

# How to Write a Seaman's Job Application

The purpose of this page is to advice on how to write a seaman's job application and how to use the [example form](#). The reason for filling out an Application Form like this is, that then you will have all your data complete and easily available at one place.

## **Basic**

## **Info.**

The example form includes all important details necessary for a seaman's job application. The example form is intended for every seaman so a deck officer/crew should delete "Engine Type" and "Horsepower/KW", while an engineer deletes for instance LOA (Length Over All).

A general job application form is not suitable for seamen. There is no space to add/include STCW-95 required points in a way so that the recruiting agent can easily see them. For instance, my own fire fighting course STCW-95 designation is: "Section A-IV/3". Other courses/examinations have different codes. Neither is there any standard format for a ship job application. Almost every agent have their own.

Same documents can have different names in different parts of the world:

- C.V. = Curriculum Vitae, comes from Latin and basically means "Life History" is often used (in USA) instead of résumé (UK). Both are the same document, i.e. a list of your schools and work experiences (always the last first).
- CDC = Continuous Discharge Certificate, commonly called "*Seaman's Book*". This is a list of all ships you have worked on with data on each ship's size and trading area. The time period you served on each vessel is noted together with Master's, Agent's, or shipowner's signature.
- COC = Certificate of Competence, sometimes also called "ticket" (licence).

Also note: Regular school or academic examinations have different abbreviations in different countries. What is used in US is different from UK, and what's used in UK is definitely different from India. Only STCW-95 abbreviations are internationally recognized. If you for instance say you "have passed CODRAM with honours", nobody outside your own country will have the faintest idea what you are talking about.

## **Example**

## **Application**

## **Form**

## **Details.**

I suggest you open a new Word document on your computer, then copy the [example form](#) to the new document (excluding the banners). That way you will be able to write in your data and also delete points not suitable to you. The example form is a combination of job application and résumé (CV) to ensure both stay together after downloaded into agent's or employer's computer.

**Note:** Do not send this application form when the agent have their own on-line application form.

Parts of the Application, for instance: "education", you will need several sub points, i.e.:

1. Course/School:
  2. Course/School:
- etc.

Every examination/course should have its own point. You can, however, by "copy" and "paste" add as

many points as you want. Same goes for "Seagoing experience" (i.e. each ship its own point), "Languages", etc.

When you save your CV documents on your computer, always use your name as part of the file name. For instance: Brown, James - CV.doc . When the employer searches in their data bank for your name all your documents will come up together.

Diplomas/certificates you should scan as pictures ([.jpg format](#)); check print size, so it doesn't get too small/big and 256 colours. Use a resolution of 150 dpi. Before you send as attachment, be sure your prospective employer/agent accepts attachments. All companies do not.

If you intend to send your C.V. by **email** you can write your e-mail address in the usual way. But if you intend to put your C.V. **on the net**, then be careful how you write your e-mail address. If you write it in normal HTML, (see: Don Pedro's [How to Hide my Email Address](#)), then you will start getting a lot of dirty email advertisements to your mail box.

Remember to give clearly necessary references to [STCW-95](#) points for each document you have and which is specified in the rules. It is very much possible, that the person examining your documents in the ship owner's/agent's office doesn't understand anything about the documents themselves. It is very possible the office person only have a list of those STCW requirements a person for a specific rank on a specific ship has to fulfill.

When you are employed on a ship, it's not because of the kind of person you are or because of the skills/experience you have. It's solely because of the documents you have.

When you use this example form, **delete banner at top, what's not applicable to you, and the banners at bottom.**

### **Using Agent's Application Form.**

When ever the recruiting agent/employer have an on-line application form, you have to use that. Most big companies are using [computer screening](#) (see below) of the forms to faster find the kind of applicant they need at the moment. Of course it's faster with the computer to check thousands of forms instead of manually. If you in such a case send your own application form instead of the on-line form, yours goes straight to the waste basket.

There is no standard format for seamen CV's, almost every agent want it their way. Do not use your own when on-line form is available.

If/when you send your **own application form**, keep it well below 100 KB. The reason for this is that a virus message is often 100-200 KB or slightly more. I have myself even received a couple of viruses/worms in the form of job applications. See Don Pedro's [Computer Viruses and Worms](#).

When you fill in the **on-line form**, fill in only what is asked for. Don't add anything extra - if something isn't asked for, then it isn't relevant. Note however that many companies use the same forms for officers and crew. Of course, officers have a lot of work experience and many more courses to list, and they are all necessary. If you are applying for a job as AB or motorman and you have been on just two ships before, then you don't have very much to list in the form. But for those positions very little is also required. Be very careful you don't add something irrelevant because you think the form looks so

"empty".

You must be especially careful not to include, for instance, computer training, when it's not required. Educated people are never employed for manual work, are they now? As AB you spend most of your time cleaning, chipping rust, or painting; as motorman your time is spent cleaning in the engine room - you are not expected to even look at the ship computer. Once you are an officer, it's a different story - then you are suddenly supposed to be computer literate and then you can include all that computer training you left out earlier.

Don't give the impression you are "over-educated" for the job you are applying for. If this causes an empty time gap in your "history", then you can give a rough time period and state, for instance: "Studied computers while waiting for job". That is OK - you have used some "dead" time purposefully but at same time you show you know it's not important for the job you are applying for now.

If your native language isn't English, don't write too much "to show how good it is". It will never be as good as the British employer's. Use on-line form as much as possible, write only what is applicable to the position you are applying for. The employer doesn't want your whole life story.

### **How to Apply for a Job.**

Whatever you learned in school, never send an "open job application" over here and there. May be the last time your teacher applied for a job was 20-30 years ago - for his/her current job.

It's always better to apply to a specific job or position. Don't tell the prospective employer you are honest and hard working. Everybody is that, at least when applying for the job. Instead show the employer what in your experience makes you especially suitable for the position in question.

The employer doesn't want to know the whole story of your life, who the in-laws are, and what they have done. The employer has may be received over a hundred applications for the same position, and he has to decide within one hour whom to employ, because he has to attend to a meeting or something else more important for him/her.

The only way to grab his/her attention is to point out - whenever applicable - "I already did this job before", but I'm underpaid so I'm looking for a new employer who can appreciate my capabilities and my experience. Do it, however, without complaining about your current employer.

To apply for a specific job always try to use employer's or agent's online application form. Then there are less possibilities for you to go wrong.

### **Effects of Computer Screening.**

All big recruiting agents and employers use computer screening of applicants' documents in their data bank. Imagine something like a "Mini-Google". Because of this you have to adapt (customize) your CV (résumé) according to each job to be sure your documents can be found when searched for.

First it's possible a secretary will download the job applications into the data bank. The result is the person who will decide whom to employ hasn't seen neither your e-mail nor your application before. Don't think it will be printed in the employer's office, that's not sure at all.

*If you don't use the right words in your job application, the employer cannot find your application in the company's data bank.* When the personnel officer searches for applicants for a certain job in the data bank, he/she will use same words as in the job description. In other words, if the job requires experience as "crane operator" and you write you have three years experience as "crane driver" your document may be won't come up at all. The computer doesn't "know" both expressions mean the same.

You must therefore adapt ("tailor it") according to what terms the employer or the agent is using in the job description. Because your documents will be read on the computer screen, those words should appear at the first screen the personnel officer sees when opening your document. As that person probably only scans the document **you write those words in bold**. Then just may be, the personnel officer will continue reading the rest of your CV / Application.

Do not insert your photo in your application or CV (résumé) if it's not specifically asked for. If you think it's good to include the photo, considering the kind of job you are applying for - may be a purser or a waiter on a luxury cruise liner - then attach it separately to the bunch of documents you are sending. When you save the photo on your computer use your own name as file name, for instance: Brown, James - photo.jpg . Always send pictures or photos as .jpg .

Of course you also use your name in the same way in the e-mail subject line, for instance: Brown, James - Job application, Crane Operator. All your documents should come up by your family name and clearly by file name show what each document is about. If you use your given name first, for instance "Peter", may be somebody with the same first name applies to the same agent or employer and your application is overwritten and completely lost.

Avoid any fancy formatting of your CV. Many big companies today use some kind of Content Management System to achieve a constant layout and "look" of all their internal documents. When your application is downloaded in the company's data bank and incorporated with the Content Management System may be all your formatting is lost. Try to copy your CV and paste it into Notepad. Is it still readable and easily understood?

Do you have problems pasting your CV into web forms? If you have experienced such problems - delete your formatting. When you have corrected all spelling errors and you think your document is ready to be sent off **print it out for yourself**. Read the print out and correct those "new" spelling errors you find. A print out is easier to read than the computer screen and the computer recognizes only spelling errors that turn a word into a non-existing one.

## **Cover letter.**

When you send a ship job application you should keep your cover letter very brief (maximum one page). If you attach your CV as attachment to your e-mail, then even shorter - max. 2 short paragraphs. In the e-mail Subject line you write: Your name (family name first) - Application for (position).

When the recruiting agent have an on-line application form no cover message is needed or expected. Either your documents are up to STCW-95 requirements or they are not.

When you apply for a crew job you can mention how many years experience you have onboard total and what kind of ships you have been on (tankers, container ships etc.). In addition you should mention when your passport and your medical expires. These two dates are important.

If you have "oil tanker endorsement" and like tankers, mention this, in one sentence only. If you are applying for a third or second mate's position you can mention you are computer literate (only if you really are), but that's enough in the cover message.

Keep the cover letter/message as short as possible, let the application form speak for itself. Always remember the recruiting agents are very busy people.

One important point you should not leave out. That's when you are available and can leave for the ship. Include the name of your nearest airport. This is suitable as the last sentence. Overall the letter/message should, of course, be polite and accurate.

If you are applying for a **shore based** job, note that you have to change your approach completely. The conventions in different business sectors and countries/cultures means people in different cultures do expect completely different style applications.

For instance, if you use a style common in India or Philippines when you apply to a British or American employer it's probable your application won't succeed. The result will probably be the same even if you use British style/conventions in an application to an American employer, although the differences are not so great.

Always use the style expected by your prospective employer. When you are not completely sure of the style you should use, please keep your cover letter as short as possible. With a short text there are fewer possibilities for you to go wrong.

You cannot just translate an application you have in your own language. Changing language is not enough, **you must change style also.**

Get [advice on cover letter writing](#). Just remember: applying for a land based job and applying for a seaman's job require completely different approaches.

When applying for a land based job with a British employer get [Alec's free tips](#) on C.V. (résumé) writing and how to prepare for your job interview. If you are applying with an American employer, then you should naturally choose an American [résumé writing service](#). Always keep your C.V. as short as possible, the employer doesn't want to know everything about you. **Stay with what is relevant to the job you are applying for.**

### **Points to Remember - Land Based Job**

- Keep education and work experience separate.
- Keep shore work experience separate from ship board (sea experience).
- List possible earlier shore work experience first and in detail.
- Keep sea based work experience short, for instance only periods in each rank, types of ships and trading areas, as well as listing employers.
- List all education and work experience with start from present and backwards.
- Give STCW and other training certificates with details in your education section.
- Don't ask for too high salary, but not too low either.
- Give a reason why you want come ashore for work.
- Don't send copies of your certificates before you are asked to do so.

- If you are onboard, arrange with a friend to continuously monitor your email. The prospective employer won't wait long for an answer from you.

---

[Legal advice to seafarers](#) in form of answers to real asked questions. Both concerning contractual (work related) problems and questions of liability under ISPS with details as applicable under British Law. The legal page is updated every month.

---

© by Capt. Peter Forsberg.

You are allowed to print out the text for your personal needs. You are also allowed to copy and distribute the printout for educational purposes when free of charge, as long as you give the source:  
[www.angelfire.com/ok4/donpedroshipping/instructions.html](http://www.angelfire.com/ok4/donpedroshipping/instructions.html).

Last up-dated:  
Jan. 02, 2007

since Jan 20, 2004  
according to  
[www.digits.com/](http://www.digits.com/)