

Resources

[Job Seeker Toolkit »](#)

[Job Seeker Advice Blog](#)

»

[Request an Article](#)

[Reprint](#)

[Salary Calculator »](#)

[CareerBuilder.TV »](#)

[Career Tests »](#)

[Degrees & Certificates »](#)

[Skills Training »](#)

[Physical Therapy Jobs »](#)

[Occupational Therapy](#)

[Jobs »](#)

[Speech Therapy Jobs »](#)

[Nursing Jobs »](#)

[Ignite your Career: Get
an Edge »](#)

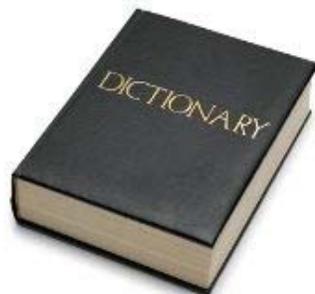


[Free Salary Calculator >>](#)

careerbuilder.com™

Can bad spelling ruin your chances of landing a job?

Rachel Farrell, CareerBuilder.com Writer



Almost every time you hear about mistakes to avoid in your résumé or cover letter, you see the same things: lying about your experience, providing too much information or using the same generic résumé for every application. We also preach about spelling.

If the job you're applying for doesn't require that you have killer writing skills, it doesn't mean spelling errors will fly in your résumé or cover letter, says Barbara Roche, lecturer at The Wharton School and executive coach for Right Management.

"Job candidates do themselves no favors when they claim to have an attention to detail and then spell it 'attention to detail,'" she says. "Most hiring authorities see typos and spelling errors as an indication of a candidate's performance on the job: low quality and not caring about the impression they make on others."

While some hiring managers may be more forgiving of minor spelling errors, the majority agree that they just can't happen when it comes to your job application materials -- or otherwise.

"Quite frankly, there is no excuse for misspelled words, even in BlackBerry messages. It's just lazy," says Roy Cohen, career coach and author "The Wall Street Professional's Survival Guide." "Spell check is available to everyone. Words that are incorrectly spelled or abbreviations often are difficult to decipher [and] can slow down the reading rather than speed it up. It may be more efficient for the sender, but it presents bigger challenges for the individual who has to translate the cryptic language for meaning."

Error-free résumés and cover letters suggest to employers that your communication skills are spot-on -- a vital skill in today's competitive job market.

"Excellent communication skills can pave the way to promotions for employees," says Sharon Armstrong, president, Sharon Armstrong and Associates. "If you are a life-long learner, you'll continue to work on the skills that will help you grow and develop."

Good spelling (and grammar) also implies intelligence, Roche says. "You are a capable, educated candidate who will represent the organization well."

And that might be what employers care about the most.

"Any company that cares about their 'brand' will be put off by bad spelling. A company that cares about the details will want to always show a professional image," Armstrong says.

Generation Gap

Some experts agree that spelling has gotten worse with each new generation of job seekers, especially with the increased amount of texting and abbreviations younger folks tend to use. While running an internship program at Penn State, Roche ran into this problem often.

"It's a real problem. College juniors and seniors simply have no awareness that they write in slang and shorthand in all instances until it is pointed out to them. They seem to split into two groups: those that are grateful to receive the feedback and remedy the situation. And those that give you the 'thousand-yard stare' as if to say, 'So?'" Roche says. "This is how stark the difference can be: 'Please accept the enclosed résumé for the entry-level administrator position' and 'Dude, hook me up.'"

The advents of social media and forums where you only have 140 characters to express yourself aren't doing spelling-challenged job seekers any favors either, says Cohen.

"Social media has given a lot of people carte blanche to abuse spelling and grammar. In a world of tweets and texts, there's no room for padding," he says. "Words and sentences shrink to symbols and acronyms and have almost become a new language. Think: BFF or LOL."

When all is said and done, the standard in your job search should be spelling-error free, says Cohen.

"Everyone's entitled to an occasional mistake once you're on the job. Not that anyone among us is perfect," he reminds. "The goal is to demonstrate that at least for the purposes of job search that we care enough about the job and our candidacy to pay attention to the details. Although a typo is inevitable even for the most diligent among us, sloppiness at the start usually means the potential for carelessness later on. That's not an acceptable standard for anyone in job search in a highly competitive market."

Last Updated: 08/03/2011 - 6:15 PM

Article Reprints

Permission must be obtained from CareerBuilder.com to reprint any of its articles. Please send a request to cbreprints@permissionsgroup.com.