

Job Applications Online

Increasing numbers of employers are asking applicants to apply online.

Why?

- Whether completing an application form, CV template or profile, all applicants get the same opportunity.
- When short-listing, key information is easily viewed and like can be compared with like.
- Form design can facilitate quick matching between job competencies and required applicant competencies.
- Electronic data in a standard format is easily stored, manipulated and retrieved, and keyword searches can be made.
- A central web-based source of information is easier to keep current than paper publications.

There can be pitfalls for the applicant however, so read on



'Apply online' could mean:

- Complete your entire application on the employer's website.
- Download an application form from the website, complete and send via email, or print off and post.
- Word process your application documents and send via email e.g. an application letter within the body of the email and CV and/or application form as an attachment.

- A requested application form is sent to you by email which you then complete and return by email.

Getting the application together can be stressful so give yourself plenty of time

- Some sites are difficult to navigate.
- Information can be hard to digest.
- Gathering all necessary information and preparing documents can be very time consuming.
- Some sites won't allow re-entry into your application, so it must be completed in one sitting and you may need as much as two hours.



- A deluge of applications being sent in the last minute can overwhelm a website which then goes off line.
- Websites can be programmed to cut off applications at a precise time. Seconds late and your application won't be accepted.

Getting started – advance preparation that is basic to any application method

- Have good insights into your skills, knowledge and interests and learn how to match job and personal competencies. You may be asked to indicate preferences from a list of job titles so do some research.
- Prepare a reference Application Letter and CV (a skills-based format is the most adaptable). Format using universally used software such as Word, and keep a copy on disk.

- A plain text version will simplify copy and paste into other documents, including the body of an email should you need to get details to someone urgently.

Go into the website:

- Read all instructions carefully. Make a list of everything required for the application – academic transcript, CV, employer information etc.
- Download/print a copy of any relevant information and/or application form. If this isn't possible, make notes.
- Some sites might ask you to register before allowing access to the application form or graduate recruitment details. **Make a careful note of any user names or PIN numbers.**



Now make a decision. If offered more than one way of applying choose the method that suits you best and gives you the most control, but if there is no choice or you choose an online application, read on

- Gather all the information necessary to prepare your application.
- Draft answers to any questions and remember to keep a copy of these as a record of what you submit and for use in future applications where similar questions might arise.
- Organise access to good computer facilities providing reliable, uninterrupted Internet access, and the facility to manipulate data - copy, paste and attach.

Ready to go online? Some key points to remember:

- Contact the organisation if you experience any technical difficulties.
- Observe the basic rules of netiquette. For example, don't send a computer virus along with your job application.

- Be professional. Electronically submitted information is governed by the same laws of copyright, defamation, discrimination etc as other forms of written communication.
- Be thorough. Most online applications can't be submitted if fields are left incomplete or codes or acronyms are incorrect, but missing information can also be a reason for screening you out.
- Be aware that applications may go directly into a database that allows the use of optical scanning software to do a **keyword search**.

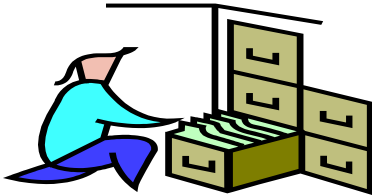


Applications can be screened out and may never be read by a real person if critical keywords (the nouns or phrases describing knowledge, competencies, experience, skills considered essential for the position) are missing. These could be words such as *project management; report writing; HTML; C++; database design; policy development; marketing; diploma in journalism; degree in biological sciences*. Advertisements, job descriptions, and paper or web-based occupational inventories such as *Jobs Galore* and *Kiwi Careers* are useful tools to identify likely keywords. A spin-off from this research can be the insights you will gain into areas of skill shortage: useful when you're self-promoting in a competitive market.

Fortunately, most employers involved in campus-based graduate recruitment activities will read all the applications, and only use simple keywords like *graduate; Victoria University* etc to access data. However, in any application it's always in your best interests to address the skills, credentials, knowledge and experience being sought. Select key vocabulary from a company's brochure, website advertising etc., but remember, although frequency of use can influence whether or not an application emerges from the database as potentially strong, an unintelligent use of words would mean elimination through the manual review.



- Keep a paper record of each document submitted in an application. This should include details of whom you applied to and when, any difficulties encountered during the application process and the name and contact details of anyone from the organisation with whom you have spoken or corresponded.



Completing an online application form

- Formatting is unlikely to be a concern, particularly if you type in material rather than cut and paste from another document as all applications will come out at the recruiter's end in **plain text**. Nor are you likely to be able to overlook a section, as most forms cannot be submitted with incomplete fields.
- As you have already drafted your answers, check the website again to ensure nothing has been changed which would alter the responses you would want to make.
- Before hitting the submit button, print off the completed application and proofread at least three times. Make any changes and print off a final copy as a reference and as proof of application - even online applications can get lost.
- Most online application systems will automatically acknowledge if submission has been successful. If not, or you are uncertain or have experienced problems, follow up by email or phone.



Emailing an application

- As long as you have your CV on disk or in a computer file this is an easy option, especially if you make use of the attachments feature. This means that any documents can be sent with formatting intact - all bullets, fancy fonts, headers and footers, tables, and graphics are unaffected. The only potential difficulty is that the recipient may not have appropriate software to open it, so make sure you prepare your documents using universal business software such as Word, and that you are communicating PC to PC.
- Documents that include unusual fonts, photographs or graphics or that have been created using specialized software may be problematic. If in doubt do a test run – send your application to a friend and ask them to print off what they receive. Any problems can then be fixed, or you can advise the recruiter in your email cover letter that the document can be sent in an alternative format if necessary. If this occurs, the easiest solution is to send the plain text version of your CV in the body of an email rather than send an attachment.
- Limit attachments to the essentials – only what the recruiter has requested from the following range: application form, CV, cover letter, sample of written work, scanned copies of references, academic transcripts etc. Employers are aware however that not everyone has easy access to a scanner, and in this case may accept posted copies or viewing them at an interview. Scanned attachments are acceptable but generally unnecessary.
- Whether the cover letter is sent as an attachment or in the body of an email message it should still be fairly formal and explain your interest in the position. (See *Career Essentials - Cover Letters*).
- As most email screens only show about 20 lines of text at a time it's a good idea to get any important information in first. Like the opening paragraph of a newspaper article it should grab your attention and make you want to read on for the complete story.

- Request a receipt of application acknowledgement either in your cover letter, or by setting up an automatic recipient received message through your computer.
- Select a title for your email that reflects the contents. Use references if these have been given, or the position title, or words such as *Job Application* or *Application For*
- Select a title for each attachment such as *CV for J Smith, Cover Letter for J Smith, References for J Smith.*
- A business-like email address is considered essential for candidates who want to be taken seriously and as evidence that you have embraced the electronic age. Addresses such as cuddles4U@ihug or chocoholic@hotmail may be cute, but are not professional.



- If using a free email programme check that it is completely reliable. Some have limitations and you don't want to discover this in the middle of the application process.
- Sending referees a blind carbon copy (bcc) of your application can be a good idea, but in any event you should make contact to let them know about the application, and if you haven't already done so provide them with a copy of your CV which will then be a useful prompt if they are approached for comment.

Downloadable application forms

- These can be printed off, neatly completed by hand and mailed if the employer is happy to receive a postal application.
- Otherwise, save a downloaded copy as a file which can then be worked on separately. Type information into the fields, print out and thoroughly proofread, then send the complete and edited version as an email attachment.

Posting your CV on the Internet

- This enables you to spread the net as widely as possible in terms of accessing potential employers, but you need to be organised – remembering where it's been posted and keeping it up to date.
- Having a CV on the WWW is a good idea for those with an 'in-demand' skills-set and relevant work experience. A 'new' graduate without a clear career direction and limited work-experience is less likely to benefit from this approach.
- It's important to post on sites that are likely to be visited by employers and recruitment consultancies.
- Security and confidentiality should also concern you – most sites take this seriously and you can decide what information you will provide and who will have access to it.
- Work out a system that does the job of getting a response from those who are genuinely interested in employing you and screens out time-wasters.

Creating your own website as a marketing tool

- This is generally useful if web skills are what you want to use in your next job. Otherwise the effort of maintaining your site, as well as a CV in print and posted elsewhere on the Net can become an overwhelming task.

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Assistance with career planning and job searching techniques is available from Vic Careers staff.

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