Teacher Companion

Job Application Class Lesson Plan

If your students think that filling out a job application is an easy task unworthy of a second thought, think again. The truth is, the application form may be the first interaction you have with a company. Filling out the form correctly could be the difference between getting an interview and never hearing from the hiring manager again. Simple rules, such as using only blue or black ink, writing legibly, and refraining from dotting letters with hearts, can actually help secure interviews.

Each section of the application demands equal attention and ample research where necessary before the job seeker turns in the completed forms. Background information should be spelled correctly and reflect current information only. All employment or volunteer experience should be listed chronologically, with the most recent listed first. Education should only reflect the highest academic level you've achieved up to the point of filling out the application. Any programs in which the applicant is currently enrolled should also be listed accordingly. References should almost always be professional in nature, unless the application specifically requests contact information for personal references.

Online applications follow a similar format as paper application forms. Applicants should check to make sure their provided information is correct, free of typos, and factual. Applying for jobs online often requires candidates to complete pre-employment screenings in addition to the application form. Pre-employment screenings typically assess responses to hypothetical and real-world situations in order to find the best fit for the job and the company. The tests check for personal characteristics, previous experiences, and both behavioral and situational knowledge.

Some common misconceptions that young job seekers may not fully understand involve salary expectations, availability, start date, and contacting current employers. For entry-level jobs, it's fine to assume that minimum wage is an appropriate salary expectation, unless the applicant has previous related experience and is making a career move that warrants a higher wage. Open availability stands out to employers, especially for entry-level roles that require employees to work nights, weekends, and perhaps even holidays. Showing a readiness to work when needed may therefore help job seekers stand out.

Giving a potential start date should leave at least a two-week period from the date of application, especially if currently employed. This shows the potential employer that the applicant intends to act responsibly and professionally by giving the current employer appropriate notice. Sometimes, job applications also include the question, "May we contact your current employer?" Believe it or not, it's acceptable to answer no. Most companies understand the delicate nature of searching for a new job and will also understand the need to keep the job search discreet until a firm job offer is in hand.

All the slides for this curriculum should present themselves in a way that helps students understand the process of filling out a job application. The accompanying video, links, and handouts should be used at the teacher's discretion to help supplement the presentation. Thank you for choosing our job skills curriculum, and please look to our additional presentations for further assistance in helping your students navigate the job market confidently and successfully.