

FIRST STEP: Use online sources (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.) to connect to someone in the company. Inquire about their experience within the company and ask for advice on seeking employment.

MORE HOMEWORK: Research the potential employer and industry and tailor your resume (and online application_ using KEYWORDS found within the job description. Keywords are actual skills (i.e. "MBA," "marketing professional," "3 to 5 years' public relations experience"), not buzzwords.

VERIFY: Stick with recommended and proven job search sites. Check the company's site for the job listing, and/or try Googling the agency or site name with words like "complaint" or "scam."

ORGANIZATION IS KEY: Keep all relevant information in an UNFORMATTED text document, including answers to any questions you can think of or have seen on other applications, and organize your resume chronologically. Cut and paste from this to avoid wasting time and spelling mistakes.

BE PREPARED: Read the instructions carefully! Practice by completing an application for a job you're not interested in or working with sample applications.

SAVE, SAVE, SAVE: Take regular screen shots of your application and a final screenshot before submitting and save for follow-up (including password and other job-specific information).

COVER LETTER: Include one if possible. Make sure it's accurate, geared toward the specific job and employer, and showcases your experience and how it relates to the job and/or company.

PROPER FORMAT: Proper names, place names, state abbreviations, etc. should begin with a capital.

PROOFREAD ONCE, TWICE, and AGAIN: Don't miss out on an opportunity due to careless errors.

PERSONAL INFO IS PERSONAL: To avoid uncomfortable sharing in required fields, try the following:

- Salary History: Give a range based on market rate for your experience level/geographic region.
- References: List only name and email IF you've notified your reference(s) ahead of time.
- Salary: Try putting Negotiable. You shouldn't need to define this without more information.
- Contact Info: If you feel uncomfortable, get a PO Box, Google mail account, or check out Google voice, a free service that gives you a phone number you can forward to any private number.

TELL STORIES: Stand out by completing comment boxes creatively. When asked, "*What were your tasks and duties?*," use this opportunity to tell a story about a past job (i.e. "*I worked 20 hours/week while attending school full-time, cultivated relationships with guests, kept my register balanced to the penny, and pinch-hit in Guest Services when it was busy.*") rather than just lists of tasks.

FOLLOW UP: Many online applications are never seen by a human or may be filtered out due to overwhelming responses. Follow up with hard copies (resume, cover letter, online application).

Source: *Outwitting the Recruiting Black Hole*, TIME.com, 8/12; *Successfully Completing Online Job Applications*, Linda K. Rolie, 8/12; *Job Hunting Online: Escaping the Nine Circles of Application Hell*, Michael Spinale, 8/12.

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