

Electronic Applications and Online Resumé Submissions

Electronic Applications

Most organizations have moved to recruiting applicants through online submission procedures. In some circumstances, this simply involves requesting that job seekers forward or attach an electronic copy of a resumé, often via email. However, the way in which electronic applications are collected continues to evolve and being prepared to send an attached document may not be enough.

Submitting Applications Through Online Forms

Many employer organizations have developed application forms to be completed and submitted online. In some situations an applicant may have an opportunity to print (or print screen) the online form for review to prepare answers prior to officially completing the application. However, in other situations, applications may have to be completed without an opportunity for preparation.

Job seekers should begin by creating targeted resúmes because the act of creating this document is still a necessary step in preparing to submit information online. In addition, if you successfully make it through the screening process, you may be asked to submit a resumé for further consideration.

Tip: When you are sending an attached resumé, you should not name the file 'Resumé'. Imagine how many applicants simply name their file 'Resumé'. Select a name which includes your first and last name (or your first initial), the name of the job or the word Resumé and even the date, Dec 09 or 12-09. Do not use the '/' key.
For example, Julie Smythe Marketing Resumé Dec-09.html

Attaching or Sending Resúmes via Email

If an employer requests that you forward a copy of your resumé via email, you have a few options for the type of file format you can submit.

If you do send your resumé as an attachment, we suggest that you send only one document which includes your cover letter and resumé. If you do include the cover letter, you should compose a short email indicating the purpose of your email and mentioning that your resumé and cover letter are attached in one document (for a sample of an email message, see page 5).

File Types

- As a **word processing** document (in Word or WordPerfect)
 - Advantage - You have some control over the format and layout and can design a more attractive document (with bullets, bolds and italics).
 - Disadvantage - The employer may not be able to open the document as he/she may not have Word or WordPerfect, or may have a different/older version. When opened, there may be changes to the layout of the document. Ensure you delete any markings from track changes. If you are using Word 2007, save the document as .doc, not .docx.
- As a **PDF** document
 - Advantage - It is essentially a snapshot of your document so you can control the appearance and create an attractive document. It also eliminates the risk of transmitting viruses. To convert your resumé to a PDF, you can use an online tool at www.pdfonline.com/convert_pdf.asp.
- As a **text** (txt), ASCII or rtf (rich text format) document
 - Advantage - Any word processor can read these file types. Useful for online submissions, not attachments.
 - Disadvantage - Formatting could be lost when sending to others and it is quite limited, making the resumé difficult to read.

Because of a concern over viruses, some employers may not accept or open any attached documents. It is in your best interest to follow the application instructions.

Sending a Resumé and Cover Letter as an online application:

- Leave margins of at least 1 inch all around
- Select a font size of approximately 12 points
- Use only basic symbols (the asterisk '*', a dash '-', a plus sign '+')
- Align information with left margin (centre justification may not work)
- Make headings stand out by typing them in capitals
- Line up similar information. For example, line up headings, space over 5 spaces from the left margin and line up all sub-headings
- Use the space bar to move over; 'Tab' may not work properly

Employment History

Sales Associate, The ABC Clothing Store, Waterloo, Ontario, 2006-2008

* Increased sales by providing information and guidance to customers

Summer Camp Counsellor, Camp Fun, North Bay, Ontario, 2009

* Provided supervision and program planning to youth

In general, most of the following features will be preserved when your resumé is opened by employers who ask you to submit/upload a resumé.

- Underlining
- Bold
- Italics
- Text justification
- Font colours
- Bullets (converted to round bullets)
- Hyperlinks

Some features may be affected when opened:

- Font type (text may be converted to the same font and size)
- Background colours (default to resumé with a white background)
- Images, pictures and graphics

Tip: Email names and accounts. Ensure that your email address is professional. If you are using an account such as hotmail, be certain that your email name is appropriate.

What Should You Write on Online Applications

Some employers may request point form 'facts and details' responses to specific questions. You should have prepared all of this information when you prepared your initial resumé. Often you can cut and paste from your resumé into the form. However, some online applications require you to do more than cut and paste from your resumé. Some employers include questions which require either detailed point form, essay or paragraph-style responses.

The best way to prepare for online applications is to take the same approach you would when preparing for an interview (consult the Career Centre's Interview Skills Guidebook for information). You should begin by identifying the key pieces of information (qualifications) the employer is seeking.

Identify, Discuss and Demonstrate Relevancy

Online forms may include questions such as 'identify and discuss your relevant qualifications'. This does not mean you simply list your qualifications; you do need to discuss your skills. The key in providing effective responses is to clearly identify the points you are 'selling' and then provide **insight** into the application of these skills. Normally, skills that are listed in the job posting or key components of the job may be queried. Unless you are limited to a few words or short phrases, try to avoid listing basic skills. You want to provide more depth by detailing your understanding of the application of your skill.

Example Question: Identify and discuss your sales and customer service skills

- Excellent product promotion skills

Promoted products to customers through attractive displays and by approaching customers to

sell special items during promotions.

- Well-developed customer communication skills

Assisted customers with decision making by providing detailed information, key product comparisons and exceptional customer service.

If you are not allotted much space to provide an answer, a shorter version of this response could be: "Promoted key sale items by providing accurate information and product guidance to customers to assist with purchase decisions."

Example Question: Identify your skills and demonstrate relevancy. The key component of this response is the demonstration of the relevant application of the skill. Begin by identifying some key skill(s), normally between three to five points unless otherwise requested. Then, for each point, you must connect the skill you are discussing to the job for which you are applying.

- Excellent product promotion skills

With a detailed understanding of both ABC Company's and competitor's products, I will develop an effective marketing and promotional plan to target key retailers and customers. A solid ability to develop attractive and effective product displays will enable me to enhance the public's awareness of company products.

- Well-developed communication skills

Using effective communication and negotiation skills, I can convince retailers to promote company products and implement marketing and promotional plans. Using excellent follow-up and tracking skills, I will build and maintain rapport with key suppliers and consumers to ensure best prices and long-term competitiveness.

The key to effectively responding to online application questions is in your preparation. You must begin by knowing what skills and qualifications you have and how these are relevant to the job. If you do not have a solid idea of what your key skills are, consider making an appointment with a Career Consultant, or check out some of the resources in the Career Centre or online at www.wlu.ca/career.

Email Messages For Sending Electronic Resumés

When sending an application, you should include a short email message which should be specific and professional. If you are submitting a cover letter as part of the attached document, you should still include an email message.

Sample Email Sent With an Attached Resumé

Subject: Resumé and Cover Letter for _____ Position

Dear _____: (as appears in the cover letter)

In response to your request inviting applications for the position of _____, I am forwarding a document containing my cover letter and resumé.

I am in the process of completing my final year of study in _____ at Wilfrid Laurier University. I have a background in _____ and _____ which I am confident will enable me to bring both knowledge and experience to the position of _____.

If you have any problems receiving the attached document, please contact me and I will re-submit it. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Full Name

Telephone Number

This email is only appropriate if you are also attaching a cover letter. If you do not attach a cover letter, you will need more information in the email.

Tips for Completing Online Applications:

- If possible, do not complete and submit an online form immediately. Print or copy and paste the form for review. However, some employers may not allow you to do this as the minute you log on (often using your name and email address), you might have to complete the entire form in one session.
- Scan through the entire form before you begin. There may be places to provide specific information (e.g., education) in various sections.
- When completing online forms, have word processing software open in a separate window and type your answers into the word processing application. Once you have spell checked and corrected your answer, cut and paste it into the form (use plain text formatting).
- When pasting from word processing software to an online form, do not rely exclusively on the spell checker. Consider using the grammar check feature and read the content aloud to check for errors. If possible, print the online form and read it carefully before submitting.
- Many forms have both optional and compulsory fields; ensure that you complete the compulsory fields in full.

- Save a copy of the completed form for yourself. Internet browsers have a File, Save As... option or you can cut and paste your responses.

Posting Your Resumé

If you are considering posting your resumé online, be aware that this is not the most effective or secure way of promoting yourself to an employer. If you do post your resumé online (or create your own website), ensure you continue to seek out other opportunities.

If you are going to post your resumé online, create several different resumé targeted to different types of positions. Many posting services will allow you to post more than one resumé. When posting your resumé, it is recommended that you consider not including specific identifying information. Include part of your name, an email address and general location. You might want to consider removing the names of employers, especially a current employer and the names of educational institutions attended. For example:

- Sales Representative, Leading Technology Company, Ontario, 2004 - present.
- Bachelor of Arts (English), Canadian University, 2008

Keep in mind that any information you post online is not protected. It could be simple for an unscrupulous person to borrow your identity or for third parties to use information to target you for spam or marketing purposes.

Key Words

For each job or type of job to which you are applying, you will need to identify key words or qualifications to be included in your application. Career Centre staff can provide you with assistance in identifying your skills and with finding information related to the key skills required for specific jobs.

To determine key skills needed for a position, analyze the job posting, the organization's website and/or reference resources in the Career Centre. These key skills can be incorporated in your 'Profile' section on your resumé. In an online application form, there may also be a skills section available to highlight your key skills and qualifications.



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