# Completing Applications Forms

**Application Forms are often used by employers to find out more specific information than CVs. They enable employers to identify the necessary skills and experience for the job at a glance as the information is provided in the same format.**

Similarly to CVs, application forms should be completed in a way that highlights your skills and experience relevant to the job you're applying for.

Online applications are now commonly used by large employers, e.g. NHS, local authorities and retailers.

## Hints

- Read the instructions before you fill in the form.

- Photocopy the form beforehand and use the copy as a rough draft.

- Use black ink - it makes for clearer photocopies at the other end.

- Write legibly, keep your handwriting to a decent size and don't be afraid to leave some empty space - it looks better and is easier to read.

- Take time writing the section called "additional information" or "personal statement". Use the job description and person specification and explain how you have previously demonstrated the particular experience, skills or qualities they are looking for – employers are looking for you to meet all of the requirements listed in the person specification as far as possible.

- Consider how you would like to explain any gaps in your employment. Create a basic disclosure statement that explains how you have used your time away from employment. Emphasise the positives from your experience and your readiness to gain work.

- Read your completed form carefully, checking for grammar and spelling errors and, if possible, get a second opinion from someone.
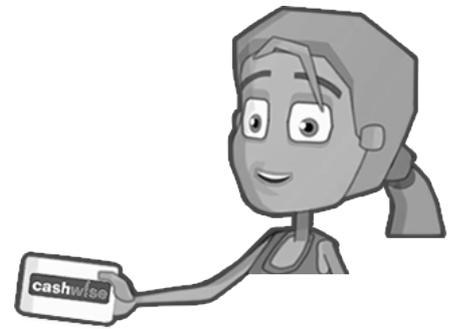
- Keep a photocopy of your completed form for your own records and to take to your interview. Include a short covering letter highlighting your relevant skills and experience

## Tips

- Don't leave any questions unanswered. If a question is not applicable to you then say so.
- Don't include a CV as well, unless it has been requested.
- Don't lie - you'll probably be found out.

## CONTENT OF APPLICATION FORMS

Although application forms can vary, most forms request the following information...

**Contact Details**
Input carefully, e.g. telephone numbers.

**Education/Training**
Should be provided in chronological order, i.e. most recent first.

**Employment History**
Should be provided in chronological order, i.e. most recent first.
Tip: When detailing your duties, focus on those most relevant to the job you're applying for.

**Personal Statement / Additional Information**
This is where you need to sell yourself!!
Tip: Use the Job Description/Person Specification and Job Advert to complete this section and ensure you always tailor this section to the job that you are applying for.

**References**
Usually your most recent employer and a character reference.
Tip: If you have not been employed, ask voluntary work/training providers. Always ask first!!

**Recruitment Monitoring**
Personal information, e.g. gender, ethnicity, disability (see Equality Act 2010 information).

This section is for employers to demonstrate they are not discriminating in their recruitment of staff – it is detached before shorted-listing for interview and so will not affect your application.

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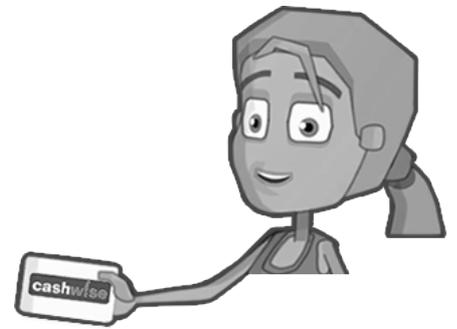
## Criminal Records

Details of any criminal record you have, may include those that are 'spent'.
Criminal convictions will not necessarily prevent you from being given the job. Again this information is given on a confidential basis and should be asked for on a separate sheet.

## Other Possible Sections

Some employers ask for additional information to screen applicants, for example:

### Personality Questionnaires / Scenario Questions / Psychometric Testing

You should answer these questions as honestly as possible, but also try to fit with what the employer is looking for, by researching the company, e.g. its values and what the company is looking for in the staff it recruits. If some of the questions are repeated / very similar, the employer may be assessing whether you are honest in your answers, so make sure your answers are consistent.

### Quizzes

This may be used to test your skills, e.g. numeracy or customer care skills. You should answer these as best you can, and as above, spend some time researching the company beforehand.

### Hobbies/Interests

The application form may ask what your interests say about you. Focus on hobbies that link to the job you are applying for, e.g. if the job requires customer care skills, mention social activities, if the job involves being on your feet a long time, mention physical activities etc.

## COMPILING A PERSONAL STATEMENT

This section is where you can really sell yourself to the employer by highlighting your skills, experience and qualities that match you to the position, and the best way of achieving this is by using the Job Description and Person Specification.

### Job Descriptions

A job description outlines the purpose of a job, the main responsibilities and key tasks, and where the job fits into the organisation.

### Person Specifications

A person specification describes the requirements of the job that the person needs to be able to perform satisfactorily (e.g. education/training, skills/experience, personal attributes), and is usually split into the categories of essential and desirable.
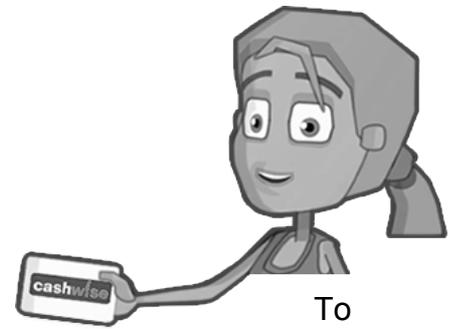
**Effective personal statements**

To create the most effective personal statement...

Demonstrate how you meet all of the essential criteria of the Person Specification, plus as many of the desirable criteria as possible, and include elements of information from the Job Description, e.g. when include tasks mentioned in the Job Description when giving examples to back up your skills/ experience. As a rule, any skills / experience that you state that you have should be backed up by examples. If you do not have previous relevant experience, you could use the following statement:

"Although I do not have specific experience of paid work in this area, I am a quick learner, with a keen interest in further developing my skills, experience and qualifications in order to develop both personally and professionally".

**Tip:** If you do not have a job description/person specification for a position, you can build up your personal statement using the information from the job advert and information from a Job Profile on the National Careers Service website. Alternatively, you could use a job description/personal statement for a similar position/company.

**How to compile a personal statement**

The format of a personal statement is up to you – you could put in sections from the Person Specification, e.g. Qualifications, Experience, Personal Qualities etc, or you could write it in essay format, linking different sections together. The main consideration in terms of format is to present the information clearly and concisely, in an easy to read fashion, e.g. putting in breaks between paragraphs, and to ensure your writing is grammatically correct, with no spelling errors.

Start by highlighting key words in the Person Specification and Job Description.

Create sentences using the above key words (try not to simply repeat the words) and thinking of examples to demonstrate how you meet this criteria.

Build up your personal statement, as above. There is no specific guidance on the length of a personal statement, but 1-2 pages should be sufficient.

Include a section at the beginning that states why you are interested in the position – try to consider what you can bring to the role and what you think you could gain from the role / company.

Once you have a completed personal statement, you can use this as a template for other similar positions, tailoring it according to the differing requirements.

**Tip:** If you are handwriting an application, you could type your personal statement and attach it to the application form. Just state 'Please see attached' in the relevant section.
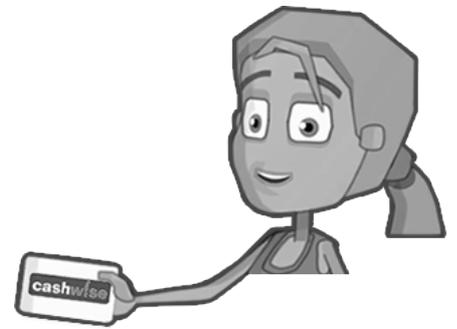
**PERSONAL STATEMENT TEMPLATE**

I would like to apply for this position because I feel that my skills and experience closely match your requirements, and that I could provide a valuable contribution to the work of your organisation. I am also keen to work for (name of organisation) because (any reasons you want to work for the company, e.g. provides a valuable service to others, has a reputation for supporting and developing its staff etc).

I have experience of (list any tasks in the person specification/job description that you have

previously done) from (where you got this experience from, e.g. voluntary work/previous employment).

This section should be tailored based on the job description and person specification, but as a guide the following skills are useful to mention (remember to always give examples!!)...

- IT skills (office roles)

- Customer service skills (retail/office roles)

- Personal qualities (care/support roles)

- Confidentiality/Data Protection (care/office roles)

- Practical skills/abilities (manual roles)

- Health and Safety (manual roles)

- Accuracy/attention to detail (office roles)

I am able to work well independently, using my initiative, or as part of a team. I have experience of working as part of a team from (where you gained this experience), in which I worked as part of a team of (number in team). I have strong communication and interpersonal skill and am able to develop effective working relationships as I am very friendly and helpful and am willing to be flexible to support my colleagues, where needed. Within my role OR In addition, in my role as ..., I was responsible for managing my own workload, which involved the ability to use my organisation skills to prioritise tasks according to deadlines and changing demands.

I am hardworking, reliable and conscientious, and always work to the best of my abilities. I am an excellent timekeeper and a committed and dedicated employee. I am keen to learn new skills and would be willing to undertake any training required to fulfil the role and to support my personal and professional development. I also understand the importance of adhering to company policies and procedures, and of maintaining accurate records, which I have demonstrated throughout my previous employment.
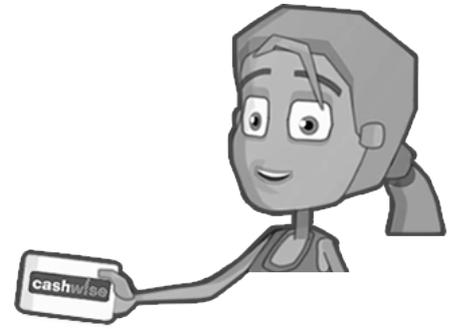
I hope that you will consider my application.