

Job applications - guidance

In general

Applications are scored in relation to the points in the Personal Specification (PS) - essential and desirable (sometimes weighted so that essential counts more highly) - and individuals with the highest scores are invited to interview.

Make sure that your application does not expect the panel to assume, extrapolate or make their own connections. In a fair recruitment process, an assessor should do none of those things, as they could make the wrong assumptions, and disadvantage one candidate over another. It is up to you to clearly spell out exactly how you meet each requirement of the role. Even if you are a great candidate, if you don't evidence that, we cannot shortlist or appoint you.

Remember that applications are usually anonymised, and in any case to be fair to all applicants the panel will review based on the information presented, not other knowledge they might have of a candidate. Don't assume the panel have any knowledge of you other than what you write down.

Think about what your application demonstrates about you. For example, if the role is for an Administrator who is expected to have both good written English, and a proven ability to communicate with a variety of different people, an application which is messy or unclear to read is indicative of someone who is unlikely to be suitable for the role.

Another common failing is not to follow instructions properly. If you are asked for some information, but give something different, or clearly cut and paste info that 'almost matches but not quite' from a CV or another application, then it shows that you don't read carefully and / or have decided to do it your own way. Neither of which makes you look like a strong candidate. Showing your initiative and doing things your own creative way can be very positive attributes. However you should demonstrate them differently, because (see above) the panel can't make assumptions about why you have disregarded the instructions. If they did, they might assume you didn't read them carefully.

Employment History

Your application is your chance to tell your version of your story: it doesn't need to be a life story and include every detail. Think about the main messages you want to convey. As you are trying to convince your reader to give you an interview it can help to think about it from their point of view: what questions might they ask, what would they want to know.

For example, if you state you were a 'Agency Temp Admin Asst' for six years, the questions that came to mind were 'how many different roles? How long in each? Were they consistently or irregularly employed? What did the different roles entail?' Include sufficient detail - not just to satisfy the panel's curiosity, but to emphasise your skills.
Eg:

Over six years I had three long term placements, being given the responsibility of a full staff member and developing productive working relationships throughout each organisation.

Or:

I had a series of short-term placements, ranging from one week to three months, which gave me a great insight into how different organisations work, and made the most of my ability to be flexible, as I had to regularly learn new systems and procedures, quickly adapt to new environments, and develop effective working relationships in a short timeframe.

Or:

I used Microsoft Office on a daily basis, mainly Excel and Word for inputting data and creating reports for my manager.

Or - because you have not been asked for dates of your education (as this can be accused of enabling age discrimination), if you want the panel to understand links then you have to be explicit:

I worked part time for this period to fund my college studies; or because I needed the flexibility to care for relatives.

If your working pattern was due to personal or family reasons, this might be something you touch on briefly in an Additional Information or Personal Statement section. Again, remember you don't have to provide every detail of your life, but this is your chance to present information about yourself or your situation in a clear concise way using your own words, perhaps explaining a gap in your working history or your reason for seeking a career change.

A final point is relevant to the layout and formatting of the text. Content is clearly the most important aspect we are reviewing. However, if one of the PS points is about 'finishing tasks to a high level of quality', we would expect you to demonstrate that by taking the same level of care with your application as you would with a piece of client correspondence. So make sure you use consistent fonts/ style/ layout so the document looks impressive - or at least doesn't detract from the content.

Responding to the Person Specification

Make sure you link closely to the points in the PS. Once you have drafted your response you may find it useful to revisit this section with the PS list and look through for specific evidence against each individual point, putting yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn't know you. Does what's written convince you?

Make sure you include examples from a range of situations. Even if your most recent role is the most relevant or responsible, there will always be things you can bring from other jobs, volunteering, or personal / family experiences. It is worth trying to think about something positive you have taken from each role, even if short term or in a different area. It shows the panel that you can reflect and learn from previous experiences.

The scoring system GI use is as follows:

Score	Description
--------------	--------------------

0	Irrelevant answer, no connection to role or question asked. No examples/ evidence, or not related to person spec criteria
1	Some connection to role or question. Examples/ evidence have a low relation to person spec. Some awareness of what might be required in role.
2	Good connection to role or question. Examples/ evidence have a medium relation to person spec. Potential of good awareness of what is be required in role.
3	Excellent connection to role or question. Examples / evidence have a strong relation to person spec. Very good awareness of what is required in role.