4-H CAREER EDUCATION HANDOUT

Filling Out Job Application Forms

If you haven't already done so, when you arrive for a job interview, you'll probably be asked to fill out the company's standard job application. Job applications help management see your strengths and weaknesses at a glance. Here are a few things to think about:

Education

Be honest with your responses. Unfortunately many people exaggerate about their education on their resumes and job applications. Employers are aware of this and are verifying education information like they do job references.

Work History

If you haven't had any formal employment before, that's okay. Just list any volunteer, casual labor or self-employment jobs (such as, mowing lawns or babysitting) you might have had. You can also include any leadership type roles you've had in school, church or through outside organizations.

References

Most employers contact all of your references if they are seriously considering you for a position. Use people you're certain will give you a positive recommendation. You want your references to represent you in the best possible way. Make sure you have permission to list someone as a reference.

Friends and Relatives

Many job applications ask if you have a friend or relative at the company. Be careful with this information. If your friend is a hard worker, mention their name. This shows you're connected to people who work hard. If you friend doesn't have a good reputation on the job, don't mention his or her name.

Off-limit Exceptions:

Employers know they're not supposed to ask questions about your age, gender, religion or other personal information. There are some exceptions to the law. An employer may ask you an off-limits question if it's important to your ability to perform the job. For example, if the job requires heavy lifting, the employer can ask you about physical limitations.

Tips for Completing a Job Application

1. **Type.** (This is usually not possible unless it's an online application.) Printing is the next best thing since it's easier to read. Use your best penmanship possible. Don't write in cursive.
2. **Use pen instead of pencil.** Neatness makes a difference. A neat application says that you take pride in what you do. A sloppy application says just the opposite.
3. **Try to answer every question on the form.** If something is confusing, ask for clarification. If you think it is an improper question, leave it blank. If a question doesn't apply to you write in "Not applicable."
4. **Don't give an expected salary since you don't want to price yourself out of a job.** Instead, write in "Open."
5. **Accuracy counts.** Check spelling, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses and dates. Making mistakes on the application implies you don't check your work.
6. **Make sure your reason for leaving a job is a good one.** For example say, "I left because I had advanced as far as I could," not " I left because I couldn't get along with the boss."
7. **Honesty is the best policy.** Don't exaggerate since you can be dismissed if you misrepresent or omit pertinent information.
8. **If a signature is requested, make sure you read the agreement carefully before signing and dating it.**