



The NCRW STYLE GUIDE

Industry standards, best practices, and English composition rules and guidelines for creating résumés and cover letters that meet Nationally Certified Résumé Writer (NCRW) writing excellence requirements and expectations.

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INTRODUCTION

The NCRW Style Guide does not provide step-by-step instructions on how to write résumés and cover letters. Instead, we have prepared this guide with the assumption that as a professional résumé writer, you are familiar with the basic tenets of professional writing, English grammar, and industry best practices. We have presented concepts and strategies that separate mediocre writing from excellent writing.

Writing is an art form and, in any creative process, there is much that must be left to the artist's discretion. On a day-to-day basis, professional résumé writers work diligently to present their clients' unique backgrounds in the best possible light. The strategies they use may or may not fall into the acceptable list in a résumé book.

Many résumé books provide specific recommendations on résumé writing; for example, they may say you should always use a particular format, that you must never include certain information, and so on. Most professional résumé writers recognize that these maxims do not always apply to our clients. Well-informed résumé writers know that such rules are meant to be broken—or at least bent—from time to time.

We acknowledge that résumé writing is a subjective process, but we maintain that our mission as an official certification body is “to promote high standards of excellence in résumé writing.” Frankly, this is not an easy task!

The concepts we have outlined here are not original, but are based on the collective wisdom and know-how of the Certification Commission Advisory Board and the Certification Commission, with a little help from *The Gregg Reference Manual* (William Sabin), *The Copywriter's Manual* (Robert Bly), and *The Elements of Style* (Strunk & White).

Each section of the NCRW Style Guide relates to a specific evaluation criteria used by the Certification Commission to review sample submissions and grade NCRW test documents. Sections are labeled with a number and letter (e.g., “1-a”), which corresponds to the Submission Checklist at the end of this guide.

When additional information is needed to explain a concept or a rule, we direct you to a specific section or page of the Gregg Reference Manual by the notation “GRM” and the section or page number.

We have also included some additional resource materials in the Appendix.

Our goal in developing this manual is to encourage excellence and elevate résumé writing standards to a new level—to raise the bar.

Disclaimer: This style guide is not all-inclusive. English grammar is complex and a style guide that covers every rule and exception would be far too long. Likewise, we have covered many of the best practices in résumé and cover letter writing, but there are many more nuances we have not addressed. Our intent is to present you with a tool to help you elevate your writing to the level of industry excellence, as well as prepare documents that will pass the NCRW testing and grading process.

The certification process will continue to grow and expand, so YOUR input and feedback are very important to us. We invite you to contact us at certchair@thenrwa.com.

THE NRWA WRITING EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW

Before we examine individual components, we will start by defining our product. In a nutshell, excellent résumés and cover letters are sales-focused, relevant, visually appealing, quality-oriented, and succinct.

Sales-focused

- ✓ Sell benefits instead of features.
- ✓ Use action/active verbiage.
- ✓ Emphasize successes, contributions, and achievements.

Relevant

- ✓ Include industry/occupation-targeted information and keywords.
- ✓ Prioritize qualifying data and information.
- ✓ Exclude or de-emphasize non-relevant information or include only pertinent information that targets the job.

Visually appealing

- ✓ Utilize classic design elements and sufficient white space.
- ✓ Complement the client's profession through appropriate page design.

Quality-oriented

- ✓ Ensure each sentence and phrase is grammatically correct.
- ✓ Edit and proofread meticulously for error-free documents.

Succinct

- ✓ Present information in first person (without personal pronouns such as I or my).
- ✓ Use a telegraphic writing style (with limited use of articles such as a, an, the).
- ✓ Avoid overwriting and verbose or pretentious language.
- ✓ Exclude extraneous verbiage and information that impairs sentence flow and readability (e.g., various, such as, in order to).

Borrowing from Robert Bly in *The Copywriter's Handbook*, here are a few universal writing tips that apply to both the cover letter and the résumé:

- ✓ The reader comes first. Write to meet the needs of the potential employer/recruiter.
- ✓ Organize your selling points. Prioritize information to highlight the most relevant qualifications and experience.
- ✓ Break the writing into short sections. Avoid lengthy paragraphs and long blocks of text.
- ✓ Use simple words. Avoid overwriting.
- ✓ Be specific. Avoid vague or weak copy.
- ✓ Be concise. Avoid redundancies, run-on sentences, passive voice, unnecessary adjectives, and wordy phrases.
- ✓ Get straight to the point. Get your "sales pitch" across within the first 15 seconds; use headlines, categories, and lead paragraphs to convey your primary message.

I. PLAN YOUR WRITING STRATEGY

Résumés and cover letters are strategic marketing documents, and every bit of information shared needs to support the client's case for the position, company, and industry target(s).

Following are things to keep in mind as you plan your résumé and cover letter writing strategy.

a) Positioning: Write with the client's career theme in mind.

- ✓ The résumé and cover letter must demonstrate that the client's experience, education, and accomplishments meet or exceed position requirements.
- ✓ Instead of initially focusing on the client's experience, begin by understanding the target audience (the industry, company, and hiring manager) and the job/occupation requirements.
- ✓ Look for reoccurring themes throughout the client's career. What types of problems does he/she solve? What value does he/she bring to each position? Look at not just what he/she did, but how it was accomplished.
- ✓ Create documents built around these themes and highlight the skills and experiences that meet the industry, company, and position needs.

b) Relevance: What to put in, what to leave out, and what to spin differently.

- ✓ The PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE section does not need to include every aspect of every position. Emphasize skills and keywords that are most relevant to the client's target.
- ✓ Consider the order and emphasis of accomplishments. What problems will the employer expect the client to solve? What accomplishments prove the client's ability to do this?
- ✓ In some cases, it might be appropriate to adjust job titles if this will help the client look like a fit. For example, a client who has owned his own company appears more relevant when applying for a business development position by using a title such as Business Development Executive/General Manager than saying Owner, President, or CEO.
- ✓ Emphasize or de-emphasize industry lingo to position clients. When clients are changing industries, drop irrelevant, industry-specific terms when possible.
- ✓ Consider the relevance of activities, associations, and community involvement to the position, industry, and company and include those sections that add the most value.

c) Tone/writing style: Think of yourself as a ghostwriter.

- ✓ The tone of the résumé, that is, the actual words used to describe a client's qualifications and experience, must be appropriate for the job level and mirror the client's communication style.
- ✓ Ensure that the client is comfortable talking about the résumé during the interview by using vocabulary and expressions that he/she uses.

d) Keywords: Use words and phrases the hiring manager is looking for.

- ✓ The content of the résumé and cover letter should be both compelling, to capture the attention of a hiring authority, and keyword-rich, to make it to the "yes" pile. You want the documents to pass through an ATS so a real person will read it.

- ✓ Keywords are nouns or noun phrases (e.g., position titles, degrees, certifications, acronyms, technical skills, software, names of colleges or employers, geographical locations, languages, and terms such as Fortune 500).
- ✓ Hiring managers personalize keyword choices for each job requisition. You will never know the exact keywords for each job, but the responsibilities and qualifications listed in a job advertisement provide a good idea of the most important keywords for that particular job.
- ✓ Integrate relevant keywords/keyword phrases throughout the résumé and cover letter.
- ✓ Although it is acceptable to include a “keyword summary” on the résumé, (aka, competency/skills list), it is more effective to use keywords in context. Make sure that the body of the résumé includes tasks and accomplishments that illustrate how the client used the competency/skills included in the summary/list.

Source keywords from job descriptions, advertisements for similar jobs, The Dictionary of Occupational Titles, and the Occupational Outlook Handbook, as well as from local government job service agencies, professional and technical organizations, headhunters, company mission statements, and company websites.

e) Inverted pyramid: Put the best first.

- ✓ Visualize the résumé as an inverted pyramid, with the most relevant and detailed information at the top. Decide what categories to include and in what order to best sell the client’s relevant qualifications.
- ✓ Strategically arrange categories to place the client’s best qualifications first, based on the match between the background/experience and the target position.

f) Design/image projection: Reflect the industry, occupation, and client’s style.

Visual impact, especially in today’s online marketing world, is a must!

- ✓ Components of good quality design include the letterhead, graphics, icons, white space, symmetry, borders, underlines, shading, fonts, and even margins.
- ✓ Choose a design that reflects the client’s occupation, industry, and career level. Not all design elements are appropriate for all professions.

g) Length: Match the amount of information to the client’s experience.

The relevancy of information is key to determining length for a particular résumé. Obviously, much depends on the individual client (i.e., number of positions, relevance of earlier employment, amount of additional training, affiliations, etc.).

- ✓ In general, job seekers with just a few years of work experience have a one-page résumé; clients with 10-plus years of experience typically need one to two pages; and managers and executives with 20-plus years of experience usually need two or more pages. CVs are rarely subject to any length rules and may include many pages.
- ✓ Detailed job descriptions on most résumés should go back only 10 to 15 years. For earlier jobs, list them with titles only or with very short descriptions.
- ✓ There are always exceptions to any rule—as when an outstanding accomplishment is older than the 10 to 15 years or a professional has relevant experience that goes back this far.

The Copywriter's Handbook offers the following:

Copy should contain enough information—no more, no less—to convince the reader to take the next step in the buying process.

- ✓ If a résumé is two pages, the second page should be substantial, that is, at least half of the page and preferably three-quarters of a page long.

II. PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY AND HEADLINE

a) Purpose of the SUMMARY (and optional HEADLINE)

The qualifications SUMMARY (or Career Summary, Professional Profile, Qualifications Summary, etc.) is the cornerstone of a targeted résumé.

Since employers tend to review résumés quickly (15 seconds or less), the SUMMARY plays a major role in capturing the reader's attention. If the SUMMARY focuses on the right set of qualifications, the reader is likely to perceive the client as a strong contender. If it is weak or focuses on the wrong (even slightly off-base) skill set, the reader is likely to lose interest and move on to the next résumé.

The SUMMARY should distinguish the client in the job market. Ask yourself the following:

- ✓ What qualifications and abilities set the client apart from other job seekers?
- ✓ What uniquely qualifies the client to solve the employer's problems?

Emphasize and substantiate these attributes throughout the résumé, but also highlight them in the SUMMARY.

An optional HEADLINE (and branding statement) should quickly communicate what the client does and what he/she can do for the employer. A HEADLINE may identify the client's occupation/occupational cluster, areas of expertise, or core functional areas. An effective branding statement tells the employer the value the client is offering.

b) Common SUMMARY weaknesses

- ✓ Does not clearly position the client: The client's occupation and career level are not prominently identified.
- ✓ Written in third-person: References the client by name; includes verbs forms that end in "s" (e.g., manages, possesses, directs).
- ✓ Not distinctive: Overemphasizes generic transferable skills that most any job seeker could claim (e.g., hardworking, responsible, works well independently or as part of a team).
- ✓ Includes trite, overused phrases: (e.g., solid record of achievement, seasoned professional, proven success).
- ✓ Content is not validated elsewhere in the résumé: For example, if the summary states the client "proactively and creatively solves problems" then the résumé must include examples/accomplishments that support this statement.

Weak SUMMARY: Example 1

Leader with a versatile personality who effectively communicates with internal staff to achieve optimal outcome. Demonstrates strong conflict resolution capabilities in order to achieve exceptional client satisfaction. Identifies sales trends, creates efficient strategies, and implements innovative solutions in order to increase profitability. Builds and manages cohesive teams to deliver outstanding service.

Issues: Occupation not clear; third-person voice (verbs ending in "s"); makes a lot of subjective claims; not keyword optimized; no distinguishing traits/value proposition

Weak SUMMARY: Example 2

HIGHLIGHTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

Successfully communicated company objectives built on structured concept achieving branch goals. Effectively demonstrated strong leadership role and implemented team atmosphere contributing to yearly increase in branch revenue and/or net profit. Enhanced operations through strong organizational and problem-solving skills. Selected, developed, and managed 18 direct reports.

Issues: Unclear what occupation the qualifications represent; not keyword optimized; primarily focuses on transferable/soft skills; does not state the occupation of the people he managed

c) Essential elements of a strong SUMMARY

- ✓ Immediately positions the client: Includes a headline, branding statement, tag line, and/or strong opening that identify the client's occupation and expertise.
- ✓ Written in first person: Each sentence is written with the pronoun "I" implied and uses active verbs.
- ✓ Keyword optimized: Includes a high percentage of nouns and keywords that relate directly to the job target.
- ✓ Leads with the most relevant qualifications: Includes a descriptive position title and number of years' experience or knowledge of a particular industry.
- ✓ Includes facts, facts, and more facts: Examples: Supervised teams of 50+ sales professionals; Formulated and administered multimillion-dollar budgets; Reduced costs 27% through Lean Six Sigma implementation initiatives.
- ✓ Well-rounded: Contains blend of relevant job specific/technical, transferable, and interpersonal skills.
- ✓ Calls out distinguishing factors: Notes specialized training or degrees; ability to speak more than one language; willingness to travel or relocate.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER / DIRECTOR

Global Business Savvy ~ Accomplished in all HR Functions ~ Technically Sophisticated

High-energy HR professional with almost 14 years of proven leadership fueling organizational effectiveness and delivering undeniable results for companies and organizations of all types and sizes: multisite, multinational, start-up ventures, turnarounds, small regional companies, mid-size, and large corporations. Key areas of contributions include:

- ✓ Leading change management and HR initiatives to drive greater profits and stronger competitive advantage.
- ✓ Envis oning and implementing fresh new ideas and proactive HR solutions to complex business challenges
- ✓ Increasing competitive advantage by hiring, training, and retaining the "best and brightest" talent at all levels.
- ✓ Reengineering processes and leveraging technology to drive down HR delivery costs while improving effectiveness
- ✓ Expanding companies globally and partnering with senior management to propel strategic goals forward

Repeatedly delivered value to employers in excess of 10X salary as measured by efficiency savings, cost cuts, and bottom-line improvements.

Strengths: Immediately identifies client's occupation; reveals her personal style; keyword optimized; introduces contributions; text box immediately calls out unique value proposition.

Target: Management Executive – Healthcare/Medical Industry

"Perseverance is an essential element of success. In every challenge conquered and every obstacle overcome there is an opportunity to learn...grow...expand...improve."

Uncommon blend of business and healthcare/medical industry background and experience. Started career in nursing, moving quickly into supervisory and administrative roles before circumstances required the assumption of the top executive role in the family business.

Quickly learned a new industry and became decision-making member of executive team and inspiration behind a team-focused, positive company culture that enabled 2-fold organic and acquisitional expansion of company locations and 195-% growth of revenues to a height of \$94 million. Built team of employees from original 80 to more than 250.

BUSINESS QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:

- ✓ Administrative Management
- ✓ Strategic Business Planning
- ✓ P&L/Cash Flow Management
- ✓ Budgeting Review & Approval
- ✓ Management Team Collaboration
- ✓ Public Relations/Community Outreach
- ✓ Employee Relations/HR Management
- ✓ Team Building & Teamwork
- ✓ Vendor/Supplier Relationships
- ✓ Multi-Site Operations Oversight

HEALTHCARE/MEDICAL INDUSTRY AND EXPERIENCE INCLUDES:

- ✓ Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree with an emphasis in emergency room care
- ✓ Nearly ten full years of nursing and nursing administrative experience in hospital settings.
- ✓ Interest in holistic therapies, recent Holistic Health Practitioner certification.

Strengths: Headline makes client's objective clear; first paragraph prepares the reader for client's career change; second paragraph includes quantifiable results; competency list optimizes keywords; quotation in text box reveals client's philosophy and hints to her personal drivers.

III. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE section is comprised of five essential elements: company information, job/position title, dates, job description, and accomplishments.

a) Company information

At a minimum, specify the company name and location (city and state). You may also include any of the following options:

Company acronym/abbreviation:

Street Solutions Inc. (SSI)

Former name/acquisition information:

Susquehanna Bank (acquired by BB&T, 2017)

Wyeth Pharmaceuticals (now Pfizer)

One line company description:

Hitachi Consulting

~ Recognized leader in delivering proven business/IT strategies and solutions.

b) Job/position title

Specify the client's actual job title. You may also modify the job title to clarify the role, indicate a promotion, and/or include the department name:

Chief Compliance Officer (promoted from Quality Assurance Analyst)

Conference Center Technician (functioning as Project Manager)

Senior Director, Database Marketing Operations

c) Dates

Position dates to either highlight or conceal a client's work history. You can apply any of several options, but be consistent with all positions.

- ✓ Place dates on the right margin to emphasize solid work history and/or strong loyalty.
- ✓ Place the dates next to the job title or company name for short stints of employment.
- ✓ Include only the years (do not include the months) to minimize job gaps or positions lasting only a few months.
- ✓ If you include months, you can spell them out (January, February, etc.), abbreviate them (Jan., Feb., etc.), or represent them with numbers (01, 02, etc.). Keep in mind that whichever style you choose, you must be consistent.
- ✓ If a client held numerous positions within the same company, consider including the total time with the company on the right margin and placing dates for each position next to the position title (you may also include the position dates in parentheses or format the font in italics).
- ✓ Avoid putting dates along the left margin where the reader's eye is naturally drawn. This is an obsolete practice from a time when longevity in a job or company was a primary selling point.

d) Job descriptions/responsibilities

- ✓ Develop a description of the job scope/basic areas of responsibility in paragraph format, with no more than five lines of text.
- ✓ For more complex job descriptions, break them into two paragraphs to avoid long, solid blocks

of text. A convenient way to break up long job descriptions is to create categories, such as job function, with operations functions in one paragraph and training functions in another.

- ✓ Never “parrot” the official job description or simply list job duties.
- ✓ Write in first person, without using personal pronouns.
- ✓ Begin sentences with active verbs instead of “ing” verbs.
- ✓ Use present tense for current jobs and past tense for previous jobs.
- ✓ Prioritize information according to the target employer’s needs and include keywords relevant to the target industry and occupation.
- ✓ Start out strong and sustain interest by emphasizing key skills. Write the first sentence to arouse the reader’s attention and draw him or her into the copy that follows.
- ✓ Avoid the words Responsible for or Duties include.
- ✓ Use a combination of short, medium, and long sentences to make the job description flow and maintain the reader’s interest.
- ✓ Choose the right words; do not sacrifice clarity to show off big vocabulary, and avoid clichés.
- ✓ Keep the job description paragraph brief so there’s plenty of room for the accomplishments to shine.

[Job description paragraph example](#)

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT

Recruited to revitalize this 30-year-old company with fresh ideas and HR best practices designed to restart business growth, optimize organizational effectiveness, and strengthen standing in competitive market place. Masterminded and introduced HR strategies, programs, initiatives, tools, and systems that have differentiated the company while raising the bar on client satisfaction and coalescing 220 employees to work together under unified mission and culture of continuous improvement.

e) Accomplishments/contributions

Accomplishments can take a résumé from average to outstanding, as they help differentiate a client from others with a similar background.

- ✓ Highlight accomplishment statements with bullets or symbols; do not bury them in job descriptions (or intermingle accomplishments and responsibilities by formatting each statement in a bulleted list).
- ✓ The ideal maximum number of bulleted accomplishment statements is five. If there is cause to include more than five bullets, it is usually best to segment the bulleted accomplishments by category headings.
- ✓ Individual bulleted statements should be concise and to the point, ideally, a maximum of two or three lines of text.
- ✓ An effective way to present an accomplishment with multiple components is to create sub-bullets, as in the following example:

- **Established substantial commercial and manufacturing footprint in India** by leading acquisition of \$65M scientific instrument business (Fisher Scientific India).
 - **Propelled sales 20% within first year of acquisition**, steering sales and new business development campaigns while guiding sensitive business and culture change to corporate processes.
 - **Improved profitability 15%** by persuading local managers to apply management by objectives (MBO) tools and Western management thinking.

- ✓ Begin each accomplishment statement with an action verb. Use present tense verbs for current and ongoing activities; past tense verbs for things already completed (for former jobs, write all verbs in past tense).
- ✓ Front-load accomplishments to capture attention quickly by beginning with the results and then state the why and how.
- ✓ Quantify accomplishments by including numbers, metrics, or data.

The following examples compare figures from a prior year or performance to a goal or an industry average:

- Boosted revenue 37% over prior year (from \$250K to \$342K) by ...
 - Increased customer satisfaction index from 89% to 97% within 1 year through ...
 - Contributed to 18% savings in purchasing costs in FY2016 by ...
 - Delivered \$3.2 million sales in 28 months, negotiating and winning key accounts with Fortune 500 customers.
- ✓ Translate confidential figures from dollars to percentages for privately held companies. When not sure, ask the client, "Is this information available to the public?"

Note: When converting numbers to percentages, do so correctly to avoid unrealistic claims, such as Increased annual revenues 1300%.

Formula for converting comparable numbers to percentages (representing either increases or decreases):

- 1) Divide the larger number by the smaller.

Original enrollment = 450 students
 Current enrollment = 800 students
 800 divided by 450 = 1.777

Original cost = \$800K
 Reduced cost = \$450K
 800 divided by 450 = 1.777

- 2) Drop the 1 and round up the number after the decimal point.

~~1~~.777 becomes .78

- 3) Convert the remaining number to a percentage.

.78 = 78%
 800 students reflects a 78% increase in enrollment.
 \$450K represents a 78% decrease in cost.

You can use an online calculator such as www.percentagecalculator.net to calculate

percentage increases and decreases.

Percentage Calculator

Percentage Calculator is a free online tool to calculate percentages.

The screenshot shows a web-based percentage calculator with three distinct input sections. Each section has a 'Calculate' button and a result field. The first section is a general form: 'What is [] % of [] ?'. The second section shows a calculation: '800 is what percent of 450 ?' resulting in '177.777777 %'. The third section shows a percentage change calculation: 'What is the percentage increase/decrease from 450 to 800 ?' resulting in '77.777777 %'.

IV. OPTIONAL SECTIONS

Consider the client's job target and overall résumé strategy when deciding which optional sections to include and in what order. The following pages describe some of the most commonly included optional sections.

a) EDUCATION

- ✓ While this section is optional, it should be included in almost all cases. If your client lacks an important degree, try to find other ways to show educational achievements such as courses, seminars, in-service training, and even independent study.
- ✓ Place the EDUCATION section toward the top for a recent graduate, whose primary qualifications are academic. For experienced job seekers, place the EDUCATION somewhere after PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE.
- ✓ Specify the type of degree (A.A. or Associate of Arts; B.A. or Bachelor of Arts; B.S. or Bachelor of Science; M.A. or Master of Arts.) Do not include an "s" on the degree (Bachelors, Masters, etc.), and do not follow the type of degree with the word degree.
- ✓ Include the major (and optional minor) or certification if it is relevant to the job target:
 - Bachelor of Arts, Biology (for client seeking a science-related job)
 - Bachelor of Arts (the same client, but seeking a job that is not science-related)
- ✓ Include the college name and location (city and state).
- ✓ Include course work, internships, and projects, when relevant to the job target. (Another option is to create separate sections for these categories.)
- ✓ Include GPAs for students or recent graduates, when impressive (3.0 or higher). For recent graduates with less-than-stellar GPAs, calculate the major GPA and include it if it's more impressive than the overall GPA.
- ✓ If the degree was awarded "with honors," state this or include the relevant designation: cum laude, summa cum laude, magna cum laude (note that these are not capitalized).

Graduation with honors requirements vary by institution. The following ranges may apply (it is always a good idea to ask the client what ranges were used at the college where his/her degree was earned):

cum laude or With Honors – GPA: 3.5 to 3.7
magna cum laude or With High Honors – GPA: 3.8 to 3.9
summa cum laude or With Highest Honors – GPA: 4.0+

✓ Do not include graduation dates that may present age-discrimination issues. Although not a rule, in general, include the date only if the degree was earned within the last five years.

✓ If included, list the graduation date only, not the years attended.

Correct: 2016 or May 2016

Incorrect: 2012–2016

✓ For recent graduates, include the month and year, not the term and year or just year.

Correct: December 2016; May 2017; 2016

Incorrect: Winter 2015; Spring 2017

b) PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT/CERTIFICATIONS

✓ Include any technical training, licenses, and certifications that are current and relevant to the job target.

✓ Some certifications and licenses have a renewal/expiration date, which should be included if relevant to the job target.

✓ Optional information you may include:

- Name of the training provider or licensing/certifying organization, if noteworthy or recognized by a specific industry.

Example: Human Resources Management Certificate, Society for Human Resource Management

Example: Licensed RN, Maryland Board of Nursing

- Date (month and year or just year) the training was completed/certification earned, if it was within the last five years.

c) PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

✓ Include listing of professional affiliations and memberships that are current and relevant to the job target.

✓ Specify any leadership role the client held within the organization (including committee chair and board membership).

d) VOLUNTEER, HOBBIES, INTERESTS

✓ Include hobbies, interests, and outside activities only if they are relevant to the job target or in some way distinguish the client. Include if they:

- Relate directly to employer qualifications (an amateur photographer applying for job as professional photographer).
- Support the job target (stay-at-home parent/school volunteer applying for a daycare position).
- Say something about the client's character and level of commitment (psychology)

major/Big Brother volunteer applying for job as boys' counselor).

- Illustrate the client's ability to set goals and meet challenges (completing the Boston Marathon).
- Exemplify the client's leadership skills (chairing the annual United Way Campaign).

Note: We recommend a heading such as COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT or VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES instead of COMMUNITY SERVICE, which may imply an activity imposed by a judge or imposed by a violation to a Student Conduct Code.

e) MILITARY SERVICE

- ✓ If the service in the military is current/ongoing, this section may take the place of PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE.
- ✓ When the client has current civilian employment, whether to include the military experience in a separate MILITARY SERVICE section or under PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE will depend on the length of service, dates, type of discharge, and relevancy to the job target.
- ✓ If the client is targeting civilian employers, use position titles that are synonymous with civilian job titles (e.g., Operations Manager vs. Battalion Chief).
- ✓ Avoid using military lingo, and spell out acronyms or use words that describe what they represent (e.g., instead of Built VMIS/MAXIMUS, write Built comprehensive database to provide a central location for tracking vehicles and equipment).
- ✓ Instead of just including names of awards and medals, consider the option of specifying what the client did to earn the award/medal.

f) MISCELLANEOUS

Many clients have multiple industry or occupational technical skills, noteworthy speaking engagements/presentations, honors and awards, published papers or books, patents, or may speak several languages. Following are some options to consider, depending on the number of skills to include:

- ✓ Create a separate section with a specific heading (e.g., TECHNICAL SKILLS, COMPUTER PROFICIENCY, PRESENTATIONS, PUBLICATIONS, PATENTS, and LANGUAGES).
- ✓ Include them in the SUMMARY in a table or list format.
- ✓ Create a separate addendum, formatted to match the résumé with the client's letterhead on top and ADDENDUM (or something similar below that).

Note: There are very specific standards for how to format publications, presentations, and patents. Perhaps one of the best resources that covers this is [Résumé Magic](#), by Susan Britton Whitcomb (JIST Works Publications).

g) REFERENCES

- ✓ Do not include reference names and contact information on the résumé. An alternative is to create a separate document formatted to match the résumé with a heading at the top that identifies what it is (e.g., PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES).
- ✓ It is an outdated practice to include the phrase, References provided upon request, and one

we recommend avoiding.

V. GRAMMAR OVERVIEW

While we acknowledge that résumés and cover letters are marketing tools, they are inherently business documents and should follow correct grammar (including punctuation and spelling).

Although there are several nuances between various style guides (e.g., The Gregg Reference Manual, The Chicago Manual of Style, and The Associated Press Stylebook) and dictionaries (e.g., Oxford English Dictionary and Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary), The NRWA, adheres to the grammar and punctuation standards/rules found in the The Gregg Reference Manual (GRM), 11th Edition and Merriam-Webster. Do not rely on the spelling and grammar checking tools that are included with MS Word.

It may be a fact that many of our clients (and even hiring managers) are not well-versed in the rules that guide correct grammar, but this does not minimize the fact that as professional writers (functioning as ghost writers) we have an obligation to our clients to write correctly.

Appendix A covers grammar basics, challenges, and common errors as they specifically relate to résumés and cover letters. The NCRW test-grading sheet directs that a specific number of points be awarded for correct grammar and punctuation. Do not cut corners by ignoring this essential appendix. (In many cases, we have written things incorrectly for so long, we are not even aware of our mistakes.)

As you review Appendix A, consider highlighting those items that give you the most trouble and, ideally, bookmark the relevant pages in the GRM.

VI. FORMATTING AND DESIGN

a) White space/readability

Include sufficient white space to improve the appearance and readability of your documents. Suggested ways to do this include:

- ✓ Margins: Set résumé and cover letter margins (left/right and top/bottom) to be equal and no less than .5 or ½ inch wide.
- ✓ Line spacing: Vary the amount of line spacing before and after headings, between position descriptions, bulleted statements, and so on, as opposed to sticking with the default single or double-spacing.
- ✓ Paragraphs: Avoid dense paragraphs (more than five lines of text) by breaking them up into two or more paragraphs or by breaking the paragraph into separate, bulleted sentences. This is particularly effective when formatting the summary and job descriptions.
- ✓ Page breaks: Strategically create your page breaks by altering the margins, font sizes, and line spacing so each page is balanced. (Imagine how it would look if placed in a picture frame.)

b) Alignment

- ✓ Center alignment is okay for the letterhead (or portions of the letterhead), main headings, and specific lines of text to guide the reader's eye and add visual interest.
- ✓ Left alignment is best for the body of a résumé and cover letter.

- ✓ It is okay to justify text (distribute it evenly between the margins); however, avoid large gaps that may occur between words and adjust your formatting to correct this.

c) Fonts

When selecting a font, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- ✓ Font style: Select a style that reflects the client's occupation, industry, and occupational level. For example, sans serif fonts (Arial, Verdana, Calibri, or Tahoma) may work well for technical/blue-collar professionals, while serif fonts (Book Antiqua, Georgia, or Garamond) may work well for white-collar professionals.
- ✓ Font size: Choose a font size for the body of the résumé that is easy to read and reflects the client's occupation/occupational level. Depending on the font style, smaller font sizes (e.g., 10 pt.) may work well for managers and executives, while larger font sizes (11–12 pt.) may work better for entry-level employees. Use a larger font for main headings (normally 2-3 pts. larger than the main text).
- ✓ System/TrueType fonts: Different fonts come installed with different versions of MS Word and on different printers; not all fonts are compatible. To ensure the documents look the same on any computer, stick with the more traditional font styles and consider embedding the font in the document.

To embed fonts in your Word document, go to Word Options. To get there, click the File tab > Options > Save, and ensure that Embed fonts in the file is checked.



Once you have set this option, whenever you save a document all fonts that are used within the document will be saved with the document. Beware though—doing this increases the file size of the document.

Appendix C of this guide features various font styles and sizes recommended for résumés and cover letters.

d) Letterhead

The client's letterhead should be the most prominent design element on the résumé and cover letter. Following are some guidelines for designing the letterhead:

- ✓ Format the client's name to stand out on the document. Some options for doing this include:
 - Choose a font size that is larger than the headings or other text in the document.
 - Format the font using bold, all caps, or small caps or consider a drop cap for the first letter of the name.
 - Key the name in a different font color.
 - Select a font that is different from, yet complementary to, other fonts in the document.

- ✓ Incorporate symbols to separate items in the address and contact information lines.
- ✓ Incorporate graphic lines that separate the letterhead from the rest of the document.
- ✓ Experiment with different alignment to achieve visual impact. Some ideas you can try include:
 - Center, left, right, or justify the entire letterhead.
 - Separate the name and address/contact information by left aligning the name and right aligning the address/contact.
 - Align the name and contact information on the left and address on the right (or blend any combination of alignment styles).

e) Tabs

The Word default automatically tabs text from the left margin, one-half inch at a time. You can manually change this default to create different tab spacing, as well as set center and right tabs.

- ✓ Press F1 on your keyboard to access Word Help for step-by-step instructions on setting tabs.
- ✓ Align content on the right margin of a document, specifically employment dates, by setting one right tab as opposed to using multiple left tabs or entries on the space bar.

f) Bullets and symbols

Inserting bullets and symbols in a document is another recommended design feature. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- ✓ Stick with the more traditional styles (bullets, arrows, stars, and ticks).



- ✓ More than two styles in a document is usually overkill.
- ✓ Bullets and symbols are commonly used before accomplishment statements and skills lists; however, you can also insert them within lines of text. For example, to separate addresses and contact information:

52 Main Street ■ Anytown, MD 21111
 jobseeker@gmail.com Cell: 800.555.1234

or to separate job title, company name, location, and/or dates:

Operations Manager ABC Corporation City, State 2010–Present

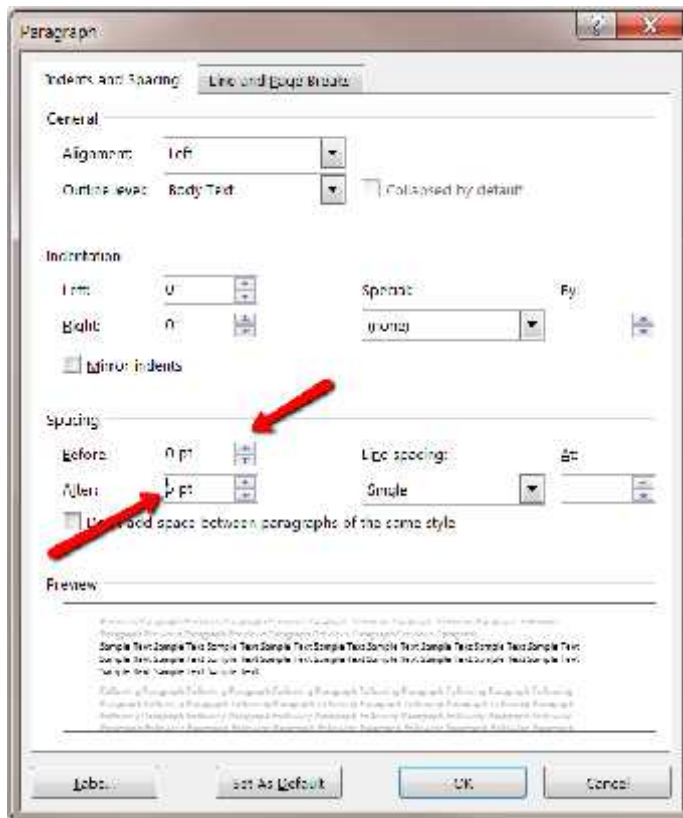
- ✓ Space text 0.15" to 0.25" from a bullet/symbol used at the beginning of a line of text (skills list, accomplishments statement, etc.).

g) Spacing

- ✓ Insert only one space
 - after a period
 - between the state and zip code
 - after a colon
- ✓ Do not insert spaces before or after an en dash and em dash.
- ✓ Do not insert spaces before or after a forward slash.

h) Incremental line spacing

- ✓ Create white space by using incremental line spacing between lines of text (e.g., section headings and content that follows; company name and job title; job title and job description; bulleted statements).
- ✓ Use the Before and After features under Spacing in the Paragraph dialog box to insert incremental spacing.
- ✓ Increase or decrease spacing in 6pt increments by clicking on the up and down arrows or key in a specific number.
- ✓ Do not create incremental spacing by reducing the font size between lines of text.



i) Widows and orphans

Adjust the formatting (e.g., space between words and/or letters, fonts, margins), or edit the content to eliminate orphans and widows:

- ✓ A widow is a word or line of text forced to go alone and start its own column or page.
- ✓ An orphan is a single word at the bottom of a paragraph/sentence left behind (sits alone on a line). An orphaned word at the bottom of a paragraph creates an interruption in the flow that breaks the reader's focus.

j) Hyperlinks

- ✓ Hyperlinks in email addresses, LinkedIn URLs, and websites/webpages may remain active in

Word documents (blue font that is underlined).

- ✓ You may want to minimize the visual inconsistency of a live hyperlink in a document by changing the font to black and removing the underline (though not a requirement).

k) Consistency

Use consistent formatting enhancements throughout the document. Specific things to pay attention to include:

- space around categories
- line spacing
- bullet spacing
- bullet size
- text alignment
- indentations
- bolding
- capitalization
- graphic lines

l) Length

There are no hard and fast rules about whether a résumé should be one or two pages (and in some occasions, even three). Adhere to the following guidelines:

- ✓ If the résumé is longer than one page, each subsequent page should be substantial, that is, at least half of the page and preferably three-quarters of a page long.
- ✓ Adjust the margins, line spacing, font size, and other formatting features to adequately fill each page.
- ✓ Do not try to squeeze two pages of content onto one page by minimizing fonts and margins, and, likewise, do not create a two-page document when formatting enhancements would easily fit everything on one page.
- ✓ If the résumé goes beyond one page, it is acceptable to include wording at the bottom of the page that indicates the document is continued on the next page.
- ✓ If the résumé exceeds one page, do not divide a short paragraph (with only two or three lines) at the bottom of a page. Always leave at least two lines of the paragraph at the foot of one page and carry over at least two lines to the top of the next page (GRM, 1344i).
- ✓ Strive to keep related content together on a page. For example, try not to split a specific job across two pages. If you must do this, include a line at the top of the second page that reminds the reader of the continuation.

Examples:

Operations Manager, continued

ABC Company, continued

Customer Service Accomplishments, continued

- ✓ If the résumé goes beyond one page, add a heading at the top of each subsequent page that includes, at a minimum, the client's name, one form of contact (email, cell, or landline number), and the page number. Do not duplicate the format and content in the letterhead.

m) Headers and footers

The header is a section of the document that appears above the top margin, while the footer is a section of the document that appears below the bottom margin. Headers and footers are viewed as separate from the main document and are not "read" by ATS software.

- ✓ Do not create the client's letterhead in a header.
- ✓ Do not put the client's main contact information in a footer.
- ✓ Page numbers can be included in a header or footer.

VII. COVER LETTERS

a) Overview/purpose

The cover letter's main purpose is to grab the attention of the reader and entice that reader to continue to the résumé. Many cover letters offer no new information and are therefore poorly regarded by employers, recruiters, and HR screeners. A well-written cover letter that speaks specifically to the employer's needs and the requirements specified in the job announcement can (and often does) give the client a strong competitive advantage.

Imagine the impact of a truly compelling, well-written cover letter that references the target position, begins with a strong sentence, responds to required qualifications, sells the client's strengths, exudes confidence, and ends assertively.

The intended audience will influence the content and format you choose for the letter. Examples include the following:

- Response to a job opening
- Letter of inquiry
- Letter to a recruiter
- Networking/referral letter
- An e-note/email message
- Letter for a job board/online application

b) Style and tone

As professional writers, we need to write letters that reflect our clients' voices and are appropriate for their professions. We accomplish this in several ways:

- ✓ The tone is professional yet sounds like a real person wrote it. It does not make grandiose (unsubstantiated) claims, but assertively "sells" the client and illustrates why he/she is worthy of a personal interview.
- ✓ The vocabulary is reflective of the client's occupation, education, and career level.
- ✓ Sentences are written with rhythm and flow, not short and choppy or excessively long.
- ✓ They are written with the employer's needs and wants in mind, not the client's. Following are ways to accomplish this:
 - Illustrate that the client has the qualifications (experience, industry knowledge, technical skills, and personal attributes) specified in the job announcement.
 - Include keywords from the job announcement/job description that are relevant to the client's knowledge, skills, and experience.
 - Provide substance that demonstrates the client understands the employer's needs/problems and that the client has the ability to address them and make a positive

contribution to the bottom line (e.g., increase profits, cut costs, improve efficiency, reduce turnover).

- Focus on relevant accomplishments framed around the desired skills.
- Minimize the inclusion of personal pronouns: I, me and my.
- ✓ Each of the AIDA principles of effective marketing are addressed in the letter:
 - Captures Attention
 - Generates Interest
 - Creates Desire
 - Inspires Action

c) Format

Since cover letters are a form of business correspondence, they should follow the conventions of business letter writing as far as formatting and punctuation are concerned. The NRWA recommends the following standards and best practices:

- ✓ Full block style format (GRM, Section 1302, a3)

All lines typically begin at the left margin. Nothing is indented except for displayed quotations, tables, images, and similar materials. Line spacing is specified for each section (see GRM page 431 for standards).
- ✓ Same letterhead design as on the résumé
- ✓ Margins the same as in the résumé
- ✓ Same font style as in the résumé. It is okay if the font is one or 2 pts larger or smaller than the résumé (depending on style).
- ✓ One page in length

d) Required content

- ✓ Date line: Spell out the month (never abbreviate). Write the day in figures, followed by a comma and the year.

Correct: September 29, 2016.
Incorrect: 9/29/16; Sept. 29, 2016; September 29th
- ✓ Inside/recipient's address:

recipient's name (if known)	Mr. Arthur Smith
recipient's title (if known)	Human Resources Manager
name of the organization	Stanton Shoe Company
street address or PO box number	212 Ravenwood Street
city, state and zip code	Spin City, MD 21157

Do not abbreviate a city name. Format the state name the same as in the letterhead (a two-letter abbreviation or spell it out).

- ✓ Salutation/greeting: Begin with "Dear" followed by an abbreviated title (Mr. Ms. Dr.), the recipient's last name, and a colon.

Correct: Dear Mr. Smith:

Incorrect: Dear Mr. Smith, or Dear John,

Incorrect: Dear Sir or Madam:

Incorrect: To Whom It May Concern

When it is impossible to identify the recipient by name, acceptable options may include: Dear Hiring Manager; Dear Recruiter; Dear Human Resources, or something similar.

- ✓ Optional reference or subject line: Some writers like to include a line that identifies the target position or job order number. The term Subject or Re should precede the actual subject and be followed by a colon. Type the subject line in either caps and lowercase or all caps. (GRM, 1343 a-e)

SUBJECT: SALES MANAGER OPPORTUNITY

Re: Job Order # 38128, Sales Manager

You can left align the reference or subject line or center it for emphasis. You can also place it above the Salutation or below.

If you do not include a reference or subject line in the cover letter, refer to the job title in the first paragraph of the letter. Although not required, it is a good strategy to key the job title in bold for easy reference by the HR screener.

- ✓ Body/message: An effective cover letter includes three (sometimes four) paragraphs/sections, each with a different focus/purpose. These are described in detail in the next section of this guide.
- ✓ Complimentary closing: Some commonly used/acceptable closing lines include Sincerely, Sincerely yours, Regards, Best regards. Capitalize only the first word and place a comma at the end of the line.
- ✓ Signature block: Insert three blank lines below the complimentary closing and key in the client's name.
- ✓ Enclosure notation: Below the signature, type a line that indicates a résumé (or any other documents) is enclosed with the correspondence. The following notations are acceptable: Enclosure (or Enclosures), Résumé enclosed, One enclosure, Enclosures: résumé and application (only capitalize the first word in the notation).

e) Body/message

Introductory paragraph

The opening paragraph should grab Attention and generate Interest, while also telling the reader why the client is writing (i.e., response to advertisement, reference to mutual acquaintance or referral source, follow-up after phone call, etc.).

In your opening sentence, instead of starting the letter with trite, overused phrases such as I am submitting my résumé for your consideration or I am applying for the position of X I found advertised on Y, apply one of the following strategies:

- ✓ Promise a benefit:

In the last three months, I generated \$25,000 in new business.

- ✓ Identify a need:

Consumers are bombarded with multiple marketing messages at every turn—and companies are continuously challenged to find new and better ways to capture attention, generate interest, and inspire action. As an experienced marketing specialist, I know how vitally important it is to enlist the collective talents of an organization to accomplish these goals—and I have a record of success that illustrates this.

✓ Illustrate industry/company insight:

Between 2001 and 2014, Company X experienced aggressive corporate expansion from 800 to more than 3,000 stores nationwide. I take great pride in knowing that I made significant contributions to this record of success throughout my 15 years as a regional sales manager.

✓ Break it down (employers like numbers):

An 83% increase in new business inquiries coupled with a 75% reduction in marketing costs—these are some of the immediate outcomes seen by Gulf Coast Business Credit because of my ability to collaboratively plan, execute, and manage a multifaceted marketing outreach and service program.

✓ Begin with a quotation:

“If we are to achieve results never before accomplished, we must expect to employ methods never before attempted.” This quotation from Francis Bacon immediately resonated with me when I first launched my career in sales 18 years ago.

✓ Tell a mini anecdote:

The first time I appeared on stage I was “Fairy Number Three” in my school production of *The Potted Princess*, and I knew right away that I wanted a career in theater. My enduring passion inspired me to earn a degree in theater and communication and led me on a path from Philadelphia to Boston, to New York City, and back to Washington, D.C. Your current search for a Company Manager, as posted on the CAGW Job Bank, caught my attention and inspired me to send you this correspondence and enclose my résumé.

✓ Illustrate your passions, dreams, and goals:

Some sales professionals are only interested in closing a deal and making a profit, no matter what it takes. My foremost concern is in building mutual trust and respect with my customers and the inside sales team while constantly assessing their needs and delivering on their expectations.

✓ Say it in 2,000 characters or less:

Reducing cost to increase profit—that is what I do, and I do it better than anyone does. I am proud to have earned the nickname “The Margin Maker.” My brain does not think in any other way.

✓ Open with keyword-rich lines that demonstrate fit:

Building corporate value is my expertise. Whether challenged to drive sales through a new business channel, launch a store within a store concept from the ground up, or create a comprehensive sales training curriculum, I have consistently delivered strong financial results. Now, I am looking for a new executive opportunity with a company poised for solid growth and performance.

The sales pitch

Compose the second paragraph around a sales pitch by explaining why the client is qualified for the position. The idea is to create Desire by calling attention to accomplishments that

demonstrate how the client has successfully handled responsibilities that are similar to those of the target job.

Depending on the situation, you might describe the client's current responsibilities, training, skills, accomplishments, or highlights of earlier jobs. Our goal is to relate that there is a direct match between what the employer wants and what the applicant can deliver.

Keep in mind when composing the sales pitch:

- ✓ Identify keywords and keyword phrases in the job announcement and include those that match the client's knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience.
- ✓ Paraphrase important information and accomplishments that are in the résumé; do not repeat content from the résumé verbatim.
- ✓ Emphasize benefits, not just features. Instead of simply detailing what the client has to offer (feature), explain what the benefits were to current/previous employers.
- ✓ Call out the client's distinguishing traits; include data and facts that illustrate what sets him or her apart from the competition.
- ✓ Employ any of the following formatting techniques or combination of techniques to improve readability and create visual interest:
 - Break long paragraphs into two shorter paragraphs (no more than five lines each).
 - Add a bulleted list of relevant accomplishments.
 - Insert graphics/images to illustrate contributions (e.g., a bar graph to illustrate sales increases or a pie chart to illustrate recruiting and hiring demographics).
 - Include a customer testimonial, peer review, award, performance evaluation, or even the client's LinkedIn profile.
 - Format the paragraph with "needs and benefits" columns, with the employer requirements listed on the left and the client's qualifications on the right.
- ✓ It is sometimes necessary and/or more effective to compose the sales pitch as two paragraphs. This practice is acceptable as long as the letter is no longer than one page of nicely formatted and easy-to-read content in a clear font.

Closing paragraph

- ✓ The closing paragraph is the client's call to Action. Ways to accomplish this include:
 - Assertively request a meeting or personal interview.
 - Explain how and when the employer can reach the client (e.g., recommend what phone number to call, email address to use, or days/times the client is available to answer questions or schedule an interview).
 - Thank the reader for taking the time to consider the client's interest and qualifications for the job.
 - If not previously mentioned, call attention to the enclosed/attached résumé.
- ✓ An additional closing paragraph strategy that can be effective, depending on the client's personal communication style and comfort level is to end the letter with the client "holding the ball" and specifying next steps. For example:

I will call you next Tuesday afternoon to follow up on this correspondence and discuss a day and time for an interview.

- ✓ Do not include salary requirements/salary history unless specifically asked for in the job announcement. When requested, the closing paragraph is a good place to include this.

VIII. ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS/ATS

Technology has had an enormous impact on the job market, particularly how résumés and cover letters are accepted and processed. Earlier technology relied on optical character recognition (OCR) software to scan and store documents, and job seekers were advised to save their résumés and cover letters in Plain Text/ASCII format.

As technology evolved, OCR scanning was replaced by applicant tracking software (ATS), which has the ability to capture, scan, and rank documents saved in multiple formats: Plain Text, Word (.doc and .docx), and Rich Text (some systems can also process PDF documents).

These systems continue to evolve, as do the requirements for how documents are formatted and saved. With more than 200 systems currently used by employers, each with various nuances, there are few hard and fast rules (and a lot of conflicting information).

As this software becomes more and more efficient, the rules for formatting documents continue to change. For the purpose of this style guide and preparing for NCRW certification, The NRWA adheres to the following requirements and guidelines (current as of the publication date of this style guide):

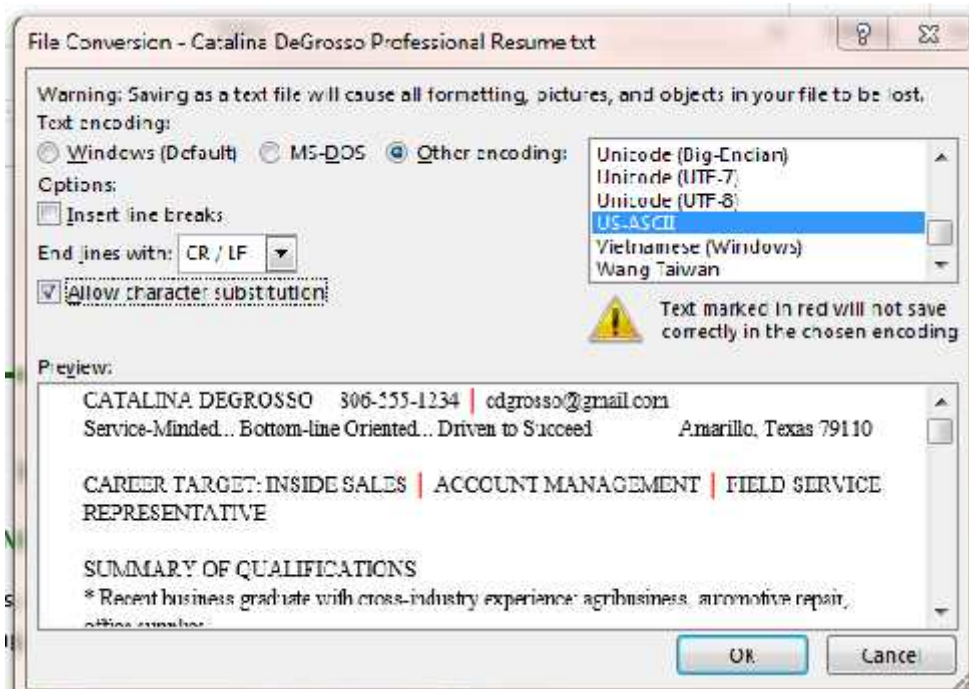
a) Plain Text/ASCII résumés

Although nearly obsolete, Plain Text documents offer the benefit of universal compatibility, since they can be read by any word processor, email program, or operating system (PC and Macintosh). Some employers still prefer Plain Text documents and job seekers still find them easier to use when copying and pasting text into an online résumé builder (such as the USAJobs résumé builder used for federal applications).

Following are requirements and guidelines for creating Plain Text/ASCII documents:

- ✓ Strip documents of all formatting enhancements (bold text, italics, symbols, graphics, etc.). If you cannot create a specific format enhancement with a single key on the keyboard, do not include it in a Plain Text document (e.g., if there is no key on a keyboard that will type a bullet or accented “e” in résumé, don’t include it).
- ✓ Begin all lines of text on the left margin; do not indent, tab, or center text.
- ✓ Replace bullets/symbols with a keyboard character (*, +, =, -, >).
- ✓ Create visual breaks between sections, with lines of keyboard characters (****, >>>>, + + + +, =====).
- ✓ Use traditional section headings (e.g., Professional Experience, Education), and do not combine sections (e.g., two separate sections—Education and Certifications vs. Education & Certifications).
- ✓ Do not cluster jobs. If a client held multiple positions with one employer, list each job separately with the dates connected to the job title and include the employer name with each position (repeat the company name).
- ✓ Number of pages is irrelevant; however, if your Word document includes a second page header, delete it from the Plain Text document.
- ✓ Save the documents in Notepad (.txt format) without line breaks and with character substitution allowed. See the following screen shot featuring the MS Word File Conversion

selections in a PC. (If using a Mac, steps and screenshots may be different.)



b) ATS-friendly résumés

With the advent of applicant tracking systems (ATS), nicely formatted documents have taken the place of “ugly” Plain Text résumés. As the systems evolve, formatting enhancements once prohibited are now acceptable (and we suspect that changes will continue to emerge).

A webinar taught by Pat Criscito, *The Latest News on Applicant Tracking Software (ATS) Systems* (which you can download from The NRWA archives: <http://thenrwa.com/event-849955>), provides detailed information about the various systems, how they work, and what content and formatting rules/guidelines apply.

Since we do not know what systems your client will encounter, the following guidelines apply to most systems:

- ✓ The client’s letterhead (name and contact information) must be included in the body of the document, not in a header or footer. (ATS ignores content in headers and footers.)
- ✓ Do not include degree or credentials next to the client’s name (e.g., M.B.A., Ph.D., J.D.).
- ✓ Use traditional section headings (e.g., Professional Experience, Education), and do not combine sections.
Correct: Education and Certifications (two separate sections and headings).
Incorrect: Education & Certifications: Education, Certifications).
- ✓ Do not cluster jobs. If a client held multiple positions with one employer, list each job separately with the dates connected to the job title and include the employer name with each position (repeat the company name).
- ✓ Include start and end dates for each position (months are optional).
- ✓ Do not include start and end dates for education/professional training, just the year (or month and year) that the degree/credential was earned.

- ✓ Number of pages is irrelevant. If including a second page heading (name/contact information/page number), put this in the document header. (This will assist the “human reader” by ensuring all pages are associated with the specific client, but since the document header is not read by ATS, the content will not show up in a questionable location).
- ✓ Borders, shading, and color are okay.
- ✓ Font enhancements (italics, bold, underlining, all caps, and small caps) are okay.
- ✓ Indents and tabs are okay.
- ✓ Bullets and symbols are okay. Some ATS will convert these to keyboard symbols (e.g., question marks or ampersands), but this will not affect readability. Do not use wingdings or webdings (☐ ☒ ☎).
- ✓ Any text alignment is okay (left, center, right, or full justify).
- ✓ Graphics (pictures, logos, images) and text boxes are okay. The software ignores these, so do not include essential information that supports the client’s accomplishments and/or value to the organization inside graphics.
- ✓ Sans serif fonts (Arial, Verdana, Calibri, Tahoma) are best.
- ✓ Inserted tables are okay, but they will be converted into one column of text (keep this in mind as you enter content in table cells). (Note: a résumé created with a MS Word template or in tables and cells is not ATS compatible).
- ✓ Do not format in columns.
- ✓ Functional or skills-based résumés are not compatible (the content does not align with job titles, companies, and dates).
- ✓ Err on the conservative side when it comes to including live links (hyperlinks for email addresses, LinkedIn URLs, or company websites). As of the completion date of this style guide, there is still some debate among ATS “experts” regarding live links. Some experts maintain that this is fine because ATS just reads the code embedded in the text; others tell us that ATS systems reject documents with live links. We recommend not including active hyperlinks.
- ✓ The NRWA recommends saving ATS-friendly documents in MS Word (.doc or .docx). Some systems will accept editable PDF documents; however, they are not able to read a PDF saved as an image. To ensure optimum compatibility, stick with MS Word.

c) Keywords and keyword phrases

One thing we can be certain of is that whatever system is used, the inclusion of relevant keywords and keyword phrases (in both Plain Text and ATS-friendly documents) is essential. Hiring officials personalize keyword choices for each job requisition, so you will never know exactly which keywords to include. Good sources for identifying relevant keywords/keyword phrases include:

- The duties and qualifications listed in job announcements
- The Dictionary of Occupational Titles (www.occupationalinfo.org)
- The Occupational Outlook Handbook (www.bls.gov/ooh)
- O*NET OnLine (www.onetonline.org)
- Professional and technical organizations/associations
- Target company websites

In addition to including relevant keywords (in ATS and Plain Text documents), keep these points in mind to ensure documents receive the highest ranking:

- ✓ Use keywords in context. Although it is acceptable to include a list of competencies/skills, illustrating when, where, how, and to what end the client applied these skills results in higher ratings.
- ✓ Keywords on the first page of a résumé receive higher ratings than those on the second page. Take this into consideration when deciding how to structure the résumé.
- ✓ How often a relevant keyword appears in the résumé also affects ratings.

d) Job board/email correspondence

When creating a cover letter to post on a job board/company website or email with a résumé, adhere to the standards and best practices outlined in the Cover Letter section of this style guide with the following modifications:

- ✓ Remove the client's letterhead.
- ✓ Do not include an inside address (employer name and mailing address).
- ✓ Edit out some of the content, while still adhering to AIDA principles and the three-paragraph format. Some websites only provide a place to copy and paste a cover letter and restrict the number of characters allowed. A good rule of thumb is to keep to 200 words or less.
- ✓ Do not include line spaces in the signature block; instead, key the client's name directly under the complimentary closing.
- ✓ Develop a compelling Subject Line for email messages (grab attention/generate interest). For example, instead of the Subject Line résumé or XYZ job, use something more compelling, such as Award-Winning Sales Professional. (Note: if the job announcement provides instruction on what to include in the Subject Line, such as a job order number, follow the instructions).

In the majority of cases, the client will copy and paste the cover letter (in an email message or text box). Save the letter in Plain Text/ASCII, as you would a résumé.

IX. FINAL SUBMISSION: PROOFREADING AND EDITING

Although much of our written communications take place in real time (email, text messages, etc.), when we write a résumé and cover letter, we have time to carefully review the documents before we submit them. There are no excuses for cutting corners on quality control and submitting documents with errors. Thorough proofreading and editing are essential.

a) Proofreading vs. editing

Proofreading is the process of correcting grammatical, spelling, and typographical errors.

- Requires meticulous reading and attention to detail as well as knowledge of basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation rules.

Editing is the process of revising document content, focusing on improving the accuracy of language, content flow/relevancy, and overall readability, as well as checking for spelling, grammar usage, and style.

- Requires a good command of English composition, but also a measure of intuition—knowing what looks right or wrong on the page—to gain a “feel” for the document's meaning and intention.

b) Common proofreading oversights

- ✓ Periods missing at end of sentences as well as complete thoughts
- ✓ Punctuation with parentheses
- ✓ Hyphens (missing or incorrect use)
- ✓ Apostrophes and accent marks
- ✓ Inconsistent use of the Oxford/serial comma
- ✓ Punctuation with closing quotation marks
- ✓ Formatting inconsistencies: number expressions, bullet sizes/styles, indents and alignments, font enhancements (bold, underline, italics, color, case), line spacing
- ✓ Spelling errors: actual misspelling of words, reversed letters, incorrect word substitutions, missing letters
- ✓ Word repetitions/redundancies
- ✓ Uneven margins
- ✓ Text outside the margin
- ✓ Missing words
- ✓ Incorrect or inconsistent spacing before and after bullets/symbols
- ✓ Capitalization errors

A good practice is to be aware of your personal weaknesses, challenges, and common errors and always be on the lookout for them when reviewing your drafts. (Bookmarking pages in your dictionary and Gregg Reference Manual will serve as easy references.)

c) The NCRW proofreading and self-editing system

Follow these steps, in order, before finalizing and submitting your documents (note that running the document through spell check and grammar check is the final step):

Step 1: Put distance between you and your work.

- ✓ Walk away from the document; you will often catch errors or have fresh insight after returning from a break.

Step 2: Read like a reader, not like an editor.

- ✓ Read first for comprehension.
- ✓ Note any sentence or phrase that is unclear.

Step 3: Limit your first edit.

- ✓ Correct typos, spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- ✓ Check for redundancy.
- ✓ Eliminate unnecessary articles (a, an, the).
- ✓ Scan the document in reverse (right to left/bottom to top).

Step 4: Perform a line edit.

- ✓ Review each sentence separately.

- ✓ Tighten up sentences by deleting extraneous words and phrases.
- ✓ Look for misplaced modifiers, unclear meanings, and awkward sentence structure.
- ✓ Correct parallel structure errors.

Step 5: Review paragraphs.

- ✓ Vary paragraph lengths.
- ✓ Eliminate widow lines/orphan words.
- ✓ Move paragraphs and/or individual sentences to support logical flow.

Step 6: Read it aloud.

- ✓ When you stumble, get stuck, or need to reread a word or phrase, rewrite it.
- ✓ Repeat this step as many times as necessary.

Step 7: Run a final spelling and grammar check.

- ✓ Run your word processor's spell check and grammar check, but do not rely on this method alone. We have seen way too many "mangers" (instead of managers) operating in the modern world.

X. STEPS FOR COMPLETING THE NCRW PROCESS

Step 1: Sample review

- ✓ Submit a fictionalized résumé, matching cover letter, and justification statement.
- ✓ Register and pay the \$75 submission fee at <http://www.thenrwa.com/event-823014>.
- ✓ One NCRW grader will review your samples anonymously.
- ✓ The grader will cite errors and provide written feedback.
- ✓ The grader will make a recommendation of READY, RESUBMIT, or NOT READY to move on to the testing process.
- ✓ You will have the option of scheduling a call with the grader (15 minutes or less) for specific feedback.

Step 2: Ten continuing education (CE) credits

Prior to beginning the test, you need to verify that you have earned a minimum of ten CEs within the last three years. The following is a list of activities that qualify for CEs and how many you can earn for each activity.

- ✓ Presentations delivered = 2 CEs
- ✓ The NRWA annual conference = 10 CEs
- ✓ The NRWA webinars and business writing courses = 1 CE
- ✓ Written book reviews = 2 CEs
- ✓ NCRW sample submission = 1 CE
- ✓ Writing Excellence Course = 24 CEs

Step 3: The exam

- ✓ Register to take the exam and pay the \$250 exam fee.

- ✓ Complete Part 1, a proofreading and grammar exam. This is timed and graded by the NCRW administrator and the certification chair. You must pass Part 1 to move on to Part 2; there is a 30-day waiting period to retake and \$50 retake fee.
- ✓ For Part 2, you will receive a candidate profile and sample job announcement. You will have three days to create a résumé and cover letter framed around the content in the profile and job announcements. Two graders are assigned to review the exam and award a final score. There is a 30-day waiting period to retake the test and \$150 retake fee.

Scoring range

- ✓ 90-100 points = A (excellent: pass)
- ✓ 80-89 points = B (above average: pass)
- ✓ 70-79 points = C (average: no pass)
- ✓ Below 70 points = D (below average: no pass)

NOTE: The NCRW Certification is awarded to those whose work is above average (80 points or higher).

XI. CLOSING

Whether preparing a sample package for review by an NCRW grader, completing the two-part NCRW exam, or simply using this style guide as a resource for ensuring the accuracy and quality of your work, we encourage you to keep a copy close by, reference it frequently, and reach out to the NCRW Certification Chair if you have questions, additions, or suggestions for improvement. Since rules and best practices continually change, make sure you have the most recent update by checking the date on the cover page and comparing it to the NCRW Style Guide featured as a download from The NRWA website.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Grammar Basics, Challenges, and Common Errors

Appendix B: MS Word Symbols and How to Accent Résumé

Appendix C: Recommended Fonts

Appendix A.- Grammar Basics, Challenges and Common Errors

The Gregg Reference Manual (GRM) includes more than 400 pages covering grammar, usage, and style; therefore, it would be very unrealistic to expect any writer to know and accurately apply each rule. This document provides details about some of the most common challenges experienced by professional résumé writers, as well as common errors found by NCRW graders when reviewing samples and grading tests.

Note those areas that give you the most trouble and consider bookmarking and highlighting specific pages and sections in your GRM for reference.

a) Parallel structure (GRM, Section 1081)

When two or more things are parallel, they have a similar function, role, or structure. In grammar, parallel refers to the balanced construction of words within a list or sentence. A balanced sentence will present items in a series by using the same grammatical form for each item in the series (i.e., adjectives should be paralleled by adjectives, nouns by nouns, and verbs by verbs; if the first item in a series is expressed as a phrase, the remaining items must continue according to the same pattern; if the first item in the series is a clause, the remaining items must also be clauses).

- ✓ Parallel errors tend to appear in competency lists:

Incorrect:

- Inventory Control
- Team Supervision
- Relationships
- Customer Retention
- Maintaining ERP System

Correct:

- Inventory Control
- Team Supervision
- Relationship Management
- Customer Retention
- ERP System Maintenance

- ✓ Parallel structure errors also occur within sentences.

Incorrect: The key to my success has been my positive energy and willingness to work hard on every assignment.

Correct: The key to my success has been my positive energy and my willingness to work hard on every assignment.

Incorrect: Saved \$20K annually by using less paper, less water, less energy, and less waste.

Correct: Saved \$20K annually by using less paper, less water, and less energy and by creating less waste.

Incorrect: In staffing the new school, we looked for teachers whose work was innovative, with solid academic credentials, and who could speak standard English.

Correct: In staffing the new school, we looked for teachers whose work was innovative, whose academic credentials were solid, and whose English is standard.

b) **Misplaced modifiers** (GRM, Section 1086)

- ✓ Misplaced modifiers are words or phrases that provide the basis for unintended interpretations and unclear meanings.

Example: Spurred growth from start-up to 500 employees in 13 countries implementing innovative sales-training techniques to develop expert closers. (Unclear as to who was “implementing innovative sales-training techniques”—the 500 employees, the 13 countries, or the client.)

Correct options: Insert a comma, the word *by*, or the word *through* between countries and using.

Example: Spurred growth from start-up to 500 employees across 13 countries by implementing innovative sales training techniques to develop expert closers.

Example: Spurred growth from start-up to 500 employees across 13 countries through implementation of innovative sales-training techniques to develop expert closers.

c) **Run-on sentences** (GRM, Section 1088)

- ✓ When two independent clauses appear in the same sentence with only a comma to separate them, the result is a run-on sentence.

Example: Saved approximately \$32K for future Adobe Design software upgrades, maintained site license for graphics department.

Three ways to correct this:

1. Use a stronger punctuation mark in place of the comma (semicolon, colon, or dash).
Saved approximately \$32K for future Adobe Design software upgrades; maintained site license for graphics department.
2. Insert a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*)
Saved approximately \$32K for future Adobe Design software upgrades and maintained site license for graphics department.
3. Treat the two independent clauses as separate sentences.
Saved approximately \$32K for future Adobe Design software upgrades. Maintained site license for graphics department.

d) **Abbreviations and acronyms** (GRM, Sections 501-514)

Some sources and writers take the stand that abbreviations and acronyms in formal documents are improper protocol and should be used sparingly. On the other hand, as communication norms change and we strive to write more concisely, abbreviations and acronyms are more commonly accepted as appropriate in expedient documents, where the emphasis is on communicating data/information in the briefest form.

Following are some of the more common rules for abbreviations and acronyms in résumés and cover letters:

- ✓ Spell out a state name or use the appropriate postal service abbreviation (two capital letters), but be consistent. For example, if you abbreviate the state in the letterhead portion of the résumé, follow this format throughout your document.
- ✓ For all other abbreviations and/or acronyms, spell them out the first time you include them in the document followed by the abbreviation in parenthesis. If included later in the document, it is acceptable to use the abbreviation/acronym instead of the full spelling.

Examples:

The American Cancer Society (ACS)

Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Note: Many abbreviations of well-known business organizations (IBM, HP) labor unions (AFL-CIO), societies (SPCA), associations (NRWA), and government agencies (FDA) are written without periods.

- ✓ It is okay to include abbreviations/acronyms for terms that are universal or well known to the target industry.

Examples:

HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning)

AC/DC (alternating current vs. direct current)

When not sure, look it up using a standard dictionary, Barron's Dictionary of Business Terms, or an online source, such as www.acronymfinder.com.

e) Numbers (GRM, Sections 401 - 470)

- ✓ The basic rules outlined by the Gregg Reference Manual for when to use the figure style versus when to use the word style for expressing numbers is as follows:
 - Spell out numbers from one through ten.
 - Use figures for numbers above ten (11 and higher).
 - It is okay to use all figures—even for the numbers 1 through 10—when they have technical significance or need to stand out for quick comprehension. This all-figure style is used for technical or emphatic references to age (a clinical study of 5-year-olds), periods of time (a 6-month loan), measurements (parcels over 3 pounds), and page numbers (page 1).
 - When a number is the first word in a sentence, always spell it out.
Correct: Forty-two managers attended the meeting.
Incorrect: 42 managers attended the meeting.
- ✓ As we strive to write more concisely, it is quickly becoming an acceptable practice to use all figures, as long as you are consistent throughout the document.
- ✓ Whether you choose to use the figure style or the word style, one rule still applies: spell out the number if it is the first word in a complete sentence (or phrase that includes a subject and a verb), as illustrated in the previous example.
- ✓ The following examples are acceptable style to quickly and concisely present results (note

these phrases do not include a subject and a verb; therefore, the example does not contradict the previous point).

RESULTS AT A GLANCE:

- ⇒ 76% increase in productivity
- ⇒ \$5M new revenue stream
- ⇒ 36% year-over-year revenue growth
- ⇒ \$1.2M cut from overhead expenses

- ✓ When writing out quantities or dollar amounts, you may use standard abbreviations (\$10K=thousand; \$10M=million; \$10B=billion) or spell out the words \$10 thousand; \$10 million; \$10 billion), as in the previous example. A word of caution though: different industries and occupations may interpret these abbreviations differently. To ensure that the information is interpreted correctly, we recommend writing out the word (or including the comma, followed by the appropriate number of zeros) as a best practice.

f) Concise writing

- ✓ Minimize the use of articles (a, an, the).
- ✓ Eliminate needless words.

William Strunk said it best in his essay from *The Elements of Style*:

“Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell.”

Not concise:

Launched the first Spanish-language support network that led to the fastest growing membership and donor growth within the history of the organization.

Concise:

Launched first Spanish-language support network, leading to fastest membership and donor growth within organization's history.

Not concise:

Conceived, wrote, produced, and edited electronic communications, including but not limited to website content, video blogs, trailers, and commercials.

Concise:

Conceived, wrote, produced, and edited electronic communications, including website content, video blogs, trailers, and commercials.

g) Capitalization (GRM Sections 196-199 and 301-366)

There are multiple rules and exceptions to rules regarding capitalization, far too many to memorize. Those most relevant to professional résumé writers fall within the following categories (note the specific sections of the Gregg Reference Manual for each category):

Capitalizing After a Colon (Section 196-199)

Proper Nouns (Section 303)

Common Nouns (Sections 307-210)

Name of Organizations (Sections 320-324)

Name of Government Bodies (Sections 325-330)

Points of the Compass (Sections 338-341)

Business Terms and Titles (Section 357)

Hyphenated Words (Section 363)

Computer Terminology (Section 365)

Intercaps/Camel Case (Section 366)

h) Redundancies

Avoid the following common redundancies:

- ✓ Using a particular word or derivative of a word two or more times in the same sentence or paragraph. Examples with redundant words underlined.

Experienced sales consultant with 10 years of experience...

Managed team of project managers...

Wrote standard operating procedures for the department. Researched and wrote grant proposals. Made several presentations, proposing changes to policies and procedures.

- ✓ Starting two or more bullets with the same action verb.

Examples with redundant words underlined:

- Increased annual sales from \$3 million to \$10 million.
- Prospected for new customers to expand the territory.
- Increased account portfolio by penetrating untapped market.

- ✓ Following an acronym with a word that is implied in the acronym.

Incorrect: Ensured the branch met or exceeded performance metrics for monthly ATM machine transactions. (ATM stands for Automated Teller Machine)

Correct: Ensured the branch met or exceeded performance metrics for monthly ATM transactions.

Incorrect: Developed department's first official SOP procedural manual. (SOP stands for Standard Operating Procedures.)

Correct: Developed department's first official SOP manual.

- ✓ Including redundant word phrases.

Examples:

and also — as to whether — due to the fact that — each and every — point in time — time period — in order to — considered to be

i) Compound words and hyphens (GRM, Sections 803-848)

- ✓ Following are three forms of punctuation used frequently in résumés, often incorrectly:

- Hyphen: Used to join two words, that is, compound words (part-time, start-up), as well as between syllables when a word breaks at the end of a line. There is a specific hyphen key on the keyboard.
- En Dash: a medium-sized dash (the width of the letter "N"), used between dates to indicate continuing or inclusive numbers (e.g., 1999–2001). The en dash is a special character symbol; the keyboard does not have an en dash key. Do not include a space on either side of the en dash.
- Em Dash: a longer dash (the width of an "M"), used to indicate a sudden break in thought that causes an abrupt change in sentence structure (e.g., I left she stayed). The em dash is a special character symbol; the keyboard does not have an em dash key. There is no space on either side of the em dash.

✓ The rules for hyphenating compound words can be confusing. Some compound words are written as solid words, some are written as hyphenated words, and some are written as separate words. Following are some rules for compound words used most frequently in résumés and cover letters (note the section of the GRM where these rules are featured):

- Compound Nouns: Some solid and hyphenated compound nouns closely resemble verb phrases. (GRM, Section 802).

Compound noun: Execute a thorough follow-up of the report.

Verb phrase: Follow up on your recommendation.

Compound noun: Manage a start-up.

Verb phrase: Start up a new department.

Compound noun: Expect a turnaround in sales.

Verb phrase: Once sales turn around.

Compound noun: First complete the logon.

Verb phrase: After you log on to the website ...

- Compound Adjectives: Two or more words that function as a unit and express a single thought (GRM Section 813)

Point-of-sale terminals

Fast-track career

High-level conference

- Adjective + Noun: Hyphenate an adjective and noun when these elements serve as a compound modifier before a noun.

High-speed printers

Closed-door meeting

All-day seminar

Part-time job

Two-week vacation

j) Common hyphen errors

✓ Do not hyphenate words that begin with the prefix multi unless the word that follows the suffix begins with a vowel.

Multimillion

Multitasking

Multi-international

- ✓ Most words that begin with the prefix non are not hyphenated.

Nonprofit
Nonbinding
Noncompetitive
Nonresponsive

Do not trust MS Word spell check/grammar check; it is often incorrect. When in doubt, look it up in the GRM or a dictionary.

Appendix B features a detailed breakout of compound words, prefixes, and hyphenated/not hyphenated words.

k) Ampersands (&)

- ✓ It is okay to use ampersands in the following situations:
 - Headings: Professional Skills & Experience; Education & Training
 - Company names (if the company uses the ampersand): AT&T; Martinero & Sons
 - Well-known business or industry terms: P&L
 - Core competency or skills lists: Sales & Marketing; Vendor & Supplier Contracts; Hiring & Training
- ✓ It is never okay to use an ampersand in a sentence in place of the word and.
 - Incorrect: Supervised customer services associates & inside sales representatives.
 - Correct: Supervised customer services associates and inside sales representatives.

l) Accent marks

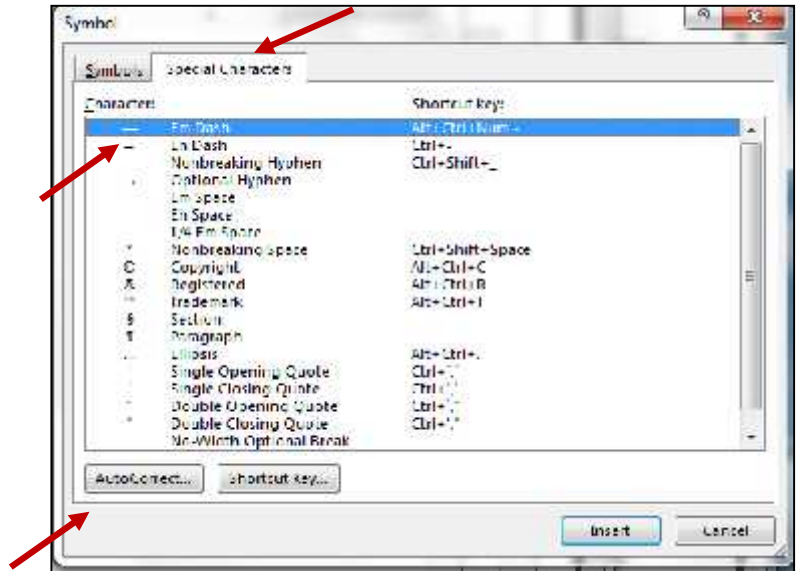
The NRWA adheres to the standard for including accent marks over the “e” in résumé. Appendix B. describes the steps for inserting an “e” with the accent mark and setting up an Auto Correct in MS Word to automatically format “résumé” every time you type it.

Appendix B. MS Word Symbols and How to Accent Resume

How to insert an en dash, em dash, and other symbols

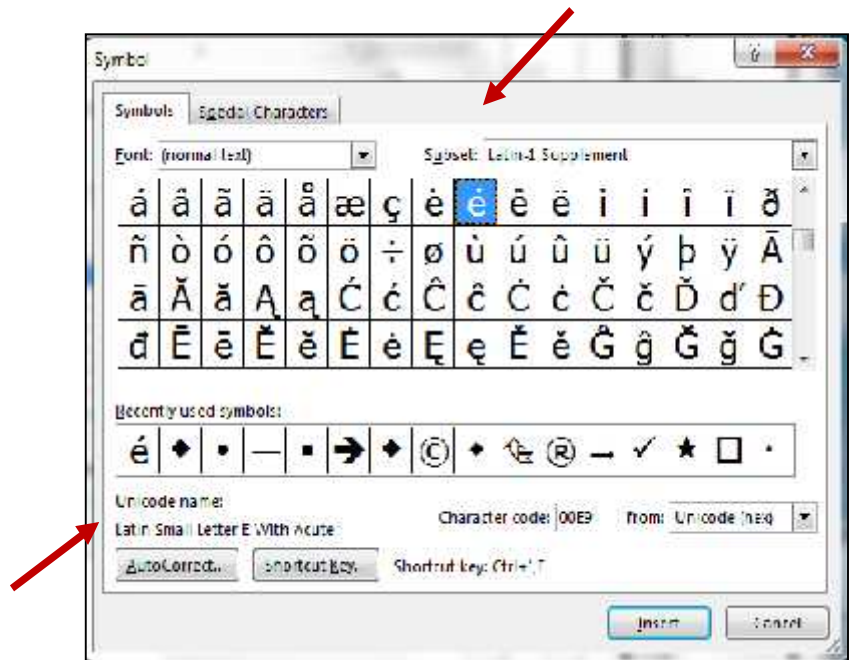
How to insert em dash and en Dash

1. Go to Insert tab.
2. Select Symbols.
3. Select More Symbols.
4. Click Special Characters tab.
5. Highlight the symbol you want. The screenshot example is an Em Dash.
6. Click insert.



How to insert an accented e (é)

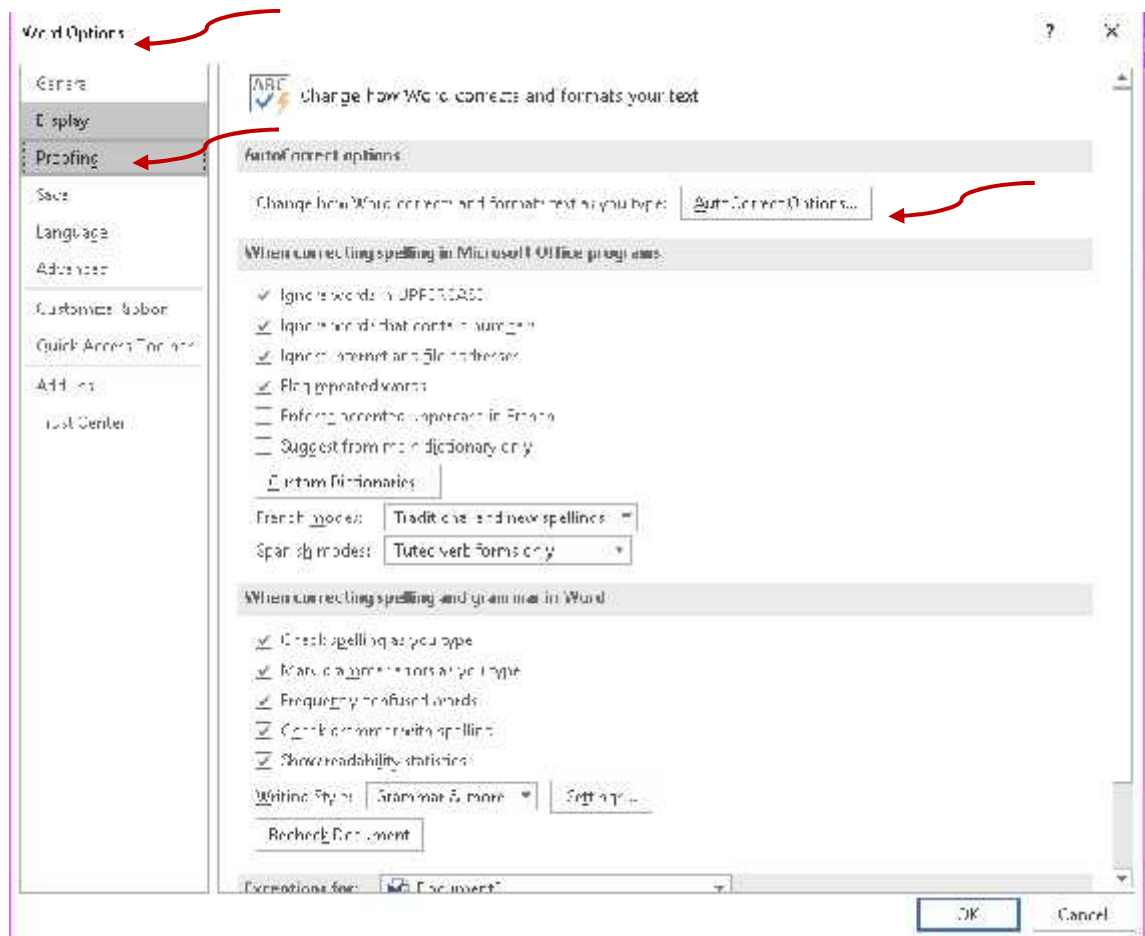
1. Go to Insert tab.
2. Select Symbols.
3. Select More Symbols.
4. Select (normal text) from the font drop-down list.
5. Scroll down until you see the accented letters.
6. Click on the é.
7. Click on insert.
8. Click close.



How to Automatically Type Accented 'e' and Other Frequently Used Words

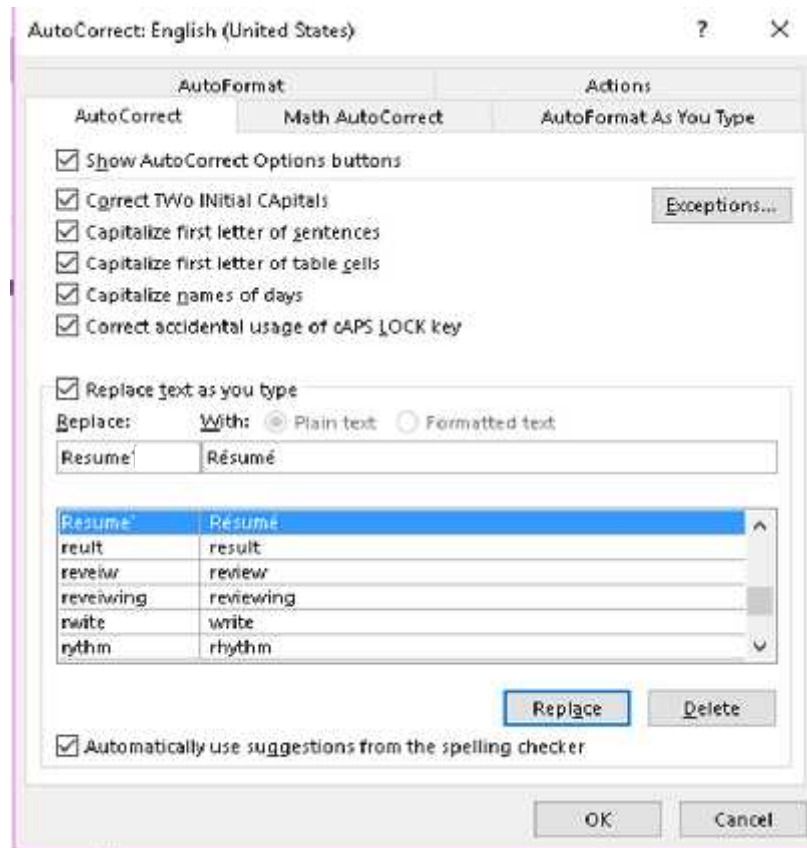
To add text entries that are inserted automatically when you type a specific set of characters, use the AutoCorrect list in the AutoCorrect dialog box.

1. **Type the text you want to automatically insert and select it** (highlight it with your mouse).
2. Click **the File tab**.
3. Click **Options**.
4. Click **Proofing**.
5. Click **AutoCorrect Options**, and then click the **AutoCorrect** tab.



6. Select the **Replace text as you type** check box, if it is not already selected.

7. Under **Replace**, type the characters that you want to use for your automatic text. The text that you selected in your document should appear under **With**.



NOTE: Good news! The AutoCorrect list is global across the Office programs that support this feature. When you add or delete a word from the list in one program, the other Office programs are also affected.

Enter text using AutoCorrect

As you type in your document, the text in the left column of the AutoCorrect list, under **Replace**, is automatically replaced with the text in the right column, under **With**.

In other words, type resume' and you'll get résumé.

NOTE: You need to set this for both capitalized and lowercase versions. Set one for Résumé in addition to one for résumé.

This appendix was prepared by Holly Genser, MA, CCTC. Holly is a Certified Career Transitions Coach and Résumé and LinkedIn Profile Writer. With a knack for technology and a background in corporate training, Holly also helps résumé writers and coaches easily streamline their specific writing and marketing tasks. She is the author of The Essential Microsoft Word Guide to Professional Résumé Writing.

Appendix C. Recommended Fonts for Resumes and Cover Letters

Compatible with Word 2003 (.doc)

*(Fonts with an * are not part of the .doc collection and may not be compatible for all clients)*

Most Common Serif Fonts		
Font Names (all keyed in 12 point)	Acceptable Sizes & Styles Body Content	Acceptable Sizes & Styles Letterhead & Section Headings
Book Antiqua	Book Antiqua (12 pt – bold) <i>Book Antiqua</i> (12 pt – italics) Book Antiqua (11 pt) Book Antiqua (11 pt – bold) <i>Book Antiqua</i> (11 pt – italics)	Book Antiqua (16pt – bold) BOOK ANTIQUA (16pt – bold caps) BOOK ANTIQUA (16pt – bold small caps) Book Antiqua (14pt – bold) BOOK ANTIQUA (14pt – bold caps) BOOK ANTIQUA (14pt – bold small caps) Book Antiqua (12pt – bold) BOOK ANTIQUA (12pt – bold caps) BOOK ANTIQUA (12pt – bold small caps)
Bookman Old Style	Bookman Old Style (12 pt – bold) <i>Bookman Old Style</i> (12 pt – italics) Bookman Old Style (11 pt) <i>Bookman Old Style</i> (11 pt – italics) Bookman Old Style (10 pt) Bookman Old Style (10 pt – bold)	Bookman Old Style (16 pt – bold) BOOKMAN OLD STYLE (16 pt – bold caps) BOOKMAN OLD STYLE (16 pt – bold small caps) Bookman Old Style (14pt – bold) BOOKMAN OLD STYLE (14pt – bold caps) BOOKMAN OLD STYLE (14pt – bold small caps) Bookman Old Style (12pt – bold) BOOKMAN OLD STYLE (12pt – bold caps)

Cambria *	<p>Cambria (12 pt – bold) <i>Cambria</i> (12 pt – italics) Cambria (11 pt) Cambria (11 pt – bold) <i>Cambria</i> (11 pt – italics)</p>	<p>Cambria (16 pt – bold) CAMBRIA (16 pt – bold caps) CAMBRIA (16 pt – bold small caps) Cambria (14 pt – bold) CAMBRIA (14 pt – bold caps) CAMBRIA (14 pt – bold small caps) CAMBRIA (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Constantia *	<p>Constantia (12 pt – bold) <i>Constantia</i> (12 pt – italics) Constantia (11 pt) Constantia (11 pt – bold) <i>Constantia</i> (12 pt – italics) Constantia (10 pt) Constantia (10 pt – bold)</p>	<p>Constantia (16 pt – bold) CONSTANTIA (16 pt – bold caps) CONSTANTIA (16 pt – bold small caps) Constantia (14 pt – bold) CONSTANTIA (14 pt – bold caps) CONSTANTIA (14 pt – bold small caps) CONSTANTIA (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Garamond	<p>Garamond (12pt –bold) <i>Garamond</i> (12 pt – italics) Garamond (11 pt) Garamond (11 pt- bold)</p>	<p>Garamond (16 pt – bold) GARAMOND (16 pt – bold caps) GARAMOND (16 pt – bold small caps) Garamond (14 pt – bold) GARAMOND (14 pt – bold caps) GARAMOND (14pt – bold small caps)</p>
Palantino Linotype	<p>Palantino Linotype (12pt – bold) <i>Palantino Linotype</i> (12pt – italics) Palantino Linotype (11 pt)</p>	<p>Palantino Linotype (16 pt – bold) PALANTINO LINOTYPE (16 pt – bold caps)</p>

	<p>Palantino Linotype (11 pt – bold)</p>	<p>PALANTINO LINOTYPE (16 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>Palantino Linotype (14 pt – bold)</p> <p>PALANTINO LINOTYPE (14 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>PALANTINO LINOTYPE (14 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>PALANTINO LINOTYPE (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Times New Roman	<p>Times New Roman (12 pt – bold)</p> <p><i>Times New Roman</i> (12 pt – italics)</p> <p>Times New Roman (11 pt)</p> <p>Times New Roman (11 pt – bold)</p> <p><i>Times New Roman</i> (11 pt – italics)</p>	<p>Times New Roman (16 pt – bold)</p> <p>TIMES NEW ROMAN (16 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>TIMES NEW ROMAN (16 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>Times New Roman (14 pt – bold)</p> <p>TIMES NEW ROMAN (14 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>TIMES NEW ROMAN (14 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>TIMES NEW ROMAN (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Most Common Sans Serif Fonts		
Arial	<p>Arial (12 pt – bold)</p> <p><i>Arial</i> (12 pt – italics)</p> <p>Arial (11 pt)</p> <p>Arial (11 pt – bold)</p> <p><i>Arial</i> (11 pt – italics)</p> <p>Arial (10-pt)</p> <p>Arial (10 pt – bold)</p>	<p>Arial (16 pt – bold)</p> <p>ARIAL (16 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>ARIAL (16 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>Arial (14 pt – bold)</p> <p>ARIAL (14 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>ARIAL (14 pt – bold small caps)</p>
Arial Black	Not recommended for body content	<p>Arial Black (16 pt – bold)</p> <p>ARIAL BLACK (16 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>ARIAL BLACK (16 pt – bold small caps)</p>

		<p>Arial Black (14 pt – bold) ARIAL BLACK (14 pt – bold caps) ARIAL BLACK (14 pt – bold small caps) Arial Black (12 pt – bold) ARIAL BLACK (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Arial Narrow	<p>Arial Narrow (12 pt – bold) Arial Narrow (12 pt – italics) Arial Narrow (11 pt) Arial Narrow (11 pt – italics)</p>	<p>Arial Narrow (16 pt – bold) ARIAL NARROW (16 pt – bold caps) ARIAL NARROW (16 pt – bold small caps) Arial Narrow (14 pt – bold) ARIAL NARROW (14 pt – bold caps) ARIAL NARROW (14 pt – bold small caps) ARIAL NARROW (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Calibri *	<p>Calibri (12 pt – bold) <i>Calibri</i> (12 pt – italics) Calibri (11 pt) <i>Calibri</i> (11 pt – italics) Calibri (10 pt) Calibri (10 pt - bold)</p>	<p>Calibri (16 pt – bold) CALIBRI (16 pt – bold caps) CALIBRI (16 pt – bold small caps) Calibri (14 pt – bold) CALIBRI (14 pt – bold caps) CALIBRI (14 pt – bold small caps)</p>
Candara *	<p>Candara (12 pt –bold) <i>Candara</i> (12 pt – italics) Candara (11 pt) Candara (11 pt – bold) <i>Candara</i> (11 pt – italics)</p>	<p>Candara (16 pt – bold) CANDARA (16 pt – bold caps) CANDARA (16 pt – bold small caps) CANDARA (14 pt – bold caps)</p>

Corbel *	<p>Corbel (12 pt – bold) <i>Corbel</i> (12 pt – italics) Corbel (11 pt) Corbel (11 pt – bold)</p>	<p>Corbel (16 pt – bold) CORBEL (16 pt – bold caps) CORBEL (16 pt – bold small caps) Corbel (14 pt – bold) CORBEL (14 pt – bold caps) CORBEL (14 pt – bold small caps) CORBEL (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Tahoma	<p>Tahoma (12 pt – bold) Tahoma (12 pt – italics) Tahoma (11 pt) Tahoma (11 pt – bold) Tahoma (11 pt – italics) Tahoma (10 pt) Tahoma (10 pt – bold)</p>	<p>Tahoma (16 pt – bold) TAHOMA (16 pt – bold caps) TAHOMA (16 pt – bold small caps) Tahoma (14 pt – bold) TAHOMA (14 pt – bold caps) TAHOMA (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Trebuchet MS	<p>Trebuchet MS (12 pt – bold) <i>Trebuchet MS</i> (12 pt – italics) Trebuchet MS (11 pt) Trebuchet MS (11 pt – bold) <i>Trebuchet MS</i> (11 pt – italics) Trebuchet MS (10 pt) Trebuchet MS (10 pt – bold) <i>Trebuchet MS</i> (10 pt – italics)</p>	<p>Trebuchet MS (16 pt – bold) TREBUCHET MS (16 pt – bold caps) TREBUCHET MS (16 pt – bold small caps) Trebuchet MS (14 pt – bold) TREBUCHET MS (14 pt – bold caps) TREBUCHET MS (14 pt – bold small caps) TREBUCHET MS (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
Verdana	<p>Verdana (12 pt – bold) Verdana (12 pt – italics) Verdana (11 pt)</p>	<p>Verdana (16 pt – bold) VERDANA (16 pt – bold caps)</p>

	<p>Verdana (11 pt – bold)</p> <p>Verdana (11 pt – italics)</p> <p>Verdana (10 pt)</p> <p>Verdana (10 pt – bold)</p> <p>Verdana (10 pt – italics)</p> <p>Verdana (9 pt – bold)</p>	<p>VERDANA (16 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>Verdana (14 pt – bold)</p> <p>VERDANA (14 pt – bold caps)</p> <p>VERDANA (14 pt – bold small caps)</p> <p>Verdana (12 pt – bold)</p> <p>VERDANA (12 pt – bold caps)</p>
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