

Completing Application Forms

A valuable application form will show an employer that you are right for the job in question and improve your chance of being shortlisted for an interview. Employers often receive a large amount of applications for just one vacancy, so it is essential that you spend time on your application to ensure that yours stands out.

Some applicants do not always put the necessary effort into completing an application form, thinking that they will have another opportunity to impress the employer in the interview. It is crucial to remember that an application form is your chance to sell yourself and if the form is not completed to the highest standard; meeting the necessary criteria; it is unlikely that the candidate will even be offered an interview.

Remember an employer will think if you can't take the time to fill in an application form, how much effort would you put into the job?

Preparation for Completing your Application

An application form may feel like a long and daunting process, but it is important that you give yourself enough time to complete the form accurately and make the best impression.

Make sure that you plan how you will complete your form. The instructions on the application form guidance are there to give you advice, so make sure you follow them and put down the relevant information that it asks you to.

If you complete your application online you can always plan and draft your application in a word processing application like Microsoft Word. By drafting your application, this will also give you an opportunity to check your spelling and grammar so don't let this small mistake affect your chance to be shortlisted for the position. It also gives you the chance to back up your information.

If you are completing a written application, always make a photocopy so that you can draft your application on this first before completing your final copy.



As long as your answers demonstrate you have the right skills, character and experience for the job, you can feel confident you're on the right track. To give you a head start, here's a run down of the areas employers within early years and childcare probe:

1) Leadership

If you're working with junior colleagues it's important you take a role in fostering their career development. Can you lead teams and what personal skills help you to do so? What's your management style and what experience have you had, even if it is a small amount?

2) Knowledge and understanding

When working in early years and childcare, it is crucial that you have a strong knowledge (or are willing to learn) about relevant legislation that you will be working with to meet the professional standards of the setting (if relevant to your role).

What is your understanding of the range of legislation used within an early years and childcare setting? Have you ever done any relevant training around this legislation and can you give an example of when you used this experience within a setting or how you would use it?

3) Communication and people skills

Interacting with people and getting your ideas across is central to the working day. Have you got the people skills to get colleagues working effectively with you or to keep your customers happy?

Very few professions require individuals to work in isolation. It's important you can work towards a common goal with a team of colleagues as well as contribute on an individual level. Think about your personal qualities and the role you're applying for - which of these skills are most relevant?



4) Organisational and planning skills

Within the childcare profession planning and organisation is crucial and meeting relevant legislation within this paperwork is crucial.

Can you organise your workload so that tasks are done well and on time? You'll often encounter situations at work where difficult decisions need to be taken in order for progress to be made. Do you have the confidence and skill to do so?

5) Planning skills and curriculum planning

Employees who go above and beyond their day to day tasks are a true asset. An employer wants individuals who can use their initiative and come up with ideas they might not think of.

This is an opportunity to show examples of what experience you have of implementing these aspects into the settings, or how you are learning these aspects and how you would use them in the future. Always use a strong example in relation to relevant legislation and if you haven't had a lot of experience, show you are willing and focus on your strengths.

6) What are you proud of?

This is a chance to sell yourself! Try to use an example that can be related to the job role and make the employer understand why it has made you proud.



Application Do's and Don'ts!






- **Don't miss out any questions!** Some may not be relevant, but you should at least try to use your previous transferable skills or explain that it will not be applicable to your post.
- **Don't** include anything you can't back up at an interview.
- **Don't** just apply for every single job – do make sure you fit the criteria before applying
- **Don't** miss the opportunity to make a **positive** impression. Strengthen your application by providing a clear reason why you should be considered, **backing it up with examples wherever possible**. Use terms from the job advert and any supporting information you have been given to make your application very persuasive as it immediately relates your skills to their companies needs.
- **Do** fill in **all** areas of the form
- **Do** answer the set questions and use personal examples
- **Do** keep it positive, focusing on what you can do rather than what you can't
- **Do** sell yourself!
- **Do** check all grammar and spelling and ensure you don't use all capital letter unless otherwise stated. Ensure you put capitals at the start/full stops at the end of the sentence.
- **Do** give examples. For example:

“I am a team player...I am part of a team of 12 people in my current nursery. I regularly attend team meetings and share information for example I recently attended a parents as partners course and fed back my learning at a recent team meeting.”

- **Do** provide two references and their contact details. Avoid using family or friends as referees and instead choose people who know you well in a *professional* capacity, such as an academic tutor or employer. Make sure you check that the people you nominate are happy to act as referees for you and keep them informed about the jobs that you are applying for so that they are adequately prepared to give you a reference if asked.

Before you submit your application

Whether your form is online or on paper you should:

| | |
|--|---|
|  | Read it over a few times to check for spelling and grammatical errors – these are one of the most common reasons applications are rejected. You can always copy the information into a word processing package, such as Microsoft Word, or photocopy the document to draft your application so that you can complete a final spelling check. |
|  | Ask someone else to proofread it for you. |
|  | Check you've filled in all of the boxes that are relevant to you – if you leave an empty box the employer may think your form is incomplete. If a box isn't completely relevant to your role, try to use a similar example in your experience in regards to the job that you are applying for or if a box isn't relevant, put 'N/A' (not applicable.) |
|  | Photocopy or print out the finished form, so you have a copy for yourself to refer back to at the interview stage. |
|  | Always make sure you are aware of the closing date and send your application form to arrive in good time. |

If you cover all of these areas you could increase your chances of an interview.
GOOD LUCK!

Line Managers Advice

We have spoken to line managers in Essex settings and this is what they said about the applications they have received:

Always make sure you read the whole advert before you apply!

“One candidate withdrew due to distance. We invited one other candidate for interview and she turned down the interview because she did not realise it was a full-time post.”

When it comes to interview times try to be as flexible as possible!

“One candidate wanted to dictate their own interview day and times, so they were unsuccessful.”

Always make sure you meet the relevant criteria before you apply!

“I would say a negative point would be that sometimes we put a level of qualification on the advert for example level 3 and some how we get lots of level 2's apply. These applicants we therefore do not interview.”



Other comments:

“If the candidate has lack of requested qualifications, skills or experience, then we will not short list them.”

“If the candidate demonstrates limited information about personal skills and interests, then the candidate tends to be unsuccessful”

“I look at punctuation and spelling - if an applicant can't be bothered to use capital letters or spell basic words correctly etc, then I assume their record keeping will be just as poor.”

Positive:

“If the candidate takes the time to display all relevant training within the early years sector, they are more likely to be short listed. This was one of the reasons we interviewed the previous candidates as it shows their understanding of particular areas of early years and maybe their willingness to keep up to date with training.”

“If the applicant displays an interesting, informative description of their previous work experience and aspirations, they are more likely to be short listed.”

“Relevant experience & qualifications (Paediatric First Aid, Food Hygiene, SENCO training, etc) or a willingness to undertake further training to improve their personal development.”