

Common Grammar and Spelling Mistakes

It's hard enough to come up with the right words to sell yourself in a resume or cover letter, without the English language tripping you up. One little mistake in spelling or grammar can ruin an entire resume or cover letter.

It's not easy to remember all the rules of the English language. So here's a little cheat-sheet to help you avoid some common grammar and spelling errors, and make your writing clean and concise

Multiple Versions of Words

Since these words sound exactly the same, everyone has made these mistakes while writing, and spell-check is no help since they are proper words. When you go back to edit, pay special attention to which version of the word you are using.

There, Their and They're: "There" refers to a place. "Their" is the possessive of "they." "They're" is a contraction of "they" and "are."

Then and Than: "Then" is used to show chronology. (We went to lunch, then to the movies.) "Than" is used to show comparison. (The rabbit is faster than the turtle.)

Too, To and Two: "Too" means in addition or as well. (Jim is coming, too.) "To" is a preposition that indicates approach and arrival, motion made in the direction of a place or thing. "Two" is the written version of the number 2.

Here and Hear: "Here" refers to a place. (I am here.) "Hear" refers to the act of listening. (I can hear the music.)

Its and It's: "Its" is used as the possessive of it. "It's" is a contraction of it and is.

Except and Accept: "Except" means to exclude. (Everyone except Terry can come.) "Accept" means to receive. (I accepted his invitation.)

Affect and Effect: "Affect" means to influence. (The layoff affected his mood.) "Effect" refers to a result. (The effect of drinking on the liver is damaging.)

Bad Grammar

Regardless of what career path you're on, basic grammar is expected of every job candidate. Don't get caught in the trap of these simple grammar mistakes.

Either/or and neither/nor: Remember to always use the parallel conjunction when using either or neither. (e.g. Neither Joe nor Paul are going. Either John or Michael can be a substitute.)

Run-on sentences: Two independent thoughts should be separated by a period, semicolon or conjunction. No exceptions.

Dangling participles: Make sure that it is clear which noun the phrase is supposed to modify.

(Wrong: After crying for hours, the mechanical swing finally put the baby to sleep. Correct: The baby was crying for hours before the swing put her to sleep.)

Would've, could've, should've: Don't use "of" in place of the contraction 've. (e.g. should of.)

Just remember each of these is a contraction of the word have.

Compound modifiers: Use a hyphen when compound modifiers precede a noun. (e.g. fast-paced curriculum) Do not use a hyphen for compound modifiers after the noun or following an adverb.

A lot: A lot is two words. Every time.

Split infinitives: This is one of the most common grammatical mistakes. Do not insert adverbs in between "to" and the verb. (Wrong: to swiftly run. Correct: to run swiftly.)

Changing Tenses

Switching tenses in the middle of a resume or cover letter can be confusing to the reader. But it is one of the most confusing grammar situations when dealing with resumes and cover letters.

Since you are (usually) still employed at your current job, you use the present tense to describe it, but switch to the past tense to describe former jobs. Here are a few common tips to help deal with tense-switching situations.

Use the present tense when referring to accomplishments that are ongoing.

Use the past tense (ending in -ed) when referring to accomplishments that you have completed.

Never change tenses in the middle of a sentence. Break the idea into smaller sentences if needed. Avoid starting sentences with -ing verbs.

Avoid perfect and progressive tenses when talking about accomplishments. Keep it simple. **Unnecessary**

Phrases

You only have so much room to sell yourself in a resume or cover letter, so why clutter it with unnecessary phrases. Many use these phrases to emphasize their point, but in the end, it just complicates the sentence. Avoid these commonly-used extraneous phrases.

It goes without saying: If it goes without saying, there is no point in saying it.

I will say this: You are already saying it, there is no need to announce that fact.

Exactly the same: If two things are the same, they are already exactly the same.

Each and every: Every doesn't add anything to this phrase, just use each.

As a matter of fact: If you are stating a fact, you don't need this phrase.

As far as I'm concerned: If you are stating your opinion, you don't need to preface it with this phrase. It will speak for itself.

For the most part: If you are making a generalized statement, most is already implied.

In a manner of speaking: This phrase is useless since anything you write is a manner of speaking.

What I mean to say is: If you have properly stated your case, there should be no reason to point out the meaning of your writing.

Source: Jeff Hindenach