

- Contact your local Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) to secure a driver's license (if you're eligible) or a state identification card.

Job Applications

Most employers require job seekers to complete an application form. Applications are designed to collect negative information, and employers use applications to screen people out. The following tips can help you fill out applications effectively.

Prior Convictions

Applications can be especially tricky for ex-offenders because most of them ask about prior convictions. When asked on an application, “**Have you been convicted of a felony in the past xx years?**” your options for answering are limited. You might

- **Say no.** While tempting, this is not a good idea. Lying about your past on an employment application is cause for dismissal. If the employer finds out about your conviction, you will most likely be fired. Today's employers have access to lots of personal data on potential hires, and your record won't stay hidden for long.
- **Leave it blank.** Leaving it blank will likely raise a red flag for the employer. It's possible, however, that they will overlook the question and grant you an interview, at which point you can discuss the matter. Still, most employers would rather you address your past honestly from the start rather than ignore the question.
- **Answer honestly.** You can simply write “*Yes, will explain during interview,*” or you may provide an attached statement with the application explaining the nature of your crime (see below for how to do this). Though each person's circumstance is different, this is the approach we most recommend.

Prepare a Summary Statement

One of the most effective ways to address questions regarding a conviction is to submit a summary statement along with your application. The statement honestly addresses your past, but also gives you an opportunity to present it in a positive way by discussing your rehabilitation efforts as well as your goals for the future.

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You should work with your counselor or parole officer to develop a summary statement for your particular situation. Consider the sample statement below:

I was convicted of a felony four years ago. However, I accept full responsibility for my actions and have paid my debt to society. While incarcerated, I took advantage of various training programs and developed the skills necessary to be successful in the position of machine operator within your company. I welcome the opportunity to discuss my conviction and rehabilitation with you in further detail. Based on the job qualifications, I'm sure that I would make a valuable contribution to your business. I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Steven Brown

Gaps in Employment

Gaps in employment indicate to the employer that the candidate may not be dependable or does not have a good work ethic. Therefore, it is important for you to account for all time periods on your application. If your gap in employment is due to incarceration, it is a good idea to document the jobs you performed *while* incarcerated. Consider the following example of a person incarcerated in the Florida State Penitentiary for four years.

Work History			
Name and Address of Employer	Job Title	Dates Employed (Month/Year)	Name of Supervisor
<i>State of Florida 19831 Institution Drive Milton, FL 32583</i>	<i>Prep Cook</i>	<i>1/04-10/07</i>	<i>Alan Summers</i>
Reason for leaving? <i>Would prefer to discuss in an interview</i>			

Concerns About Education

Employers will also ask about your educational background on an application. It is important for you to be honest here as well. It's also important to remember that graduation from high school or a GED is a minimum requirement for most jobs. Keep the following tips in mind as you fill out this section of the application: