

## When Spell Check is Not Enough

I am dating myself, but when I was starting out the only tool we had was the typewriter (if you were lucky, it was an electric model), which meant that if you wanted to submit an original copy of your resume, you had to type each and every one individually, along with the cover letter. As inefficient as this may seem in today's world of automated everything, it forced us to ensure that spelling, grammar, personalization and customization were correct.

In today's world of personal computers, there is no excuse today for typos and poor grammar. Regardless of how obvious this may be, I receive lots of resumes and cover letters every year that are poorly formatted, grammatically incorrect, and chockfull of misspellings.

Here are examples of when spell check is not good enough.

### Correctly Spelled Words

Probably the biggest reason why you should not rely on automated spell check is that you can use an incorrect word, but spell it correctly.

▶ Big Systems, Inc.; Seattle, WA  
Project Manger

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### Subject-Verb Confusion

Your resume presents your career achievements, but the underlying foundation is still elementary school English. While it is acceptable to present accomplishments in bullet point formats and leave out certain adjectives or articles, remember that a sentence is divided into specific parts of speech where the VERB indicates the action of the SUBJECT.

▶ Profits from sales of Product X was \$10 million.

▶ Profits from sales of Product X were \$10 million.

▶ Data was analyzed...

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### Homophones

Remember homophones? These are words that are pronounced the same as another word but differ in meaning and spelling, and you need to be extra careful because spell check will not flag "there" or "they're" as errors when you meant to use "their."

▶ "My great work at XYZ Company helped improve they're bottom line by \$1 million."

### Acronyms

Spell check will most likely highlight acronyms as misspelled, and the tendency is to simply hit the "ignore" button, but be careful...you may have transposed a couple of the letters.

▶ Are you a member of the AICPA, or the AIPCA...?

### Commonly Misused Words

We are all occasionally guilty of using the wrong words; just make sure that one of those occasions is not when preparing your resume or cover letter. You know the word confusions we are talking about - accept versus except, its versus it's, compliment versus complement, than versus then, and lots more like these.

- ▶ *“Affected \$1 million cost savings by eliminating unnecessary paperwork.”*
- ▶ *“Effected \$1 million cost savings...”*

### Naming the Wrong Organization

Today's automated checks will not tell you that your cover letter is properly addressed to Company A, but later describes Company B in the body of the letter. Believe it or not, I receive many cover letters addressed to me followed by the name of my company in the address line, and then go on to describe in the body of the letter how the applicant would be a great addition to the team at a competitor organization.

Modern technology has made it much easier for job hunters to peddle resumes and applications in search of employment, but beware the pitfalls. Attention to detail and good old-fashion scrutiny are still needed. Or is that pedal resumes?

Cover letters aimed at finding employment are not good choices for mail-merge. Do not -- repeat -- **DO NOT** reuse cover letters. The danger of not properly personalizing your introduction to the company to which you are applying, or leaving something in the body of the letter from a previous version, is too great a risk for the few extra minutes of rethinking and retyping.

### Incorrect Salutation

Salutation is personal, so make sure you know exactly whom you are addressing.

- ▶ *Are you writing to Alan, Allan or Allen...? Linda and Lynda...?*
- ▶ *Is Alan the CIO or CTO...?*



Don't squander your great work experience, solid academic foundation, and valuable extracurricular accomplishments by botching your resume or cover letter.

- ▶ Proofread tomorrow what you type today - you may be surprised at what you find.
- ▶ Take the time to rethink each cover letter for the position and company to which you are applying and truly personalize each and every introduction.
- ▶ Ask at least two colleagues to read your resume.

You may be astonished at the feedback from your close acquaintances, as well as your own reaction after reading your documents anew after a few days.



Remember, you have one shot to get your foot in the door. Typos, grammatical errors, and formatting faux pas will land your application in the trash for sure, and could close that door forever.

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