



Apply successfully

Good applications made simple



IHK Ausbildungs-GmbH



The most important thing first
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This brochure provides you with lots of important tips and advice for a successful application.

But perhaps you are still unsure about your professional future? An apprenticeship or maybe even a dual study programme?



**Applying via
an online portal**
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Or maybe you already have some idea of what you would like to do, but do not know which company offers training for this profession? Then just take a look at our homepage – the IHK (Chamber of Industry and Commerce) offers lots of services related to choosing a profession.

All our services can be found at

schule-wirtschaft-ihk.de/berufstart/



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If you want to start working on your application now, you can find two checklists on the right. The first contains all the important points to ensure that your application is complete. The second contains the points which need to be checked and adjusted for additional applications.



Cover letter
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Before you send off any application, use this list and cross off each point once it has been properly checked. This way, you can avoid mistakes.



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Checklists for writing an application

1

Cover letter

- Full company name
- Contact person
- Correct name of training occupation
- Your contact details such as address, phone number, email
- Location, date, signature

Curriculum vitae

- Your contact details such as address, phone number, email
- Reverse chronological order (most up-to-date information first)
- No information gaps
- Precise dates (month/year)
- (Expected) school-leaving qualification
- Professional application photo
- Foreign language knowledge including language level
- IT skills (name programmes, specific skills)
- Location, date, signature

Attachments

- Straight and well-scanned documents
- At least the most recent school certificate
- If applicable, all pages of your school-leaving certificate
- References from work and internships, certificates

Important for all application documents

- Check spelling
- Ask another person to proofread
- Clear formatting
- PDF file
- Max. file size of 5 MB
- Clear file name(s)

2

Check and modify for each new application

- Full company name
- Contact person
- Correct name of training occupation
- Date on curriculum vitae and cover letter



The most important thing first

Never be sloppy with your applications! Whether the application is on paper, via an online portal or by email, ensure that your work is clean and thorough and that at least one other person proofreads your application!

You should have the following documents completed and available (see also the checklist on page 3):

1. Cover letter
2. Cover page (this is not essential)
3. Curriculum vitae
4. School certificates
5. Internship certificates
6. Certificates, references, etc.
7. Work samples (if required)

Applying via an online portal

Online applications involve filling out a form which has been prepared by the company. You receive specific instructions about what documents need to be uploaded and in what form.

TIP:

When it comes to online applications, make sure to answer every question. Do not leave any field empty, as it may lead to your application being automatically rejected.

Most portals will ask you to upload your cover letter as a PDF file.

If, on the other hand, there is an empty box for the cover letter, you should prepare it in a Word document first, then copy and paste it into the online form. Check whether there are a maximum number of characters permitted. You may need to shorten your cover letter!

Sometimes online portals feature additional empty fields where you can enter an extra motivation letter. If you leave this field blank you are wasting an opportunity to make a good impression!

Before clicking send, you can take a screenshot of all the fields you have filled in, so you know later exactly what you wrote.

If the online form does not allow you to navigate backwards, you can start by working through the form under a different name and taking screenshots as you go along – but of course you should stop before the application is sent. You can then begin again with greater certainty under your own name.

START



Email applications

Essentially, an email application is just an application portfolio in electronic form. You should prepare all the necessary documents and ideally combine them in a **single** PDF file, generally with a maximum size of 5 MB.

You can create, combine and change the size of PDFs with online tools such as tools.pdf24.org/de/.

TIP:

Use a respectable email address (not partyanimal@something.com) and make sure to use this one email address throughout. Send your application from the same email address that you provide as your contact address.

Check the finished PDF file to make sure it is of sufficient quality. A lopsided certificate should be rescanned. Also check your scanner's resolution settings.

If you do not have a scanner, you can scan in a copy shop or library or at your school. Scanning apps are also available for your phone.

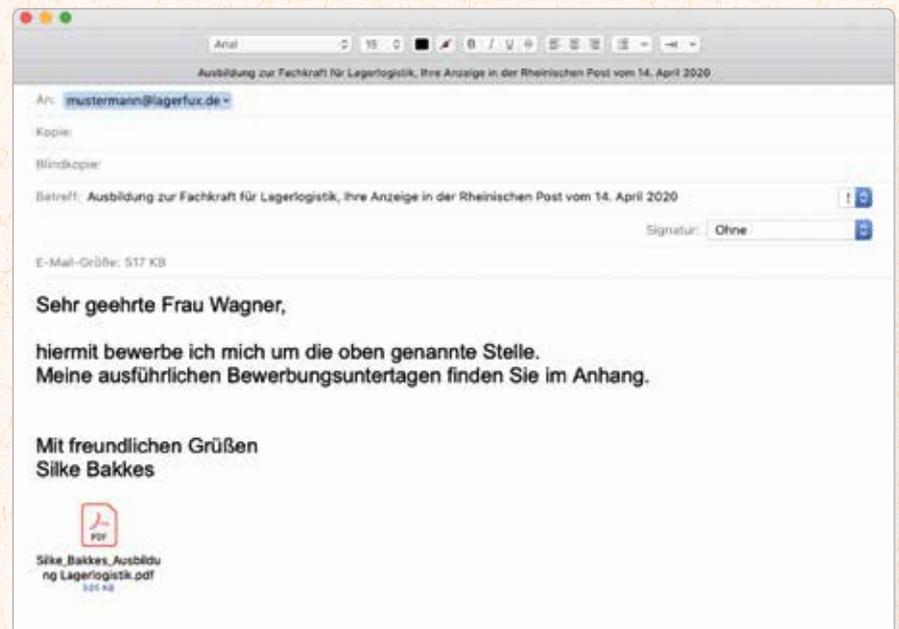
It is important to give the files an appropriate name. The file name should mention the type of document and your name (CV_Birte_Bienlein). The recipient then knows what sort of document they are dealing with. You then send the final PDF file together with a short email to the respective company.

The application cover letter should not be copied into the email, but instead also attached in the PDF file. The subject line of the email contains the exact title of the position, e.g. "Training as a Warehouse Logistics Specialist" and where you saw the advertisement. In the accompanying email you should also formally address the recipient. Under no circumstances should you send a "blank" email with attachments!

A good accompanying email might look as follows:

TIP:

All documents you plan to send should be saved as PDFs. Please do not use any other file formats!



Cover letter

The cover letter in your application portfolio is the first work sample that the company gets to see from you. You should therefore prepare it with the utmost care. The reader wants to form an impression of you to see whether you are a good fit for the training position. Avoid irrelevant details in the letter. Instead, focus on your main strengths.

Write a strong cover letter and think about what information it contains which will need to be checked or modified for each application. You can also find these points in the checklist. Use colour to highlight this information, and remove the colour only when you have edited the point for the cover letter you are currently working on. This will help you to avoid embarrassing mistakes. If you want to make a particularly good impression, revise the letter for every application individually and show that you have done your research on the company.

Using the example of Tom Tower, who would like to train as a photographer, we show you what points will immediately grab the attention of human resources managers:

Important!



Cover letter and curriculum vitae also need to be signed in the case of an electronic application. Insert your scanned signature into the respective document. Please do not print the document, sign it and re-scan it, as it reduces quality!

1. **Subject line:** This should include the training position you are applying for and where you saw the advertisement. If you have spoken to the contact person in advance by phone, then refer to the call in your subject line ("Our phone call on 24 April 2020").
2. **Before applying you should, if possible, identify a specific contact partner.** This can often be done via the company's homepage. If not, you can contact the company's head office and ask for the name of the person who deals with applications. In this case, make sure they spell the name for you!
3. **You need a bit of courage to call the company in advance, but it offers a major advantage.** As in our example with Tom, it provides you with an excellent introductory sentence for your cover letter, and the contact partner is familiar with you!
4. **By mentioning the USA trip, Tom shows what he has been doing between finishing school and writing his application.** If there is also a considerable gap between the time you finished school and the time you are making your application, mention briefly what you have done in this period – a line or two is sufficient.
5. **If you mention your internship, describe as specifically as possible what you learned or did and how.** If that would involve too much information, then perhaps just give an example and add that you would be happy to provide more detail in person.
6. **As a rule, you should only use words and phrases like "motivation", "team player", "ability to work under pressure" and "commitment" in connection with your own skills, hobbies and work tasks.** Be as specific as possible in explaining how, for example, you demonstrated your qualities as a team player when doing sport: "As a player I also sometimes had to put my own ambition aside and take up a defensive position for the good of the team." Or: "When learning to play the harp I also learned how to motivate myself and develop the discipline required for regular practice."
7. **The last paragraph explains why Tom is applying to Fotostudio Objektiv.** Mr Pfeil will be impressed. Who wants to offer a position to someone who does not care where they do their training?
8. **A frequent piece of advice, but one that is absolutely correct: Make sure your final sentence is not lacking in confidence.** "I would be happy if you invited me for an interview" does not sound great. Tom has found a good alternative!
9. **The word "attachment(s)" should be used to refer to additional documents.** Nowadays, it is no longer necessary to list the documents individually.



Tom Tower | Müllerweg 99 | 41464 Neuss | 0176 1234567 | tom_tower@web.de

Fotostudio Objektiv
Martin Pfeil
Dürener Str. 123
50931 Köln

Neuss, 27. April 2020

1. Ihre Stellenanzeige in der IHK-Lehrstellenbörse | Ausbildung zum Fotografen

Unser Telefongespräch am 24. April 2020

Sehr geehrter Herr Pfeil, **2.**

- 3.** vielen Dank für das informative Gespräch am Freitag, das meinen Wunsch, eine Ausbildung bei Ihnen zu machen, bekräftigt hat. Im vergangenen Jahr habe ich die Höhere Handelsschule mit der Fachhochschulreife abgeschlossen und im Anschluss zehn Monate lang die USA bereist. Nun bewerbe ich mich für den Ausbildungsbeginn am 1. August 2020. **4.**

Seit über zehn Jahren beschäftige ich mich in meiner Freizeit mit der Fotografie. Schon früh hatte ich die Gelegenheit, einer befreundeten Fotografin bei Auftragsarbeiten zu assistieren und habe dabei einen Blick für Motive entwickelt. In einem Fotokurs des Neusser Jugendzentrums habe ich gelernt, schwarz-weiße wie auch farbige Bilder zu entwickeln und zu vergrößern. Meine Begeisterung für das Fach Chemie bildet eine gute Grundlage für die Arbeit im Labor. Seit circa fünf Jahren fotografiere ich ausschließlich digital und kann nicht nur mit meiner Spiegelreflexkamera, sondern auch mit gängigen Bildbearbeitungsprogrammen wie Photoshop sicher umgehen.

- 5.** Bei einem Praktikum im Flexi-Fotoshop konnte ich darüber hinaus meine Kontaktsicherheit im Umgang mit Kunden unter Beweis stellen. Durch meinen Auslandsaufenthalt, den ich selbst organisiert habe, bin ich **6.** belastbar und flexibel geworden.
- 7.** Wie ich Ihrer Webseite entnommen habe, liegt Ihr Schwerpunkt im Bereich der Porträtfotografie. Hieran reizen mich vor allem der Kundenkontakt und die Möglichkeit, jeden Einzelnen individuell in Szene zu setzen. Mein Pkw-Führerschein macht mich mobil. Gerne würde ich mich mit großem Engagement in Ihr Fototeam einbringen, um das von der Pike auf zu lernen, was schon lange mein Hobby ist.
- 8.** Ich freue mich, wenn Sie mich zu einem Gespräch einladen, um einander kennenzulernen.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen



Tom Tower

- 9.** Anlagen

Curriculum vitae

Your curriculum vitae should be clearly and logically structured in a table-like format and contain no information gaps. It complements your cover letter and brings all your important personal and academic data together on one page. It helps the human resources manager to decide whether you would be a good fit for the training position.

We have compiled and explained the most important points for you to consider when writing your curriculum vitae.

1. Format the document clearly. Headings should be distinct from the rest

Make sure to use tab settings to give your CV a neat appearance. Do not try to do this by manually inserting spaces – it will go wrong! Web pages such as pcs-campus.de/office/word-tabulatoren/ provide a good description of how to work with tabs.

2. An application photo is no longer obligatory, but companies do like to see one. Insert your digital photo directly into the CV. At the bottom of this page you can find a tip on application photos.

3. Details about your place of birth, your family and nationality are voluntary. If you are not yet 18 years old, we recommend giving the names of your parents, as they will also have to sign your training contract. There is no need to give any information about their occupations.

4. The best approach is to present information in reverse chronological order i.e. start with the most recent information and work backwards. This means the person reading the CV can see the most important details straight away – they are more likely to be interested in your final secondary school grades than in which primary school you attended.

5. When listing your practical experience, be specific with times. State as accurately as possible what you did in which months. It makes a good impression if you state your main role during your internship or part-time job.

6. No matter what school you attended, state your school-leaving qualification. If you are not yet finished, you can write, "Expected school-leaving qualification: Abitur (upper secondary school leaving qualification) 2020". If your grades have already been determined, you can include them.

7. Almost all applicants claim that they have computer skills. That is too vague. It is better to list the exact programmes you have experience of. You should also say whether you have, for example, "basic" or "good" knowledge of these programmes.

Likewise, you should be as specific as possible when it comes to foreign language knowledge. For example:

Vietnamese:	native speaker
German:	business fluent
English:	intermediate
Russian:	basic knowledge

8. If you have a driving licence, state it on your CV, including the licence category.

9. Think carefully about what hobbies to include. "Watching TV" or "playing computer games" are not really hobbies that add something to your CV. Simply stating "music" makes it sound like you enjoy listening to music as a way of relaxing. As a hobby that is also not particularly striking. However, if you are actively involved in music – you play an instrument, sing in a choir or in a band – that's another story. Experience of being in a band or on stage, for example, show that you can integrate yourself into a group and that you are not afraid of performing in front of strangers. Depending on the training position, these qualities can also benefit a company and are worth mentioning in the cover letter.

However, it should not sound as if your hobbies are more important to you than the training position you are applying for. If you and your band play in a different German city every weekend, the company in question may worry whether you will have the time to dedicate to the training position on offer.

10. Location and date should be included at the bottom of every CV. Make sure that the date is the same as the date on the cover letter!

TIP:

If you include a photo in your application, **avoid using a passport photo**, as these biometric photos tend not to look very good. Ask a photographer to take application photos – they will have many more possibilities to capture you in the right light.



1. Lebenslauf

Persönliche Daten

Vor- und Zuname: Benjamin Cook
 Adresse: Bäckerstraße 99
 41464 Neuss
 Geburtsdatum: 6. Mai 2002
 3. Geburtsort: Mönchengladbach
 Staatsangehörigkeit: deutsch
 Familienstand: ledig
 Eltern: Claudia Cook, Carsten Cook

2.



Praktische Erfahrungen

4. 5. 03/2020 Schreinerei Holzweg, Neuss; zweiwöchiges Pflichtpraktikum im Zuschnitt
 10/2019 Commerzbank AG, Neuss; dreiwöchiges freiwilliges Praktikum
 in der Abteilung „Wertpapiere“
 06/2019 Computershop „Bits & Bytes“, Neuss; Aushilfskraft im Service

Schulausbildung

6. seit 09/2012 Comenius-Gymnasium, Neuss
 Voraussichtlicher Abschluss: Abitur im Sommer 2020
 09/2008 bis 08/2012 Käthe-Kollwitz-Grundschule, Neuss

Besondere Kenntnisse

- PC-Kenntnisse: 7. MS-Office: gute Kenntnisse; Adobe Photoshop: erste Erfahrungen
 Sprachen: Englisch: fließend; Französisch: Grundkenntnisse
 8. Führerschein: Klasse B

Interessen

9. Lesen, Musik (ich spiele Gitarre in einer Band und habe Bühnenerfahrung)
 Aikido (im Verein), Fitness

10. Neuss, 27. April 2020

Benjamin Cook

Other creative ways to find a training position

TIP:

Before you apply somewhere: Check what appears on the internet if you search your name. Do you have publicly accessible social media profiles? What is your profile picture and status on, for example, WhatsApp? What information is visible to a person who does not know you, but who has your mobile number? Now is the time to delete, hide or change **anything that might be embarrassing**. Be aware that anything that can be found about you online might be brought up in conversation, and think about how you should react.

Another good way of finding a training position is to create a profile on a social network which specialises in this area. Companies which train people in your desired profession can "discover" you on such platforms. One example is the IHK's "Lehrstellenbörse". You can find the site here: [ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de](https://www.ihk-lehrstellenboerse.de).

Most of the platforms on which you can set up a profile and be found by companies offer a certain amount of data protection. This is also the case with the "Lehrstellenbörse". Only registered training companies have access, and of that group only companies which offer training in your chosen profession(s) within a set radius can access your data. That is important! Always check the privacy policy before you make any of your data available!

It is better to be safe than sorry! To sum up: Use a professional photo and take a professional approach, present information in a clear and structured manner and include a full CV.

There are other ways to stand out from the crowd, for example by creating an application video or your own application homepage. Such strategies can make a great impression, but they might also end up being embarrassing. Remember, the internet does not forget!

You should therefore only use such media if you feel comfortable and confident about how to use them.

TIP:

There is also an app for the Germany-wide apprenticeship portal. You can download it for free.



TIP:

It may sound obvious, but it is worth repeating because mistakes often appear in precisely this area: Make sure that there are no spelling or grammar errors in your documents. If possible, all documents should be **proofread by several people**. If applying in German, make sure to use a capital letter for "Sie" and "Ihr" when formally addressing the recipient. An online check of your texts might also be worthwhile. Websites that offer this service include [duden.de](https://www.duden.de) – but you should also take another close look at your text yourself.



You have sent your application – now what?

After sending your application, you should be aware of how the company might contact you. If you have given your parents' home number, let them know who might be calling in the near future. Tell them what information they should give to a caller and what information they should request if you are not there. Pen and paper should be close at hand!

If you have given your mobile number, check the greeting message when someone gets through to your mailbox and make sure to answer the phone appropriately if it rings. Try to always have a pen and paper ready to make notes!

If you expect to be contacted by mail, check your inbox every day and your spam filter to make sure you don't miss any messages.

If the interview is due to take place by video (Microsoft Teams, Skype, Zoom, ...), make sure you are well prepared. Be aware of what is visible in the background and remove any inappropriate objects from view. Check lighting and sound and make sure that you will not be disturbed. Treat the conversation as seriously as you would a face-to-face interview in a company and dress appropriately. Switch off other mobile devices, put the landline phone in another room and make sure that no one enters the room and that the doorbell will not disturb you. It is a good idea to close the window so as not to be disturbed by noise from outside. We also recommend you do a test call in advance with a family member or friend.

And then?

Now you should prepare for your interview. Some interesting videos about this topic are available on our homepage:

schule-wirtschaft-ihk.de/berufsstart/videos-zur-bewerbung/



The IHK Ausbildungs-GmbH wishes you every success with your application and a rewarding and successful apprenticeship!





IHK Ausbildungs-GmbH

Legal notice

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We have provided a lot more useful information at schule-wirtschaft-ihk.de/berufsstart/ to help you enter professional life. Just scan the QR code!



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