

COMMON APPLICATION ERRORS AND HOW TO AVOID THEM

AN APPLICATION FORM IS AN EMPLOYER'S FIRST IMPRESSION OF YOU SO IT IS IMPORTANT TO STEER CLEAR OF MAKING ANY EASILY AVOIDABLE SLIPS.

Too generic

- ✗ Generalised statements that are not backed up by evidence: 'I am a highly motivated team player who puts her best efforts into every task.'
- ✗ Generic statements about the company that could apply equally to another company: 'You are a reputable company with an exciting client portfolio and provide excellent training prospects.'
- ✓ Reading and analysing what the recruiter is looking for.
- ✓ Structuring your application and/or CV/cover letter around the skills, qualities and experience which match their requirements. Please see advice on CV and cover letters on pages 30 and 32.
- ✓ For competency questions on application forms use an approach such as STARR to structure your answer. Please see how to use STARR on page 26, and learn more about competencies on page 25.
- ✓ In a cover letter including specific points about the employer and why that attracts you to them and to this job.
- ✓ Always backing up the points you make in the application/CV/cover letter with specific examples as evidence: 'I demonstrated high levels of motivation by exceeding sales targets three months in a row in my part-time role at Simply Coffee.'

Spelling, grammar or typing errors – accuracy is crucial

- ✗ Copying and pasting sections carelessly.
- ✗ Amending sentences without re-reading to make sure there are no extra words left from the last version (or words missing).
- ✓ Proofreading thoroughly, and not relying on spell-check.
- ✓ Asking someone else to proofread, as it is very easy to miss mistakes when you know what you intended to write.

Not following instructions

- ✗ Missing out an element of an application. For example, sometimes you are given the option of adding a cover letter. If you are offered that opportunity to sell yourself, take it. The recruiter is likely to be far less interested in an applicant who has not taken the trouble to do so.
- ✗ Exceeding word limits. With online applications the maximum number of characters may be set automatically, so if you try to exceed the maximum the last part of your answer will be lost. It is up to you to make sure you stay within the maximum. You do not need to use all the words allowed, but a response that is too short suggests you could do more to sell your skills and experience.

Writing in a manner that is too formal or too casual

- ✗ Using lots of long words to sound impressive.
- ✗ Using clichés: 'I would relish the opportunity to hone my skills', 'I am passionate about...'
- ✗ Using contractions: 'I'm', 'didn't' etc
- ✗ Using colloquial language: 'My performance was on the money.' This sounds arrogant too.
- ✓ Write in a clear, concise and business-like style.
- ✓ Use active words: 'analysed', 'coordinated', 'demonstrated'.
- ✓ Finally, be sure to save a copy of your application so that when your excellent application gets you through to an interview you are able to look back over it as part of your interview preparation.

