

How to write a job application in Germany

In order to apply for a position, written application documents are very important. How they usually look is different in each country. In Germany, great importance is attached to the format and content of the written application. This document is intended to give you an orientation and represent the standards of an application in Germany. Often, however, variations from this are also acceptable (depending on the branch/company). The most important thing is that you feel comfortable with the results of your application. If you have any questions regarding your application, please feel free to contact the team of the Welcome Center.

The written application consists of:



Cover letter

(Cover sheet)

Curriculum vit

Copies of
professional
references

Copies of the most
important school and
training certificates

General information:

- The application should best be written in German. Exception: If the job posting is in a different language
- Reader-friendly fonts should be used (e. g. Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri or Helvetica)
- Font size: between 11 and 13 dots; line spacing: single line; margins: left: 2.5 cm, top/bottom/right: 2 cm
- A clear layout should be used (same design of cover letter and CV)
- In the meantime, it is no longer common to send applications by mail. Digital applications by e-mail are more common. There are a few things to consider:
 - The name and the e-mail address of the contact person are usually given in the job advertisement. Otherwise, you can find out the name by searching on the homepage or by calling the company
 - The e-mail address you use should be professional; it should contain your own name if possible; fictitious names seem unprofessional and can end up in the spam folder
 - The e-mail subject line should be used (here you can insert the subject line from the cover letter - e. g. "Application as...")
 - A short text should be written in the E-Mail - here is an example:

Sehr geehrte/r Frau/Herr x,

anbei finden Sie meine Bewerbungsunterlagen für die von Ihnen ausgeschriebene Stelle als Projektmanagerin.

Ich freue mich darauf von Ihnen zu hören. / Für ein persönliches Gespräch stehe ich Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Ihr Name
(e-mail signature)

- All documents should be combined to a single PDF file (the value for the maximum size is 5 MB)
- The file should have a suitable file name (e. g. "Application documents_Max Mustermann")
- The signature should be scanned and inserted at the end of the cover letter and the CV

Good to know!

Merging the documents into a PDF document is very important. If you have difficulties with this, you will find help on the Internet, e.g. under the following link: https://praxistipps.chip.de/pdf-zusammenfuegen-so-gehts_92095

- In the case of an application by post (only if requested in the job advertisement), the following must be taken into account:
 - Put all documents in a designated application folder
 - Print on white, plain DIN A4 paper on one side
 - Always send just copies of certificates, never the originals
 - Dispatch in a DIN4 envelope with sufficient franking (usually 1.55€ stamp)

Important!

If the application is not carefully designed and contains any possible mistakes, it is often sorted out directly by the human resources managers of the companies!

1. The Cover Letter

a) Layout

The cover letter should not be longer than one A4 page. It consists of:

- Full name and address of the sender
- Full name and address of the recipient
- Place and date
- Subject line (marked in **bold**) either reference number or job title - "Bewerbung als X"
- Greeting / salutation:
 - In the greeting, use the name of the responsible person (if known) Example: "Sehr geehrter Herr Mustermann,"
 - If the name is not known, try to find it out by making a phone call. This is especially helpful in small companies. During the phone call you can introduce yourself and show your interest. You will be remembered, which can increase your chances.
 - If you cannot find out the name of the person in charge, use the general "Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren"



b) Content

The following text of the cover letter is divided into introduction, main part and conclusion. These parts are separated by a paragraph.

- In the short **introduction** you first state the reason for your application / refer to the job description or the telephone call that may have preceded, introduce your person briefly and explain why you are currently looking for a job (e. g. graduating from university), also name the most important stages of your career path.
 - If your foreign qualification has been recognised as equivalent to a German qualification, write this directly in the introduction. This makes your degree more understandable for the German employer
 - Find out beforehand whether the profession you are applying to requires a recognition of your qualifications from abroad

- The **main part** should explain briefly:
 - why you are interested in this job
 - why you want to work for this company
 - why you are the best person to fill the position (show your strengths with examples, e. g. by proof of professional/study-related success)
 - how you can support / enrich the company in its activities and
 - why you want to work in Germany

In addition, you also state your earliest possible starting date and (if required) your salary requirement.

- **Closing sentence and greeting**

Good to know !

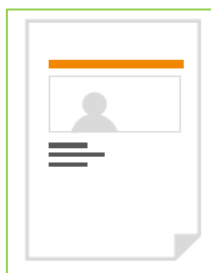
Third-country nationals can refer in their cover letter or interview to the fact that they are in contact with the Welcome Center Heilbronn-Franken, which will be happy to help you and the company with all steps necessary, free of charge.

Important!

Be well informed about the advertised position and the company so that you can prepare a job application tailored to the job description and the company! Consider which tasks and responsibilities are required for the execution of the position and which successes or skills qualify you exactly for this tasks. This is more work, but an individual application increases your chances for being invited to an interview.

2. The Cover Sheet

The cover sheet ("Deckblatt") is not a "must have" in your application documents. However, it can enhance the application visually and give you more space in the CV since the personal information is already listed on the cover sheet. You have more creative freedom concerning the design of the cover sheet than with the cover letter and CV. But make sure that the cover sheet is clearly structured and visually appealing.



The cover sheet usually consists of:

- Heading, e. g. "BEWERBUNG"
- Desired position, e. g. "als Projekt-Manager bei der Muster GmbH"
- Contact details (name, address, telephone number, e-mail address)
- application photo (no "must", but recommended)
- Reference to attachments (curriculum vitae, certificates, references)
- A short profile of your main qualifications (optional)

The Application Photo

Due to the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG), no one is obliged to use a photo. However, most human resources managers in Germany still expect it. Especially if you use a cover sheet, the photo can be used for a more attractive design. If you use a photo on the cover sheet, you can omit it from your CV. Often the human resources managers use the application photo to get a "first impression". An open and at the same time purposeful smile is usually authentic and convincing.

If you decide for an application photo, you must consider the following points:

- The application photo should not be a photo from the photo box or a private photo. It should be professionally made. It is best to have it taken by a photographer/photo-studio in your area
- The outfit should fit the job or the potential employer and has to be discreet and serious at the same time (no bright colours, no low neckline, no eye-catching jewellery, etc.)
- The direct view into the camera and a natural smile make a pleasant impression

3. The Curriculum Vitae (CV)

a) Layout

- The CV generally should not be longer than two DIN A4 pages
(Exception: if you have already gained a lot of work experience, you may also have three pages)
- The training and professional experience should be listed in reverse chronology, with the most recent activities listed first
- The CV should be clear and well structured
- Mostly the CV is tabulated in two columns –
Left column: time period, right column: description of the activity (job or study)
- The curriculum vitae should include not only year dates but also months (e. g. 10/2016 to 10/2017)
- The curriculum vitae should have no gaps and be up to date
- At the end you confirm with place, date and your **signature** the correctness of the data given



b) Content

The CV includes:

- The heading "LEBENSLAUF" (marked in bold)
- Your contact details (first and last name, address, e-mail, telephone) and personal data (date and place of birth)
- Here you can also mention your status of residency, whether you already have a work permit or what permit you are eligible for once you have a job offer (example Blue Card, special regulations for international students etc.)
- School education from secondary school onwards (the primary school does not have to be indicated)
Left column: time period, right column: name and location of the school or university, if applicable course of studies, major areas of study and, if you have completed your studies, also: degree (B. A., M. A.) as well as final grade and topic of the thesis
- Work experience (professional title, name and place of the employer, naming of the most important 3-5 tasks)
- If the case stays abroad
- If the case: volunteer work
- Other qualifications
 - Language skills
 - Use the commonly used categories like "native", "fluent", "basic knowledge"
 - If you attend a German language course at the time of application, indicate that your level of German language skills will improve
 - Computer skills
 - Training / Certificates / Awards (most important copies as attachment)
- Hobbies/personal interests (no must, but can to show for example the participation in a team sport for emphasizing the ability to work in a team)

4. References

In Germany, it is common practice to receive a so-called professional reference at the end of each internship or employment relationship. In this document, the employer confirms to you in which period you have worked in the respective company. The

certificate also contains a description of the tasks and an evaluation of the working method. If references are not common in your country of origin, please mention this on the relevant passages in your CV.

Good to know!

In Germany, employees have a legal claim to receive a professional reference. This claim expires after 3 years.

5. School and Training Certificates

Add to your application all references, awards, certificates (e.g. proof of further training) that are relevant for the job

- All others can be omitted (without relevance), otherwise the annex is quickly overloaded and confusing
- If necessary, you should have your certificates translated into German and certified
- If necessary, add extra information to explain the documents:
 - e. g. via the grading system
 - Explanation of your vocational qualification certificate: type of training, the typical sectors and fields of activity, content of training and the achieved knowledge, skills and competences. Under the following link you will find further information on some professions of the Europass Certificate Supplements:
<http://www.europass-info.de/index.php?id=46>
 - For university degrees: Please contact your university. There you will receive a „Diploma Supplement“, which explains the university degree and your qualifications in detail
- If you cannot provide all documents, explain why this is the case

A special kind of application -

The Unsolicited Application

If you don't find the perfect vacancy for you, another possibility is the unsolicited application. This is aimed at potential employers but without reference to a special vacancy. First of all, you have to choose a company you would like to work for. Afterwards, it is advisable to call this company to inquire whether an unsolicited application is desired or not. If the company likes to receive your application, you should put extra effort into creating them. Define the job you want to do and explain why exactly you are suitable for it. Please state the focal points of your studies and/or previous work experience. Show that you have been involved with the company and can identify with it. Otherwise, the documents for an unsolicited application have to be prepared according to the same principle as for a "normal" application.

General information

If you are looking for examples of application documents, you will find them on the Internet. Have a look at different applications and find your own style.

Any further questions?

If you have prepared your application documents and have questions, you are welcome to [contact](#) the Welcome Center Heilbronn-Franken. We offer a free application check – we read your application and make suggestions for changing it. Call the Welcome Center Heilbronn-Franken and make an appointment or write us an e-mail. You can also come during open office hours; you can find the exact locations and times on our website at [Locations and Opening Hours](#).

Phone +49 (0) 7131 7669 867

Email welcomecenter@heilbronn-franken.com.

Example of a letterhead:

<p>Muster GmbH Herr Peter Müller Musterstraße 19 74172 Neckarsulm <i>(insert one blank line before place and date)</i></p> <p><i>(insert two blank lines after place and date)</i> Bewerbung als Projektmanager / Referenznummer 6703 <i>(insert two blank lines here)</i></p> <p>Sehr geehrter Herr Müller,</p> <p><i>introduction</i></p> <p><i>main part</i></p> <p><i>closing sentence:</i> e. g. Über eine Einladung zu einem persönlichen Gespräch, in dem ich Sie von meinen Fähigkeiten überzeugen kann, freue ich mich sehr.</p> <p>Mit freundlichen Grüßen</p> <p>Ihr Name (e-mail signature)</p>	<p>Zhang San Musterweg 4 74076 Heilbronn Tel.: +49 123 45678910 E-Mail: zhang.san@mail.com</p> <p>Heilbronn, 10.01.2018</p>
--	---

You can also find this document online for download here:

<https://www.welcomecenter-hnf.com/fachkraefte/arbeiten-karriere/bewerben.html>

We make every effort to provide up-to-date and correct information, however cannot be held liable for erroneous information.

Latest update: April 2020