

Tips on Applying to the Peace Corps

Today...

Applications for Peace Corps service are at a 22-year high as a result of reforms that allow applicants to preference their country and assignment through a shortened, one-hour application. The Peace Corps has always received more applications than positions available, but it's more important than ever to make your application stand out from the rest. The following tips will not guarantee you'll receive an invitation, but they will *increase your chances of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer*, which could certainly be the most rewarding and memorable time of your life.

The application is simple...

And takes about the same amount of time as your favorite episode of "Breaking Bad." A small sacrifice indeed! All you need to do is submit some basic contact information, an essay about your motivation to serve, a couple of reference e-mail addresses, and your resume.

The resume is the most important piece ...

So spend some time and make sure it tells your whole story. We use it to determine if you have the academic, work, and volunteer experience to qualify you and make you competitive for an assignment. Your resume can be up to 3 pages and could include:

1. Any construction or trades experience that could qualify you for our Water Sanitation/Health Education assignment.
2. Any agricultural/poultry experience (years digging around the family garden could qualify you for our Agricultural Advisor positions).
3. Any and all significant volunteer work with kids could qualify you for Youth in Development.
4. Any teaching/tutoring experience including dates, number of hours, and age of students could land you an Education assignment.
5. Any health-related volunteering and/or work experience for the Health Extension programs.
6. Any business, marketing, or entrepreneurial experience for Community Economic Development positions.
7. And finally, any experiences you've had that fit the qualifications listed for each volunteer assignment. In other words, your resume should be tailored to the position you're applying to, and with a little research, you can easily see what background and/or degree you'll need. If you don't have it, get it!

Your resume should quantify the amount of time you've spent in each position (example: *English Literacy Tutor 3 hrs/week*). You should also include a section listing your language skills which should also quantify the amount of language experience you have (example: *4 years high school French, 6 semesters college French reaching 400 level*).

Your resume should also stress your volunteer experience. The Peace Corps is a volunteer program after all! This is often the section where we find many applicants to be lacking, so if you don't have a strong volunteering section on your resume, be sure to go out and get relevant volunteer experience before applying.

Spanish or French language skills ...

Are not required but could qualify you for positions in Latin America or Sub-Saharan Africa. Most positions require at least 4 years of high school language courses and a minimum of 2 semesters of college coursework. Since almost a third of our volunteers are in those regions combined, speaking Spanish or French could *increase your chances of becoming a volunteer*.

Choosing your assignment ...

Should be exercised carefully. Be mindful of the importance of meeting the qualifications for that assignment.

So here's how it works: There are two options on how to apply.

- 1) You can select “Apply to Go Anywhere” and preference different regions of the world where you might like to work as well as the work sector you are considering and the earliest date you are available to leave.
- 2) You can select one specific job posting to apply to. Selecting this second option elicits a series of yes/no questions asking if you have the required skills necessary for the position. It also presents a question asking, “If not selected for this assignment, would you like to be considered for other assignments?” and presents a box allowing you to make notes about what other positions you might be qualified for. Please note that as the second option asks you to check yes/no and is used to weed out unqualified candidates, you should carefully consider your qualifications for a position before selecting this option (in other words, if you select “no” for all of the questions, perhaps you are not as qualified for this position as you should be...)

So what about those “Featured” Openings on the website?

Assignments listed on the Volunteer Openings page with an orange “Featured” box next to them are positions for which there is still a high need for applicants. As such, applying for one of these positions may help you to *increase your chances of becoming a volunteer*. However, the key to success in any volunteer program is that you are qualified and competitive for that program, so make sure that you are qualified for these positions before applying.

Now if you're wondering when to apply ...

Applicants should look to apply about 9 months before they would like to leave (or about 3 months before the “Apply By” deadline). Applications are rolling for each quarterly application deadline, so applying earlier in the quarter (and not the week before the “Apply By” date) will increase your chances of being selected. Keep in mind, applying only means applying. Your decision to accept an invitation will take place down the road. The bottom line - **THERE IS NO COST, OBLIGATION, OR COMMITMENT WHEN YOU FILL OUT THE ONE-HOUR APPLICATION.** We know life happens in between application and departure, and folks drop out of the process for one reason or another. We understand that. Just give us the courtesy of letting us know. No penalty or punishment. Reapply when you are ready to serve.

What if I don't get in?

That's an easy one. Don't be shy to reapply and contact us to see if we have any guidance on how to make you a more competitive candidate. Applicants can only have one application open per deadline; however, if you are rejected for a position several weeks before the application deadline, you can start a new application for the same deadline. Remember, there will always be a new pool of candidates in the mix, and you may be more competitive in a different pool of candidates. And if the assignment selection is a bit on the slim side, just wait until the next application cycle with new assignments coming out (at the beginning of February, May, August, and November). Applying a second or third time will definitely *increase your chances of becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer*. And that's what we want.

Our job...

Is to help you to learn more about the Peace Corps and to help you decide if the Peace Corps is the right opportunity for you. It's also to be your guide as you navigate through this process. Feel free to reach out to us by phone, email, or whatever works best for you. All the best on your journey to becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer!

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