicable).
 - Respond to all questions. If a question does not apply to you, use "n/a" to indicate that it is not applicable. This shows the employer that you did not overlook anything.
 - Most applications will ask for references.



Tips on Providing References

- Talk with the individuals you wish to use as references, to make sure they are willing to provide a reference, are familiar with the job you are seeking, and are prepared to talk about your qualifications.
 - Ensure that you have current contact information for your references.
 - It is OK to include a personal or character reference – but don't use a family member for this purpose.
- **If you are filling out a paper application:**
 - Make a rough draft. Write out responses on a separate sheet of paper before completing the real application. Or, get two copies and use the first one as a rough draft.
 - Write and print clearly using a black or blue pen.
 - Proofread it. Make sure that you have no grammar or spelling errors. If possible, have someone else review the application to catch errors you might miss.
 - Keep it neat.
 - **Always list your "position desired."** Do not leave this question blank or use "any" or "open."
 - If you're answering a job ad or looking for a specific position, enter that job title.
 - If you are not applying for a specific position, enter the name of the department in which you wish to work.
 - Fill out more than one application if you are interested in more than one job.
 - **Give a range for your salary requirements.** Employers may use this question to screen out applicants. It is best to give a salary range or list "negotiable", even if you know the wage. This leaves you room to negotiate a higher salary and reduces the risk of you being screened out. [NH LMI](#) can provide you with relevant information.
 - **Give positive reasons for leaving past jobs.** Choose your words carefully with this question. Avoid using the words "fired", "quit", "illness", or "personal reasons". Always use positive statements. Here are some possible ways to handle this question.
 - **If you were fired:**
 - Do not use the terms "fired" or "terminated". Consider using "involuntary separation" or "employer discretion".
 - You may want to call past employers to find out what they will say in response to reference checks. When doing so, reintroduce yourself and explain that you're looking for a new job. Be honest that your termination hurts your chances of getting another job. Past employers will sometimes agree to use the term "resigned." This response saves them potential headaches and even lawsuits.



- **If you quit your job, use the term "resigned" or "voluntarily separated."** These responses indicate that you followed proper procedures in leaving the job. If the application asks for a reason (or if you are asked in the job interview), you can respond as follows:
 - Quit for a better job. This response includes leaving for advancement potential, to work closer to home, for a better work environment, or for a career change. If you quit for a better job, there should not be a long break in employment. Your employment history should support the statement.
 - Quit to move to another area.
 - Quit to attend school. If you use this reason, the education listed on your application and/or resume must reflect it.
 - Quit for other reasons, such as took an extended vacation/sabbatical, did volunteer work, started own business, or raised family.

- **If you were laid off from a job due to no fault of your own,** indicate the reason for the layoff. Here are some possible phrases to use:
 - Lack of work
 - Lack of operating funds
 - Temporary employment
 - Seasonal employment
 - Company closed
 - Plant closing
 - Company downsized
 - Corporate merger

- **Watch for illegal questions.** Applications may contain questions that are illegal to ask before a conditional offer of employment. These include questions about:
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Creed
 - National origin
 - Receiving public assistance
 - Gender
 - Marital status
 - Sexual orientation
 - Age
 - Disability

You need to decide how you will respond if you encounter any of these questions. If the question does not bother you, answer it. If it does, you can use "n/a." Be aware that you may get screened out by using "n/a" too frequently.

- **Present a positive, honest picture of yourself** during your job search. The information you provide is likely to become part of your permanent employment record. False information can be the basis for dismissal. Answer all questions honestly. Provide only the information that the employer wants, or that is needed to sell your qualifications. Avoid any negative information.

- **Target your qualifications.** Include only those that meet the specific needs of the job. Many applications have limited space to record your skills, experience, and accomplishments. To decide how to target the information to include, research the company, its products or services, and the skills needed for the job. Often you can attach a resume that details your skills, experience, and accomplishments.



Online Applications

Today, many employers expect job seekers to apply for positions online. You may need to apply on the employer's website or an online job board, like Monster or CareerBuilder. Do not e-mail your resume to an employer unless the job ad asks for this. To apply online, you will need access to the internet and an e-mail account.

If you don't have a computer, free internet access is available at public libraries and at your [local American Job Center](#).

If you need an e-mail address, many sites offer free accounts. Popular free services include Gmail from Google and YahooMail. Use a simple e-mail address with your name or initials. Do not use e-mails like SuperHotGuy@hottie.com. This type of e-mail address is not considered professional.

Professional E-Mail Address

Your online presence is part of your brand – and you will want to make the best possible impression when you communicate with employers. Here are some common e-mail mistakes that can send the wrong message to a prospective employer:

- **Too flirty.** Avoid cute or goofy email addresses that may be left over from college – like hotsexythang@yahoo.com.
- **Nonsensical** – like youcangetajob@gmail.com, or rotememoryrobots@yahoo.com.
- **Creating spam filter challenges** – like r_smith1980@hotmail.com. Many email filters are set up to look for numbers, underscores, and superlative adjectives. This could land your email in the junk mail bin of your intended recipient!

If you need a more professional email address, consider one containing just your name. In addition to avoiding controversy, using your name will make it easier for hiring businesses to remember you.

Consider creating a separate email address for job search activities. This keeps business emails separate from personal emails.

How to Complete an Online Application

Before you can apply online, you first need to register with the job website. This simply means that you need to create an account. To do this, you will need to choose a login name and a password. Many websites will use your e-mail address as your login. You will have to register separately for each job website.

Once you have an account, you can add the information from your resume. Below are the three most common ways to do this:

- **Attach a file of your resume.** Many applications allow you to browse for a file on your computer or USB drive. They often ask for a PDF, text, or Microsoft Word file. Select your file, and click "ok" or "insert." It's just like attaching a file to an e-mail message. Online applications often tell you if the file has been successfully uploaded.



- **Copy and paste your entire resume into the online application.** Open your resume file. Highlight all of the text using the mouse. Select "Copy" from the menu or by right clicking. Go to the online application to insert your resume. Select "Paste" from the menu or by right clicking. Make sure you check the formatting of your resume. You can add your resume to an e-mail message using the same method.
- **Enter your work history manually one field at a time.** Some online applications have different fields for different information. For example, you enter a past employer's name in one field, your dates of employment in another, and your duties in yet another. This type of application can be very time-consuming to complete. To save time and reduce errors, cut and paste text from your resume using the method above.

If you're having trouble completing the application, look for a "Help" button or link.

After Applying for a Job

If the employer has had your application for one to two weeks and you have not been contacted, you should reach out to the employer via phone or e-mail, unless the employer specially states in the job listing not to call or email. You can express your interest in the position, inquire about the status of filling the job and, if you're told it has been filled, to request that your application or resume be kept on file for future consideration.



1. Use the information you've studied in the Job Application Strategies section to create your personal data sheet.
2. Use Appendix I to practice completing an online job application.
3. Apply for jobs! This is not a drill; this is the real deal. How else are you going to find employment?



To document the completion of these activities, we recommend that you save your work electronically in an easily accessible location, with an appropriate file name and date.

Alternatively, you may also print out your work and maintain the document in your work search records. Be sure to properly label and date your print documents.



Confirm the applicable NH unemployment insurance requirements and be sure to follow them closely to avoid benefit disqualifications or overpayments.