

**THE POLICE
HOW-TO
GUIDES**

**HOW TO STAY IN THE
JOB APPLICATION GAME**

by William Harvey
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HOW TO STAY IN THE JOB APPLICATION GAME

*Fill out your job
application
carefully and
accurately or you'll
make it easier for
them to say no*

Does this sound familiar? You've been waiting for the application process to open at an agency. You've checked web sites, the daily mail, and job announcements. Your desired department has (finally!) opened up their process, and you can't wait to submit your application.

Hold on, let's make sure you do the application correctly. If you go overboard with your applications, your dreams may end up in the rejection pile.

While you're waiting for the job opening, do some application preparation. You know you'll have to produce copies of a birth certificate, high school and college diplomas, certifications, and military papers (DD Form 214). Go make several sets of clear, legible copies and keep them in a file. Also make a PDF copy so you can send them as electronic attachments.

You'll want to avoid last-minute searches for lost papers and requesting overnight delivery of copies. Don't send a poor copy from the public copier machine with blurs and scratches. Produce a resume (just in case) with accurate information that can be validated. If you have a college degree, did you receive a diploma? Keep this document current.

Gather the information about your past work experiences and references. Face it, telephone numbers change and people move, so make sure to give correct information. Have all of the information on a prepared list to print or cut-and-paste—proper names, work and home contacts, and e-mail addresses. Don't use terms of endearment, use Snake's real name. Writing "Johnny D" as a character reference can send up a warning flag. You need to know how to portray this contact. Are they known from past employment, a friend, or relative? Also, be sure to ask them if you can use them as a reference. They could surprise you.

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Don't alter or edit the application! Do you want to be a cop or a graphic designer? Applications are designed that way for a reason. The department got along just fine, and doesn't need you to change the fonts, type size, color, or add squiggly designs!

If you have to print it out to fill out the application, do it legibly! Take your time and ensure that it's readable. Watch the contractions, use only the standard ones. Use two-letter abbreviations for a state or degree. Follow directions and use black or blue ink. Some applications can now be submitted online; follow their recommendations.

I've seen applications submitted on pastel stationery for letters of intent and resumes. Use white paper, black ink, and standard fonts. No flash and glitter, just do it. I know you want to get noticed but this is not the way to surface.

If the initial application states do not send copies, don't do it. Preliminary applications are reviewed and ranked as if you're a certified officer, college grad or veteran. Sending copies of every certificate you possess just muddies the issue; they'll be tossed or returned. When you return the packet, follow the directions. If it is to be sent to the civil service secretary or human resources, that's who you'll return it to. Don't send it to the chief of police or the mayor.

Again, be sure you fully understand the process. If applications are open for 30 days, don't call back every day and ask when you'll hear something. The real secret for success is to make it as easy as possible for the people handling your application. The more they have to work on your application, the more you'll get noticed (not in a good way). If you can't follow simple directions, play by the rules, and complete simple tasks, the process will weed you out. Take your time, do it correctly and be patient. It will pay off.