

NOTES: 2/21/12

Tues, Feb 21 Read pp. **100-104**, —Business Letters” & “Cover Letters”
Read pp. **105-111** Effective Résumés/Curriculum Vitae
Short Review of Objective Report & its component parts

Assignment #3: Effective Cover Letter & Resume--Due 2/28/12

When applying for a job, a cover letter must always be sent with a resume. Why? The cover letter tells a story about you, revealing: (1) your writing skills, (2) your attention to detail, and (3) how well your previous experience relates to the position. Here is your chance to highlight specifics that might otherwise be missed in your resume. Additionally, this is an opportunity to compose or improve your resume. It's just one of the many ways English class is relevant to real-world situations.

Your assignment:

Find a position advertised either in the newspaper or online (Careerbuilder.com provides free access to position listings in the area). Choose one and write an application letter (a.k.a. cover letter) for it, following the letter-writing standards discussed in the 2/21/12 class. Accompany this with a resume that uses the principles discussed in the 2/21 notes, including the use of action verbs, quantification of achievements, and indication of timeframes in which these achievements were accomplished.

Audience: Your potential employer

Purpose: Sell your abilities; match your experience with qualifications listed

Format: Typed, 12 pt., use letter writing & resume standards discussed

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But first....a recap from last week:

Q: WHAT IS OBJECTIVITY?

A: FACTUAL, FAIR, AND BALANCED--

LOOK AT BOTH SIDES OF AN ISSUE IN
A FAIR AND BALANCED WAY,
WITHOUT EMOTION OR JUDGMENT

**Just the facts, mam.
Just the facts.**



For greatest objectivity, USE:

- PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS (REMEMBER DON'T JUST LOOK, OBSERVE! Report *concrete* details.)
- RELIABLE STATISTICS
- NEWS REPORTS
- SCIENTIFIC DATA
- OTHER RELIABLE WRITTEN SOURCES
 - POLICE REPORTS
 - OFFICIAL REPORTS
 - SCIENTIFIC PAPERS
 - BOOKS
 - RELIABLE ONLINE NEWS SOURCES
- SUBJECT AUTHORITIES
 - INTERVIEWS (WE SAW THIS IN NEWSPAPER STORY WE LOOKED AT ON TUES)
 - PARAPHRASE OF QUOTES

Your career and the *power of word choice*
English class tips for the REAL WORLD:

COVER LETTER TEMPLATE
(also, we'll refer to your book for examples, pp. 100-104)

Employer Contact Information

Name Title Company

Address

City, State, Zip Code

Salutation *Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name, (leave out if you don't have a contact; instead "Dear Human Resources Manager")*

Body of Cover Letter *The body of your cover letter lets the employer know what position you are applying for, why the employer should select you for an interview, and how you will follow-up.*

First Paragraph *The first paragraph of your letter should include information on **why you are writing**. Mention the position you are applying for and where you found the job listing. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one.*

Middle Paragraph(s) *The next section of your cover letter should describe **what you have to offer the employer**. Mention specifically **how your qualifications match the job you are applying for**. Remember, you are interpreting your resume in relation to the position available, not merely repeating what is on the resume.*

Final Paragraph *Conclude your cover letter by thanking the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow-up.*

Complimentary Close

Sincerely,

Signature

Handwritten Signature (for a mailed letter)

Resume Tips

First, let's look at the resume examples I your book on pp. 105-111

Resume Tips for Technology Professionals (From Monster.com)

By Kim Isaacs, Monster Resume Expert

With increasing numbers of job seekers competing for the most desirable technical jobs, your resume needs to be better than the rest to get noticed.

Technical Summary

Effective technical resumes clearly show the candidate's **technical skills -- a hiring manager shouldn't have to go fishing for this information (ah-ha! Remember to ask, who's my audience?)**. An excellent way to include technical knowledge is to add a Technical Summary or Technical Expertise section to your resume. Break the section into subcategories so the reader can quickly scan through your knowledge of programs and applications...[blah, blah, technical blah...stuff here not relevant to us]

Career Summary

Many hiring managers (**your audience!!**) say they are searching for candidates who offer more than technical credentials. Soft skills such as interpersonal communications, ability to work collaboratively and commitment to achieving corporate goals are just as

desirable. In other words, **your resume needs a personality**. The reader shouldn't be impressed only by your technical qualifications, but should also find you to be likeable and well-suited for the team. You can highlight some of these skills in a Career Summary section.

Focus on Technical Results

Technical candidates usually make one of two critical errors on their resumes -- either the document is excessively long with excruciating detail on every assignment ever completed, or too short with hardly any descriptions at all. There needs to be some middle ground -- **the resume should be succinct yet effectively showcase your achievements.** (*What's that? Be brief and concise? Ah-ha!*)

What to Include

For each position you've held, give a **brief synopsis** of the **scope of your responsibility**. Then show **how your performance benefited** the company. **Give examples of how past initiatives led to positive outcomes such as enhanced efficiency, faster time-to-market, monetary savings, etc.** **Accomplishments are most powerful when they are measurable, so include actual performance figures whenever possible.** (*What's that? Be concrete not abstract! Give details!*) **Focus on your most impressive technical projects/accomplishments.** (*Narrow to the most important details! And again remember the concerns of your audience...what are they most interested in?*) **What types of challenges did you face? What did you do to overcome the challenges? How did your performance improve the organization's bottom line?**

[blah, blah, technical blah...omission of stuff not relevant to us]

Keywords

The best **keywords for your resume depend on your job target and experience.** **Specific programs and applications are often used as keywords,** which is another reason a Technical Summary is a good idea. To determine the best keywords for your industry, examine job postings on Monster to see which credentials and skills are used frequently; these are potential keywords that should be incorporated into your resume.

(From Monster.com)

Use Numbers to Highlight Your Accomplishments

By Peter Vogt, MonsterTRAK Career Coach

If you were an employer looking at a resume, which of the following entries would impress you more?

- Wrote press releases.
- Wrote **25** press releases in a **three-week period under daily deadlines**.

Clearly, the second statement carries more weight. Why? *Because it **uses numbers to quantify the writer's accomplishment**, giving it a context that helps the interviewer understand the **degree of difficulty involved in the task**.*

Numbers are powerful resume tools that will help your accomplishments get the attention they deserve from prospective employers. With just a little thought, you can find effective ways to **quantify your successes** on your resume. Here are a few suggestions:

Think Money

Organizations (your audience!) are and always will be concerned about money. So as you contemplate your accomplishments and prepare to present them on your resume, **think about ways you've saved, earned or managed money in your internships or volunteer work, part-time jobs and extracurricular activities so far.** A few possibilities that might appear on a typical resume:

- **Identified, researched and recommended** a new Internet service provider, **cutting** the company's online **costs** by 15 percent.
 - Wrote prospect letter that has brought in more than \$25,000 in donations so far.
 - Managed a student organization budget of more than \$7,000.
- *(Savannah's NOTE: Are you a homemaker moving back into a professional position, or have you been unemployed for awhile, but taking care of kids/a wife/a husband/a household? Family responsibilities and households are both like running companies: a budget must be established, and costs must be cut wherever possible in order to remain solvent. Say, for example, you negotiated for better car insurance rates. A detail like this is every bit as valid on a resume as work at an actual conventional position. It provides evidence of your proactive capabilities...you didn't merely keep paying a high rate—you identified and secured a lower one. That takes sense and initiative, which are valuable qualities for any position.)*

Think Time

You've heard the old saying, "Time is money," and it's true. Companies and organizations are constantly looking for ways to save time and do things more efficiently. They're also necessarily concerned about meeting deadlines, both internal and external.

So whatever you can do on your resume to show that you can save time, make time or manage time will grab your reader's immediate attention. Here are some time-oriented entries that might appear on a typical resume:

- **Assisted** with **twice-monthly** payroll activities, **ensuring** employees were paid **as expected** and **on time**.
- **Suggested** procedures that **decreased** average order-processing **time** from **10** minutes to **five** minutes.* *Spell all numbers zero and nine out; for numbers 10 and above, use numerals.

Think Amounts

It's very easy to neglect mentioning how much or how many of something you've produced or overseen. **There's a tendency instead to simply pluralize your accomplishments – e.g., “wrote news releases” or “developed lesson plans” – without including important specifics – e.g., “wrote 25 news releases” or “developed lesson plans for two classes of 20 students each.”**

Don't fall into the trap of excluding numbers. Instead, include amounts, like these:

- **Recruited 25** members for a **new** student environmental organization.
- **Trained five new** employees on restaurant operations procedures.
- **Created** process that **bolstered** production **25 percent**

The more you focus on money, time and amounts in relation to your accomplishments, (that is, concrete specifics, as we've been discussing!) the better you'll present your successes and highlight your potential – and the more you'll realize just how much you really have to offer prospective employers. Add it all up, and you'll see that playing the numbers game is yet another way to convince employers that you should be a part of their equation for success.

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13.1 Eliminating Sentence Fragments

Revise each of the following fragments, either by combining fragments with independent clauses or by rewriting them as a separate sentences.

Example:

Zoe looked close to tears. Standing with her head bowed.

Standing with her head bowed, Zoe looked close to tears.

Zoe looked close to tears. She was standing with her head bowed.

1. Wollstonecraft believed in universal public education. Also, in education that forms the heart and strengthens the body.
2. Her father pulled strings to get her the job. Later regretting his actions.
3. Organized crime has been able to attract graduates just as big business has. With good pay and the best equipment money can buy.
4. Trying to carry a portfolio, art box, illustration boards, and drawing pads. I must have looked ridiculous.
5. The president promoted one tax change. A reduction in the capital gains tax.
6. Connie picked up the cat and started playing with it. It scratched her neck. With its sharp little claws.
7. The climbers had two choices. To go over a four-hundred-foot cliff or to turn back. They decided to make the attempt.
8. The region has dry, sandy soil. Blown into strange formations by the ever-present wind.
9. The appeal of this film is obvious. Its enthusiastic embrace of sex and violence.
10. To feel useful. Many older Americans want nothing more than that.

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Let's go back to the 2/14 notes and look at the details for MLA citations

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EX #2: Objective Formal Report (we looked at objective *informal* last time)

“Carmakers Urged to Limit Dashboard Distractions”

By MATT RICHTEL

Published: February 16, 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/17/us/carmakers-urged-to-curb-dashboard-distractions.html?ref=us>

NOTE: There are two sides to this article, but three vantage points. What are they, why 2 sides but 3 points of view? Let's analyze.

A federal traffic agency formally urged carmakers on Thursday to stop equipping automobiles with entertainment and navigation systems that can distract drivers. **(What kind of lead?)**

The agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, said that its proposed voluntary guidelines were not intended to reduce the sale of popular features like navigation systems. Rather, the agency wants to encourage companies to design them to be safer.

(What should we ask here....and what should you, as the writer, include here?-->) Studies have shown that the risk of crashing increases markedly when drivers take their eyes off the road for even two seconds, particularly the faster they go. Carmakers, however, are building increasingly complicated devices — called “infotainment” systems — that control music, navigation, phone systems, even Internet searches and social media updates.

BACKGROUND: Though many carmakers have developed voice-activated versions of these systems, research shows that many functions still require hands-on use, and that some consumers simply prefer to use them that way.

MORE BACKGROUND: The broad guidelines encourage automakers to reduce the complexity of tasks that are not related to driving, including limiting activities that require drivers to take both hands off the wheel or that take more than two seconds to perform. The agency said that the proposals would not levy any penalties against carmakers that fail to comply.

“The choice between ensuring drivers are safe and including cutting-edge features in cars is false,” said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, who announced the guidelines. “We can and we must do both.” **(←What is this? Is it handled properly?)**

Some safety advocates **(←Why is this problematic?)** reacted with disappointment to Mr. LaHood's sentiments, and to the guidelines themselves. They **(←And why is this problematic? How could we make it better?)** said the measures should be tougher, could not be enforced because they were voluntary and did nothing to discourage people from talking on their phones while driving or issuing orders to their devices.

“It’s disappointing,” said David D. Teater, **senior director of transportation initiatives at the National Safety Council, a nonprofit advocacy group. (←Why is this highlighted information important to include?)** He said that the greatest risk to drivers, by far, was from talking on the phone because people spend so much more time talking than they do using dashboard devices. **(What side is Teater on? What side is Lahood on?)**

Several months ago, another federal agency, the National Transportation Safety Board, **called on states to ban the use of phones while driving**, including hands-free devices, because talking can distract drivers’ attention from the road. Laboratory studies have shown that talking on the phone can lead to a four times greater risk of crashing, the equivalent of having a blood alcohol level of .08. **(←what’s missing here that you, as writers of academic papers, would need to include?)**

Mr. LaHood said that the highway traffic safety agency was studying the impact of distractions on drivers. He said the recommendations reflected the latest research that the agency found reliable.

An industry trade group, the **Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers**, praised the proposed guidelines and characterized them as consistent with the industry’s own practices. **(Who’s side do they support? Focus on details: what does “industry trade group” mean?)**

Others **(←why is this a problem?)** who study traffic safety said the proposed guidelines were a positive step, and a realistic one given the popularity of the devices.

The Transportation Department “is on the right path,” said Jonathan Adkins of the **Governors Highway Safety Association**, whose members are state highway traffic officials. **(Why is this information important?)** “Of course, the best advice for drivers is to refrain from using any of these technologies while driving, but that probably isn’t realistic.” **(What side is Adkins on?)**

Last year, *Consumer Reports* magazine found that some of the newest and most advanced automobile infotainment systems can be highly distracting. The magazine found that as automakers build more functions into dashboards, even simple actions like changing a radio station can tax a driver’s attention.

The magazine said that voice commands helped, in theory, but often were not reliable.

“Automakers are throwing as much stuff up there to look cool or sell vehicles, and that may not be what the customer wants or should be able to have or do,” said David Champion Sr., director of Consumer Reports Automotive Test Center.

“Some of the systems are extremely distracting to use.” (←**What side Champion on, if he’s on any side? If he’s not on a side, what value does his quote have?**)

1) Why is this *formal voice*?

Hint: How does it compare to the “It’s the economy, Girlfriend” article we looked at on 2/14?

2) How many sources were consulted, including people and print sources?

Last Thing Tonight:

Rewrite this paragraph, as best you can, so that it contains no sentence fragments. No anxiety over it; just give it a whirl:

It must be embarrassing for famous people. To have people think that they are dead when they aren’t. I’m not talking about whispered conspiracies. Like all of those supposed clues on Beatles albums about Paul McCartney’s supposed demise. (In case you were wondering. Paul is alive and well and now a knight, no less.) Instead, I’m thinking about half-forgotten celebrities. Actors and musicians who are not among your favorites may get mixed up in your mind. Before you know it. You’re saying to a friend, “I thought that guy was dead.” Then you may both debate for a while. Because neither of you is certain whether the guy is dead or whether you’re thinking of someone else who resembled him. It’s a good thing so many celebrity reality shows and exposes feature the has-beens you barely remember. With those shows. You at least know that the people on screen are still alive. Or if they aren’t. They have died recently enough that you will probably still remember.