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USAJobs.gov

Applying for Federal Jobs Tip Sheet

Earth Day is every day at EPA! At EPA, you can protect human health and the environment of all Americans, and you'll discover that EPA is one great place to work! We offer great benefits and work flexibilities, and our diverse workforce connects to more than just a career--we share a common passion to promote a cleaner, healthier environment. Discover how exciting safeguarding our natural resources and protecting human health can be.

[Learn more about EPA.](#)

GETTING STARTED

Much like CareerShift and Handshake, the federal government maintains its own job search site, known as www.USAJOBS.gov. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also maintains a [Careers website](#) with information specific to careers with EPA.

FIRST – CREATE YOUR USAJOBS ACCOUNT

Before you get started we recommend you visit [A Step by Step Guide on How to Get Started with USAJobs](#) on USAJobs

Create an account on the USAJOBS Web site by clicking on the "Create your account now" box and filling in the necessary information.

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING USAJOBS

The "Search Jobs" button takes you to central job search page where you can sort and search through jobs by geographic location, job category, pay grade or salary, or a key word search.

Key Word Search helps you narrow your search to only those positions that fit your expertise and experience. If you're looking for a job with a specific title (e.g., electrical engineer), type that into this box and the search will only show you jobs that match your description.

Location shows open positions by geographic preference.

Job Category Search tailors listings to personal skills/interests.

Salary Range and Pay Grade Range (GS) Search lets you eliminate jobs above or below your level of expertise and education.

Student Interns = GS-3 through GS-5 levels

Bachelor's degree = GS-5 through GS-7 levels

Master's degree = Begin your search at the GS-9 level

If you have an extensive work record, these guidelines may not be quite right. Keep searching with Pay Grade Range until you find a level that best fits your education and experience.

Applicant Eligibility assesses a range of federal jobs available to you. If you're not sure whether or not you can answer "yes," or are not sure what some of the terms mean, leave the "no" option selected.

Once you set up the search the way you want, click "Search for Jobs" at the bottom of the page to sort results by keyword or date and view either a brief or detailed description.

If you find a job you're interested in, read the description carefully to make sure that you're eligible to apply and to learn how to begin the application process.

Consider clicking on the "Save this search and email me jobs" link at the bottom of the page. This will allow you to receive daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly emails containing new jobs that meet your criteria. To use this feature, you'll need to have already established a USAJOBS account.

THE JOB APPLICATION PROCESS

Before you get started we recommend you view the [How to Apply for Federal Jobs](#) USAJobs YouTube video. After identifying a job to which you'd like to apply, we encourage you to consider the following tips:

Plan ahead: The application process itself can take time; to improve your chances of getting a job, be sure to allow plenty of time to thoroughly complete your application.

Be selective: Applications tailored for specific jobs that are a good match for your skills and talents will be more successful than sending out a standard resume for many jobs.

Prepare to wait: It can take weeks to months before you will hear back about an application and there may be little or no communication from the agency. Every federal job requires a background check before being offered the position.

Follow-up with the agency: Contact the identified representative to learn the status of an application or to find out more about a job about a month after the closing date. If the closing date is extended, follow-up about a month after you turned in your application.

CREATING YOUR FEDERAL RESUME

Before you get started we recommend you view the [Writing Your Federal Resume](#) USAJobs YouTube video.

Forget what you know about typical resume writing. While you may find yourself summarizing your work history into a one-page document for a typical job application, your federal resume should be more detailed and run two-to-five pages in length for an entry-level job. A federal resume uses the same information from a typical resume, but goes into more depth about your skills, past duties and accomplishments.

What to Include

To write your federal resume, we strongly suggest using the Resume Builder available on www.USAJOBBS.gov. It will guide you through the resume writing process, ensuring that you do not leave out important pieces of your application. It also allows you to store multiple resumes, so that you can tailor each one to a different position. The Resume Builder will also eliminate decorative formatting by generating a template that looks the same for every applicant, ensuring a fair and equal process.

Candidate Information

Provide basic information, including your name, contact information and citizenship. Most positions require applicants to be a U.S. citizen, but there may be exceptions for hard to fill jobs. You also need to identify whether you have ever worked for the federal government and whether you qualify for veteran's preference. If you have never served on active duty in the Armed Forces, then you are not eligible for veteran's preference. Required: Name, contact information, citizenship, whether you claim veteran's preference, federal employee information.

Work Experience

List the required elements for any relevant jobs you've held. Each component is essential to your resume meeting minimum qualifications. Experienced workers may list only jobs held in the last 10 years. Required: Employer, location, position title, start and end date, average hours worked per week, responsibilities and accomplishments - Optional: You may want to include your supervisor(s) as a reference. Including your salary is also optional and will not exclude your resume from consideration.

Education

Include basic information about all schools attended and coursework completed. Only list degrees from accredited schools or programs that meet the Office of Personnel Management's standards. If you wish to substitute education for experience to qualify for a job, you must include the information about coursework in your resume. To ensure that you receive appropriate credit for your academic credentials, you should provide as much information as possible. Required: Schools attended, degrees obtained - Optional: Grade point averages, relevant coursework taken, academic papers or projects, key presentations, honors received, other important accomplishments

OPTIONAL INFORMATION TO INCLUDE

It is to your advantage to provide as much relevant information as possible in any of these optional sections. A well-written resume allows you to highlight your accomplishments and display your competitive skills, which demonstrates to the employer your value and ultimately determines your pay level.

Job Related Training - Include any classes, seminars, coursework, certifications, or trainings you have completed that relates to your professional development and the position description.

References - In addition to your supervisors, you may choose to provide professional or personal references who can vouch for your character, work ethic and dependability. Individuals you have worked with closely—such as colleagues, classmates and mentors—will add to your credibility as an applicant.

Language Skills - Include any language experience you may have and level of proficiency.

Affiliations - List any professional associations, societies, clubs or other organizations you are affiliated with. Highlight any leadership role and volunteer experience you may have had, to the extent that it relates to the job description.

Professional Publications - Include any publications you have contributed to, along with the publication name and date.

Additional Information - You can include any other relevant pieces of your resume in this section: skills, awards, leadership activities, public speaking engagements, volunteer experience or other items that may not fit in a section above. You may choose to list your availability, the type of work environment you seek and your desired location. These items will not exclude your resume from consideration but are simply used for recruiters to determine your interest.

FEDERAL RESUME TIPS

Tailor Resume to Job Announcement

You may be tempted to submit your standard resume to a wide variety of positions and ultimately become frustrated when you don't advance in the hiring process. However, if you tailor your resume to a specific job description, your chances of moving to the next stage in the application process will drastically increase.

To customize your resume, carefully review the position description. Focus on the duties, qualifications and requirements sections and include keywords and phrases in your tailored resume. Make sure you demonstrate how you have developed the specific skills required by the agency. Your final resume should mirror the language used to describe the position.

The federal resume is becoming even more important as agencies try to simplify their applications. Emphasize areas where your previous experience or education overlaps with the duties and qualifications listed in the job opportunity announcement.

Sell Yourself and Your Achievements

Don't be shy about showing your knowledge, skills and accomplishments in your resume. Give the agency representative a reason to make you one of his or her top candidates. Include skills and achievements that go beyond your work experience and education. Think about all activities that might qualify you for a job, such as: involvement in social or religious organizations, volunteer experiences, unique projects or interests, awards or certificates and subjects mastered. These items may set your resume above the rest, especially if they correspond to the qualifications for the position.

Check Your Spelling and Grammar

One of the biggest complaints from federal agencies is that applicants frequently do not edit their work and often have spelling and/or grammatical errors in their federal resumes. Use a word processor or ask a peer or professional to check your spelling and grammar. Doing so may help you avoid being overlooked when it comes time for an agency to select candidates for an interview.

Be Concise

Provide as much detail as possible but be concise. Wordy or irrelevant information will only confuse the reader. When tailoring your resume, delete education or experiences that do not relate to the position.

Do not assume the reader is familiar with organizations in your resume. Provide context when appropriate and avoid acronyms. Omit unnecessary details. Provide enough information to demonstrate your qualifications, without overwhelming the reader. Remember: the quality of the information is more important than the quantity.

APPLICATION QUESTIONNAIRES & ESSAYS

Before you get started we recommend you view the [Five Tips for Communicating your Qualifications](#) USAJobs YouTube video.

How to Answer Application Questions

Most agencies use application questionnaires to screen candidates. Questionnaires vary in length but may contain up to 30 multiple-choice questions. Question formats may include yes/no, true/false, short-essay or standard multiple-choice questions. Some positions allow you to preview the questionnaire in the job posting, but generally you will complete the questionnaire when you submit your application.

To best answer these questions, take the time to consider your skills. Your questionnaire responses should mirror your resume. Some questionnaires include statements that ask you to summarize your experience in performing certain tasks with a range from "no experience" to "expert". If you claim to be an expert on every question answered but your resume doesn't validate that claim, the agency may think you are being dishonest. You should be able to back up your response through your resume or in an interview setting. If you find yourself ranking low on several of these questions, it may be a signal to you that you are not qualified for that particular position.

OTHER COMMON APPLICATION MATERIALS

Depending on the position and agency, you may be asked to submit multiple documents or forms with your application. Some of the more common types of documentation include college transcripts, professional certifications or proof of non-competitive status.

Other application materials requested may include cover letters, letters of recommendation, or writing samples. Make sure that each document reinforces the knowledge, skills and abilities listed in the qualifications of the position which you have already spoken to in the other components of your application.

Transcripts

You may need to submit college transcripts if you are required to verify receipt of a degree, special coursework or if you are claiming superior academic achievement. Plan in advance to obtain your transcript, as some schools may need a few weeks for processing. If you are unable to obtain an official transcript, check with the HR contact listed on the job posting—some agencies may accept unofficial documents.

Verification of Status

If you claim veteran's preference or another type of non- competitive status, you must submit the appropriate documentation to verify this status. The forms you need are generally listed in the job posting. USAJOBS.gov also provides links to many of these forms.

TIPS FOR SUBMITTING YOUR JOB APPLICATION

Submit YOUR Application On Time

Start immediately! The federal application process may have more steps than you are accustomed to, so allow plenty of time to thoroughly complete your application. Agencies will not make exceptions if you miss the deadline.

Follow Instructions

After reading the application requirements in the "How to Apply" section of the job announcement, be sure to complete each step and include all required items. When you are ready to submit your application on USAJOBS.gov, you may be redirected to an external hiring system. You will need to create a login on this website to actually submit your application. Be sure to submit all application materials through the agency's system of choice.

Note Key Application Details

For future reference, save both the job announcement number and the HR contact information listed in on the job posting in case you need to follow up with the agency.

Save Copy of Application

You will want to review your application if asked to interview, especially if you have recently applied to a number of jobs.

Be Consistent

Each piece of the application package should reinforce your qualifications for the position. Be consistent in what skills and abilities you highlight in the resume, questionnaire and other application materials.

VETERANS' PREFERENCE

Veterans' Preference was established by Congress to recognize those who have served our country and, in doing so, have suffered economic loss and, in some cases, have become disabled. It is designed to give veterans extra assistance in competing for a federal job.

Typically, veterans must have served on active duty for at least two years during a period of war or be disabled in order to be eligible for Veterans' Preference. Veterans receive an additional 5 to 10 points which is added to their score on the competitive civil service examination. Veterans' Preference does not guarantee the veteran a job. Veterans Preference information: www.fedshirevets.gov

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Federal agencies provide reasonable accommodations to individuals with disabilities, as long as you meet the job qualifications. Some of the accommodations provided include:

- TTYs for use with telephones
- Hardware and software that make computers accessible if you have vision impairments or difficulty using your hands
- Sign language interpreters or readers
- Training and other written materials in an alternative format (e.g., braille, audio tape, computer disk)
- Physical changes, such as installing a ramp or modifying a workspace

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