Introduction

For many employers, asking you to complete a **job application** is the first step in the hiring process. Depending on the circumstances, you might complete an application **in person**, **online**, or before an **interview**. Some employers require an application even if you've submitted a resume. Whatever the situation is, if an application is required, it should be taken seriously as an important part of the hiring process.

In this lesson, you'll learn the **basics of completing a job application**, including ways to answer common questions (and more difficult ones, too). In addition, you'll understand the role of **Affirmative Action** and **Equal Employment Opportunity Employers** in the application process.

Basic Advice

People who make hiring decisions often have to read many applications in order to fill a position. **Applications that are not filled out correctly are often rejected**. To increase your chances of being considered, follow these basic guidelines.

- **Follow directions**. Be sure to read through the application completely before filling it out. Gauge how much space is allotted for each answer, and phrase your answers accordingly.
- **Fill out the application completely**. You may be required to fill out a job application on site, so be prepared to respond to all questions. If a section doesn't apply to you, enter **N/A** (not applicable) instead of leaving it blank. This shows the employer that you didn't overlook anything.
- **Be neat**. When filling out paper applications, your answers should be clearly written in blue or black ink, and most importantly, free of errors.
- **Be honest**. Surveys show that 90% of employers conduct some type of **background check** during the hiring process. If you give false information, it could cost you an important job offer—or worse, lead to termination if you get caught later. It's extremely important that you tell the truth about **everything** on the application, including your

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employment history, education, and criminal background. Stretching the truth (even just a little bit) isn't worth the risk.

Did you download our **Personal Information Worksheet** (Word, Google Doc, PDF) in Lesson 1 of this tutorial? Remember that you can bring it with you to fill out job applications in person. You can also copy & paste from it to apply for jobs online.

Applying for Jobs Online

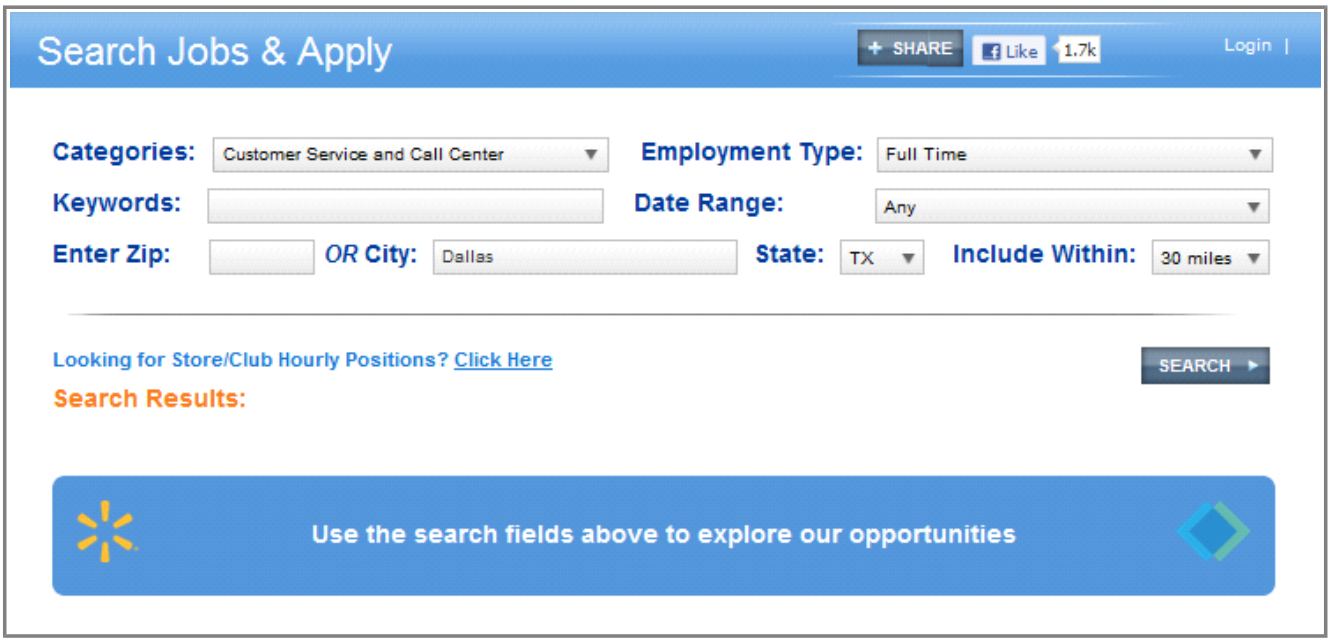
Though some companies still use paper applications, most modern businesses require you to **complete an application online**—including national brands like Walmart, Bank of America, Ford Motor Company, and millions of others.

When you apply for a job online, you may be asked to **create an account** for the website, **fill out a form**, and/or **attach your resume**. Every online application is different. If you know what to expect, however, you'll be prepared for almost anything.

Searching for Jobs

Many company career pages begin with a **job search**. This gives you the opportunity to search for a specific position, or just see if the company has any job openings. You can also narrow it down to your city and state, if the company is a national brand.

To learn more about searching for jobs, visit our full Job Search tutorial.



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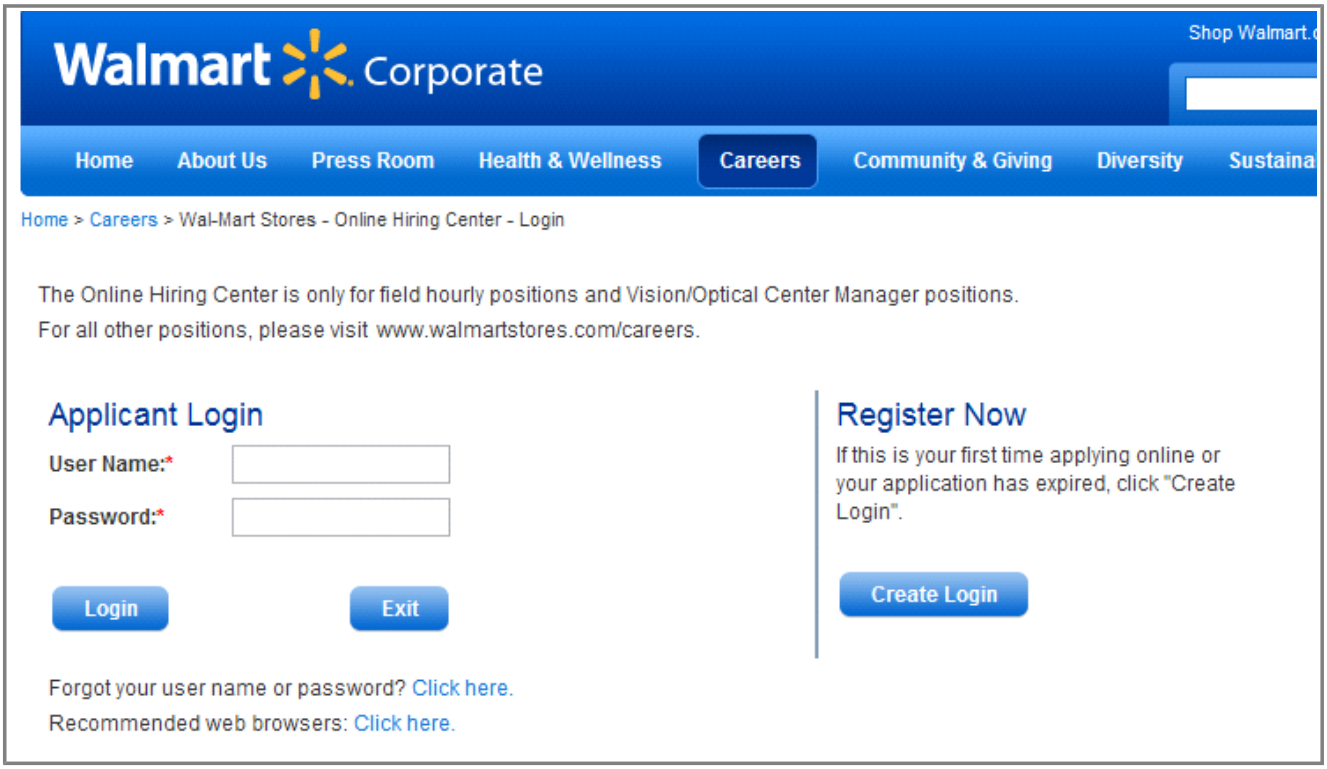
Career page with job search

Creating an Account

To apply for a job online, you usually have to **create an account** first. Because every company has its own website (and its own application system), you can expect to have to do this several times during your job search.

Your online application will contain a good deal of **personal information** (including your Social Security number). Therefore, it's very important that you create a **strong password** to protect your account. For help, check out Passwords: the First Step to Safety in our Internet Safety tutorial.



Log in or register

Filling Out Forms

Many online applications use **forms** that look similar to paper applications. They provide a place for you to enter your personal information, and answer questions about your background.

If you saved your information in a **document** (for example, our **Personal Information Worksheet**), here's a useful tip. Try copying & pasting your answers from the document into the form. That way, you don't have to keep typing the same information over and over again, every time you apply for a job online.

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Personal Information

First Name*	Valerie
Middle Name	Jean
Last Name*	Gregson
Address 1	1704 Silverado Court
Address 2	Apt. B
City*	Dallas
State/Province	Texas
Zip Code	75206
Email*	valerie.gregson@gmail.com
Primary Phone	321-555-2739

Completing a form

Providing Your Resume

Some companies ask you to provide a **resume** in addition to your application. If this happens, don't panic. Here are some tips and resources that will help you prepare.

- **Follow instructions carefully**. Does the company want you to copy & paste your resume into a form, upload it as an attachment, or send it in an email? There are several different possibilities, so it's important to show the employer that you know how to follow directions.
- **Double-check your resume**. Make sure it's in the correct format, if necessary, and ready to be sent over the web. Visit our lesson on Preparing Your Resume for the Internet for more information.
- **Create a resume** if you don't have one yet. You'll be glad you did, even if you need it only once or twice during your job search. For help, try our comprehensive Resume Writing tutorial.

Common Job Application Questions

Every application is different, but many of them have certain questions in common. We've compiled some of these questions and answers in the example below.

Use the interactive to learn more about **common job application questions**.

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APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

What position are you applying for? Assistant Store Manager

How did you learn of the company / position?

Online job posting — Walk-in

Newspaper classifieds — Other

Company website — Referral – Mina Hasan, Sales Rep

Have you ever applied / previously worked for the company? Yes No

If yes, please explain: N/A

Date available for work? Two weeks notice

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Company Name: Grove Department Store **Phone:** 321-555-3384

Address: 6500 Green Valley Ave (Street) Dallas (City) TX (State) 75206 (Zip)

Supervisor (Name, Title): Ana Gomez, Cosmetics Manager

Position: Lead Sales Rep **Salary:** $12 / hour

Hours per Week: 30 Full Time Part Time

Start Date: 06/01/2008 **End Date:** Present

Reason for Leaving: Seeking new opportunities

AUTHORIZATION

I authorize investigation on all statements contained in this application. I certify that the information given on this application and on any supporting documentation is true. I

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information given on this application and on any supporting documentation is true. I understand that, if employed, falsified statements on this application shall be grounds for dismissal.

Signature: Valerie Gregson **Date:** 08/08/2012

Glimmer Bath & Body
6500 Green Valley Ave, Suite 401
Dallas, Texas 75206

A Drug-Free Workplace

Difficult Job Application Questions

Some questions are **more difficult** than others. There are many reasons why this might be the case—maybe you don't know what to say, or you're afraid the answer will hurt your chances of getting hired.

For help completing the more difficult parts of a job application, review the questions and answers below.

Sample Questions and Answers

- **Have you ever been convicted of a violation of law other than minor traffic violations? If yes, explain.**

  Here, indicate whether or not you've been convicted of a crime (other than minor traffic violations) in civil or military court. If you have not been convicted, enter **no**. If you have a conviction on your record, enter **yes**, and supply a typed explanation. Include the nature of the offense, the date of conviction, location where convicted, and disposition (sentence, probation, etc.).

- **Why are you interested in working for us?**

  To stand out from the rest of the applicant pool, do a little **research** before you start filling out the application. Find out more about the position, the company, their philosophy, and work environment—and then explain why you think you'd be a **good fit for the team**. Avoid answers that may sound self-involved, such as, "I heard the company pays well."

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Here's a much better example:

- *"As a Humane Society volunteer since the age of 16, I strongly believe in your organization's mission to provide low-cost vet care, vaccinations, spay/neuter, and other services to pet owners. I'm hard-working and experienced, and think I'd be a great asset."*

What skills and abilities qualify you for the position?

If you're responding to a job posting or advertisement, take a closer look at the **job description** that it contains. What skills can you list that would demonstrate you can not only do the job, but do it well? This is the key to answering this question effectively.

For example, qualifications for an **administrative assistant** may include greeting customers and guests, managing an administrator's schedule, and proficiency in Microsoft Word and Excel. If you have those skills, **list them by name**, and try to highlight them on your application. Don't forget to include other relevant skills, like typing words per minute (WPM), foreign languages, software, and office management experience.

Reason for leaving your last position?

Avoid terms that may reflect poorly on you, or make you seem unreliable; for example, **illness**, **quit**, **personal reasons**, **fired**, or **didn't like my supervisor**. Never criticize a former employer. Instead, use positive terms to explain your reason for leaving, such as:

- *"Pursuing degree"*
- *"Seeking advancement"*
- *"Relocated"*
- *"Resigned"*
- *"Career change"*

If you were **terminated** from your last job, you may want to contact your former employer before you begin filling out applications. Politely explain the situation, and ask what they'll say in response to reference checks. Often they'll agree to use the term **resigned** instead, to save themselves the trouble (and even a potential lawsuit).

If they don't agree, it's best to tell the truth on your application. Use the expression **involuntary termination**, and look for an opportunity to explain the circumstances to potential employers, especially if you were terminated without cause.

What are your salary requirements?

Employers often use this question to screen out applicants. So even if you know how much you'd like to make, leave your answer open-ended. List a **salary range** instead (rather than a specific amount), or say **negotiable**. This will give you more room to negotiate if you're indeed offered the job.

To learn more about this topic, visit the Salary Basics tutorial.

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Resources

For more help filling out job applications, visit the resources below.

- How to Apply for a Job at an In-Store Kiosk (Monster)
- How Do I Explain Getting Fired? (Monster)
- Who's Most Likely to Fail the Background Check? (Monster)
- How to Conduct a Job Search with a Criminal Record (CareerBuilder)

Equal Employment Opportunity

When filling out job applications, you may notice that a company is an **Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) employer**. What does this mean?

A result of the civil rights movement, organizations and institutions with **affirmative action policies** promote diversity by recruiting minorities and women, and giving them special consideration in hiring, contracting, and admissions decisions.

Equal employment opportunity laws are designed to prevent the opposite from happening. They prohibit discrimination or mistreatment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age (40 and older), disability, or genetic information.

If you're faced with questions about race, religion, etc., on a job application, it's up to you how you choose to respond. Employers are prohibited from using this information to make **unfair hiring decisions**, but they sometimes ask for their records.

To learn more about **affirmative action** and **equal employment opportunity laws** (including how to file a claim if you feel you've been discriminated against), visit the sites below.

- American Association for Affirmative Action
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Employees & Job Applicants

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