

Top 10 Tips for Writing a Winning Postdoctoral Fellowship Application

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Postdoctoral fellowships are an exciting opportunity to develop your skills and knowledge as well as enrich your training and professional development. The aim here is to contribute to the field while also enhancing your skills for career development. Moreover, you may decide to pursue a fellowship abroad thereby giving you an opportunity to travel as well.

Postdoctoral fellowships are very competitive. In order to ensure success, it is critical that your fellowship application stands out from the rest of the applications that the reviewers go through.

Therefore, you will need to show that you:

1. have thought through the proposal thoroughly
2. are equipped to successfully carry out the work
3. have thought of skills you are lacking and how you will acquire them
4. are committed to the project
5. will use this experience to further yourself and the field in the long run.

Here are the top 10 tips to help you write a winning postdoctoral fellowship application.

Things to Remember

• Plan

Read the requirements for the application and create a checklist. It is important to plan well and [start early](#). Create a timeline, work on your checklist regularly, and stick to deadlines.

• Letters of Recommendation

Give your referees an advance notification when you request a letter of recommendation. [Provide them with the necessary information](#) on your background, experience, and personality. Always choose referees that have [known you for at least a year](#).

• Mentors

Reviewers will assess your mentors because a [strong mentoring team](#) with the appropriate qualifications will give you the necessary support to succeed.

• Background Knowledge

Identify the [gaps in knowledge](#) and stay updated with the latest developments. Formulate an interesting research question that will not only advance the field but also develop the skills you need to further your career. Link your research question to current affairs to increase the chances of your research gaining [media attention](#).

• Research Plan

Develop specific aims to attain your overall goal. Use them as a roadmap for your proposal. What alternative approaches will you use if something does not work? Is the goal attainable regardless of the hypothesis outcome?

• Motivation

Show that you are [excited about your topic](#) and care about the work. Tell your reviewers why you want the fellowship by [describing your career goals](#).

• Training Goals

Identify three to five training goals for skills that you are lacking for the project. Inform the reviewers [how you will develop these necessary skills](#). Will you attend courses, or will the host institution provide training?

• Personal Statement

Give [a simple and logical argument](#) to show the reviewers that you are the best candidate. Demonstrate how your knowledge and experience has equipped you for the proposed work, and how this work will enhance your future prospects.

• Resume

Write a [concise resume with relevant details](#) that have shaped you for this fellowship. List your relevant publications, work experience, previous fellowships, teaching experience, and academic awards.

• Proofread

It is essential that your application is grammatically correct and free of spelling errors. Ask your mentors, a former fellow, or an editor at your university's writing center to [proofread](#) your fellowship application. In addition, ask a friend who is not in your field if they understand your proposal. Remove any jargon and technical terms, minimize acronyms, and also check if the formatting meets the requirements for the fellowship application.

A great candidate for a postdoctoral fellowship application has the background knowledge, experience, passion, and drive required for the project. If you can show these qualities in your application, you have a good chance of being considered.

However, if you fail, revise your application and resubmit to other funding opportunities.

Tell us about your postdoctoral fellowship application experiences in the comments below. What did an unsuccessful application teach you? Were you successful after resubmitting?

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