

Seven Tips for Preparing Effective State Applications

A powerful state application is a vital component in obtaining a desired position. It is also your first opportunity to make a good impression; one that will assist you throughout the selection process. There are two things that make an application stand out from the others: *presentation* and *content*. The following are seven tips for writing an effective state application.

Tip One – Be Accurate - Check and recheck for proper spelling, listing of dates, titles, and time frames. Confirm periods of employment, locations, names, etc. Have someone proofread your application for errors.

Tip Two – Complete the Entire Form - Complete all sections. A blank section raises questions in the employer's mind. For example, a missing employment date, or reason for leaving might mean there was a bad work experience. Take time to complete all areas. One area that many people overlook is the Knowledge, Skills and Abilities area. This section is used during the screening of applications, so be sure to list anything which might be relevant to the job.

Tip Three – List Jobs in Chronological Order - List the current or most recent jobs first. Include military service and job-related volunteer work, if applicable. Use a separate block to describe each position or gap in employment.

Tip Four – Highlight Skills and Relevant Job Responsibilities - Do not downplay previous jobs. Your application should demonstrate skills the employer needs and wants such as the ability to deal with the public, customer service, data entry, administrative skills, organizational skills, time management, telephone etiquette, computer skills, etc. Be thorough when listing your job duties for each job so that a potential employer can see exactly what you have done in the past. You may even want to call the contact person for the job and ask to see a copy of the official position description. Then, you can tailor your application to show times when you have used those skills in past positions.

Tip Five – Pay Attention to Grammar, Punctuation, and Formatting – Correct grammar is critical! Do not misuse or over-use punctuation marks. Paying attention to detail makes for an effective application. Do not use bolding, underlining, or italics. Once again have someone else review your application. It is better for a proofreader to catch a mistake rather than the potential employer. If you copy and paste your information into People First, check it carefully. People First does not recognize some bullets and quotation marks, so they will make your application difficult to read.

Tip Six – Describe the Duties and Responsibilities for Each Job Carefully

- Do not stretch the truth. Make sure that your description of job duties is accurately worded.
- Include results, achievements, and accomplishments.
- Do not use abbreviations or acronyms. Use clear, concise language.
- In describing job duties for previous positions, use past tense. Use present tense only for the current position.
- Use action verbs such as arranged, completed, organized, administered, coordinated, managed, and trained.

Tip Seven – Stay Current - The state application is a living document. Keep all information current and up-to-date.