Application guidelines Germany

PFH Career Service

(updated: 2024)

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# The application's purpose: SELL YOURSELF

The application shall capture the reader's attention and promote the BENEFITS you can offer the company. The message to employers is not what the employer can do for you, but **what YOU can do for the employer**.
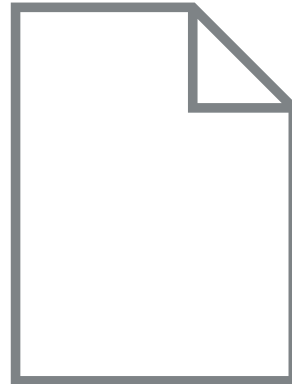
Your emails, application letters and resumes are your marketing tools and are intended for you to sell your profile and skills set. They need to be **tailored to each individual employer**, as they form the basis for the first impression you make.

Usual Elements of a German job application
(unless stated differently!)
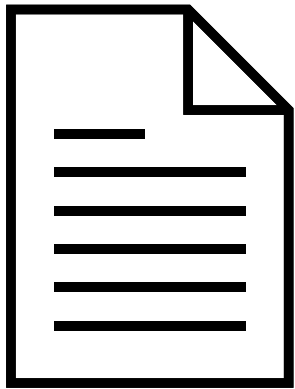
Cover letter

Cover (optional)

Photo (optional)
(high quality or professionally taken!)

Motivation letter (if asked for)
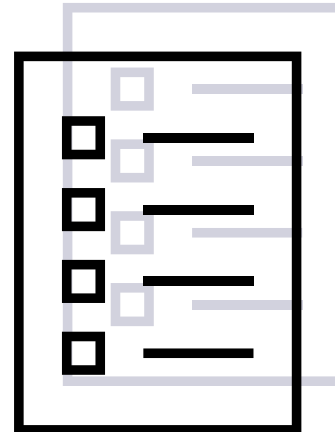
CV

+Photo (optional)
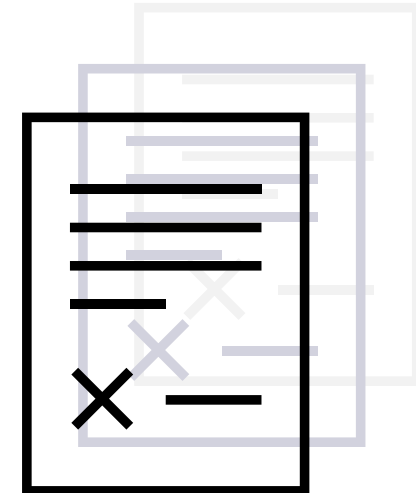
Certificates, confirmations

arranged chronologically or by relevance

Preparation

Most important step when applying for a job

Preparation

1. Analyze the job advertisement

2. Research in the internet or consult your network to understand the company/ department and what profile they are looking for

3. Analyse your professional profile and skills set to become aware of your value

4. Get in touch with someone from the company (if applicable)

5. Bring it together: **own expertise + job offer = your individual fit** & write an „answer" to the job ad

Reflect on your professional profile

„Hard skills" – work related, expert knowledge, aquired in education and training, e.g. study content, IT skills…

Transversal skills – talent or developend, transversal between occupations, e.g. methodical skills, research skills…

„Soft skills" – self-management skills, personality, social skills, e.g. enthusiasm, communicative, leadership, initiative, self-responsible…

Assessing the job ad

- Do you understand the description of the job?
- Does the description appeal to me?
- Do tasks & responsibilities suit you?
- Do you fulfill ~80% of requirements („must" and „can")?
- What kind of person are they looking for?
- Are there any hidden messages?
- How could the everyday working life look like? (Company culture, team…)
- What questions are left open?
- What's their preferred way of applying (which documents are required, do I need to fill out an application form)?

Prepare the „answer"

In your application documents you shall address each of the analyzed aspects. Make connections and give evidence of where you have previously demonstrated these skills.

| Requirement/ tasks/ company description	Do I fulfill it?	Experience/ qualification + example
Successfully completed studies in economics, engineering or a comparable qualification	✅	Study programme xy
Coordination and control of international projects in complex plant construction	⭕ *	Project management experience in different sector from 01-09/2020

*Even if you have not performed required skills, you may be capable of transferring similar skills learnt in a previous activity. Try to draw similarities using examples that are tailored to the specific position.

CV

The heart of your application

CV – from a recruiter's perspective

Most important elements of an application

Certificates

Motivation letter

CV
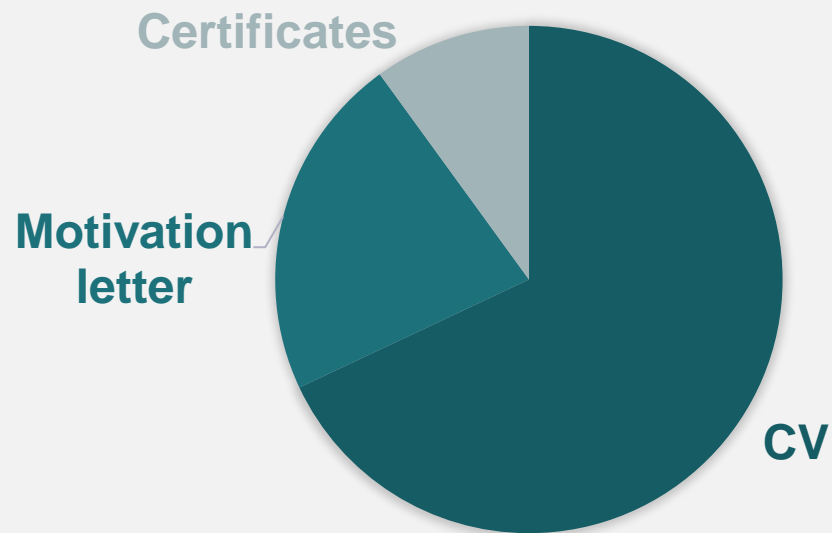
Time for CV

43 sec – 2min

First glimpse

Photo

https://www.stepstone.de/karriere-bewerbungstipps/eyetracking/ (2018)

CV - formal criteria

- Max. 2 pages

- Includes relevant academic as well as paid and unpaid work experience (even if no reference letter exists!)

- Antichronological → starting with most recent experience

- Nessecary personal data like address, nationality (does not have to be stated completely due to antidiscimination law!)

- Correct dates

- Complete details → e.g. position, company name, branch, city, country or school, city, degree, programme, focus areas, thesis topic, grade

- Date + signature

CV - content

Practical experience (paid/ non-paid working experience, engagement, voluntary activities, projects, time spent abroad, „transferable" skills)

Expert knowledge (academic education, further training, self studies, IT skills, languages, further „hard" skills)

Personality

(honors, interests, hobbies,

„soft" skills)

CV - layout

Your CV must be easy to read by providing a well-structured layout and clear section headings to draw recruiters' eyes to what's important.

! Content defines layout!

Further layout ideas:

www.bewerbung.de

CV - tips

- Choose meaningful categories if possible: Can you find a summarizing title for your experience e.g. „Practical experience in custumer service"

- Sort categories and content by relevance: What is more important - current side job (work experience) or study programme (academic education)? - and list it first. Find creative solutions for highlighting important activities!

- Practical experience: Do not list all - but most important responsibilities & achievments/ success by relevance (~ 3-5 bullet points per position) - you can also not mention any tasks at all if they are not important

- Define the language level in a practical manner: e.g. English C1 (study course language), German A2 (current classes B1, using on a daily base in side job), Hindi mother tongue

Cover letter

Tell your story and be remembered

Cover letter – content

Subject: Application for [concrete position or request e.g. compulsory internship of 6 months between Feb-Oct 2024"]**

1. **Why are you interested in this position/ company?**

2. **Why should they select you?**

3. **What's your value for their needs?**

4. **Formalities / Framework conditions**

✖ Common mistakes   ✔ Do better

- too long
- Not on the point
- Too polite
- Too formal
- Not custumized
- Phrases used
- Repeat CV

- Individualize (no copy paste at any time!)
- Use concrete examples
- Use CAR stories (challenge – action – results)
- Highlight your contribution
- describe your learnings

Cover letter – structure

Jane Doe
123 Main Street, 37083 Göttingen
jane.doe@email.com
mobile: 0155 6677 9900

John Smith
TheExampleCompany
Business Rd. 123
12345 Business City

Göttingen, 21 June 2023

Application for the position People and Organization Development Expert (x|f|m)

Dear Mr. Smith,

As an experienced HR professional with a strong passion for data-driven insights and focus on organizational development, I was thrilled to get the chance to talk to your colleague Mrs. Anne Hoe about recent restructuring processes in your department and current challenges of performance measurement and resulting business decisions.

With over ten years of experience in HR, including various roles including recruitment, training, data analysis and talent acquisition, I developed a deep understanding of the importance of data analysis in HR decision-making. Through my recent academic specialization in e-business I mastered fundamental analysis techniques such as power Pivot table for Excel and Tableau, allowing me to derive actionable insights from complex datasets.

In previous positions I showcased strong customer orientation and excellent communication skills across different hierarchical levels while being responsible as interface between management and wide-distributed employees. Building relationships and effectively collaborating with stakeholders are described as my core strengths, when asking my former team. Throughout my career, I have successfully managed talent management projects, demonstrating my proficiency in optimizing performance development processes.

I am confident to make a meaningful impact in this role using my strong analytical skills as well as hands-on spirit. I would welcome the chance to discuss how I can contribute to TheExampleCompany's success in more detail. I am available for an interview after July 1st 2023.

Sincerely,

Jane Doe

1. Your adress
2. Company adress
3. Place, date
4. Letter subject referring to the position
5. Adress concrete contact person
6. Catchy/ compeling opening or reference to a personal encounter or any other connection
7. Describe personal motivation
8. „Answer" position requirements with own profile
9. Formalities: Salary, entry date, time period (internship)
10. Salutation + signature
11. Attachments (opt.)

Cover letter – content

> **!** Cover letters are tailored to each role you apply for; employers are interested why you apply and how you define your value for their specific needs

PURPOSE: Highlight or add key information of your resume & tell the employer why they should consider employing you, based on your skills and experience (listed in CV)

The letter is a link between your resume and the job/ organization: It is used to convince the organization you have the in-demand skills and experience necessary to be the best applicant for the position – there's no need to "re-tell your CV"! Better use the space to "tell your story".

SUCCESS TIP: Show the employer that you know about their business

Research additional information about the company/ job position/ department/ sector, so that you kind of get inside the employers thinking and be exceptionally knowledgeable about their company and the job you are applying for.

Cover letter – linguistic style

How to write:

1. Draft it focusing on content in easy language (or mother tongue)

2. Transform it to formal language style (ChatGPT may help but it needs individual input first)

- Use concrete examples - avoid empty phrases

- Be enthusiastic and use positive wording, e.g. rather than using "I don't have any experience in ..." consider writing "I have had similar experiences whilst working with ..."

- Maintain a balance between self confidence and modesty; never sound desperate

- Be error free - have it checked by another reader as spell-check will not always edit incorrect wording and grammar

Final Checkup

How to proceed when proofreading your documents

Steps

1. What skills profile or kind of person are they looking for?

2. What do you bring to the table referring to that wanted profile?

3. How do you communicate your overall value for these specific needs?

Defining your profile

If your previous biografic history has a title – what would it be?

Pitch yourself!

Have ready a short description of yourself that you can use on job fairs, networking situations or a LinkedIn message.

For the pitch, we recommend the **present-past-future formula:**

- **Present:**   describe who you are and what you're doing
- **Past:**   explain your previous experience and expertise gained
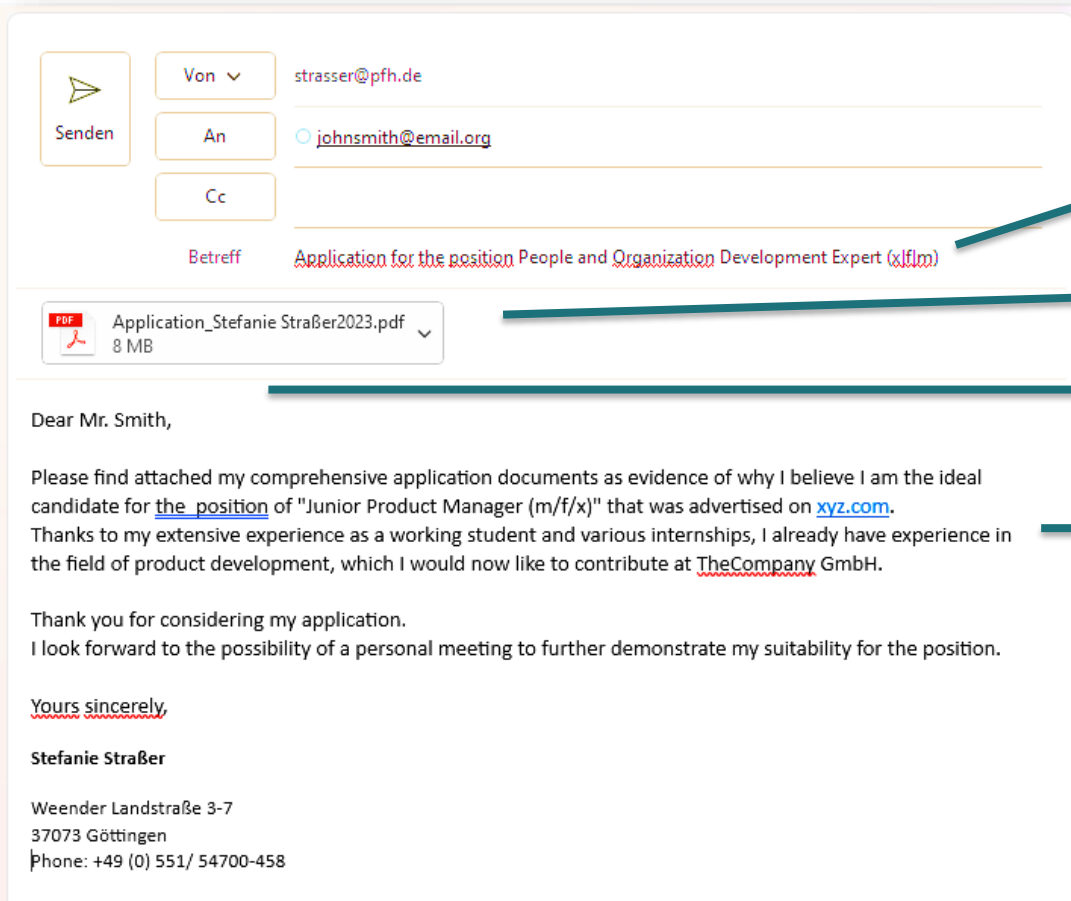- **Future:**   outline your career plans and how this role aligns with them.

Or:

- **Question**:   tell what you are looking for (advice, information, internship possibility)

Submitting your application

Careful handling is the key

Submitting your application via email

Von: strasser@pfh.de

An: ○ johnsmith@email.org

Cc:

Betreff: Application for the position People and Organization Development Expert (x|f|m)

📄 Application_Stefanie Straßer2023.pdf
8 MB

Dear Mr. Smith,

Please find attached my comprehensive application documents as evidence of why I believe I am the ideal candidate for the position of "Junior Product Manager (m/f/x)" that was advertised on xyz.com.
Thanks to my extensive experience as a working student and various internships, I already have experience in the field of product development, which I would now like to contribute at TheCompany GmbH.

Thank you for considering my application.
I look forward to the possibility of a personal meeting to further demonstrate my suitability for the position.

Yours sincerely,

Stefanie Straßer

Weender Landstraße 3-7
37073 Göttingen
Phone: +49 (0) 551/ 54700-458

Subject refering clearly to position, location, ref. no

All documents as **one** pdf labeled with your name, max. 6MB

Adressing HR team or recipient

Text:
- where you found the job posting, if asked for
- Summary of your profile in 2-3 sentences
- personal reference, if possible
- availability for job interview, if necessary
- **No typos!**

Submitting an application via app (e.g. LinkedIn, indeed.com)

If you find your dream job using an app, you can apply directly:

1. Clicking on "Apply Now" will take you to either the employer's mobile application page or an application form.

2. Have your application documents easily accessible on your mobile device, such as in the cloud.

3. Utilizing an account can streamline the process of your online application. The fields in the application form will be automatically filled out with your data; be careful: you still need to adjust them in order to tailor them to the specific job!

Submitting an application via online form

- Fill out all fields in the application form.
- Use relevant keywords in the free-text fields as they often have search functionalities for the recruiters.

> **!** Utilize relevant keywords to increase your chances of passing ATS and AI screening in recruiting, but still tell your story and keep the human element in mind.

- Treat the free-text field as a replacement for the cover letter and maintain general polite language and avoid using abbreviations, informal language, or telegram style. Include both a greeting and a closing formula.
- Free-text fields often have character limits. Focus on highlighting your strengths and keep your responses concise.
- Test the form before submitting to prepare your content accordingly.

Further strategies

Social media, networking, dealing with frustration

Using social media while job hunting

Use low-threshold contact options on social media platforms for your applications:

- Follow career pages or general company profiles on **Instagram** to learn more about the work atmosphere, open positions, and internal organizational structures
- Join regional job market **Facebook** groups to familiarize yourself with the job market
- Use provided **WhatsApp** contacts for open questions you might have
- Respond to **TikTok** videos to initiate initial contact
- Utilize the one-click application option on **Xing or LinkedIn** (after optimizing your profile and adding a meaningful "About Me" description)
- Attend **online career fairs** to get to know your dream employers better through informal inquiries and gather background knowledge for your application

www.karriere101.de/digitale-bewerbung/ (2023)

Unsolicited Applications via networking

Leverage your network: Reach out to your professional contacts and inquire if they have any insights or connections within the company you are interested in. Request introductions to relevant individuals, e.g. HR personnel.

Contact HR through your network: Use your network connections to reach out to HR directly, mentioning the mutual connection and expressing your interest in submitting an unsolicited application..

Create tailored application documents highlighting your skills and value proposition. Submit your application using the designated channels provided by HR.

Follow up with your network contacts: Keep your network contacts informed about your application and ask for their support in following up on your behalf or providing additional insights or recommendations.

Dealing with frustration

The application phase can be a real test of patience. But it won't be as tough in your career. Getting started is the biggest hurdle you need to overcome.

- Avoid comparing yourself: Don't worry about how quickly or well things are going for others. Focus on yourself and take care of the things that matter to you (hanging out with friends, learning new things, staying active, enjoying music…)
- Set small milestones and reward yourself regularly
- Establish a solid daily routine and make sure you include your job application activities in your schedule. During times of low motivation, harness the power of routines to keep you going
- Acknowledge self-doubt and negative feelings - It's okay to have moments of uncertainty. Give yourself space to process them. If needed, take a break and redirect your focus towards something enjoyable and uplifting.

www.karriere101.de/mental-health/ (2023)