

# Writing Portfolio for Jacqueline Myers

## Sample #1

### Fact or Fad? Exposing Common Healthy Eating Myths

Have you ever noticed the disparity in nutritional advice? One week, eggs are bad, bad, bad...the next week, you should eat them at every meal. Oh, and the popularity of “health foods” that have no basis in reality. The “superfoods” that are on the cover of popular magazines this month have been a staple in some cultures for centuries. And they will be popular here too. Until the next fad comes along.

These fads turn into myths about what is healthy and nutritious. So how do you know what advice to follow? Read on as we expose these common healthy living myths:

#### Coffee

This mainstay in the Western diet has long-been considered evil, mostly because of the amount of caffeine it has. However, recent studies now reveal that the large amount of antioxidants found in coffee actually make it healthy! Who knew that your favorite warm beverage could actually help you live a longer, healthier life! Go figure!

#### Salt

While it is true that high-salt intake can impact those with hypertension, the myth that all of us should lower our salt intake is unfounded. Salt does not lead to higher risk of strokes or heart attacks, as proven in medical testing.

#### Grazing

Many claim that eating several smaller meals throughout the day assist in weight-loss efforts because it heightens metabolism. However, there is no scientific proof of this. In fact, it's easier to *gain* weight by following this advice because it's easier to eat more without realizing it. The truth is, eating your 3 squares daily burns *exactly the same* number of calories as eating multiple meals throughout the day.

#### Fat

Eating foods high in fat makes us fat, right? Well, not really. It depends on what else the foods contain. If the high-fat foods are also high-carb, then yes, these foods can cause weight gain. But, it's the *carbs* that cause the weight-gain, not the fat. In fact, diets high in fat, but low in carbs actually *increase* weight loss!

## **Wheat**

No matter what the food pyramid says, wheat isn't what it used to be. Because of the genetic modification wheat underwent in the 1960's, today's wheat is less nutritious, causes inflammation in the gut and can raise cholesterol levels.

## **Full-fat dairy**

Although we've been told for years that the high calories and saturated fat content in full-fat dairy products leads to heart disease and obesity, there is no scientific proof of this. In fact, the fat in these tasty products is nutritious. Actually, full-fat dairy products that come from *grass-fed cows* have been proven to *significantly* lower risk of heart disease!

## **Red meat**

While red meat is typically touted as increasing your risk of heart disease, cancer and type-2 diabetes, the studies that "prove" this include both *processed* and unprocessed meat. In truth, studies substantiate that *unprocessed* red meat does not significantly increase heart disease, diabetes or cancer.

## **Low-fat**

All low-fat food is healthy, right? Wrong! The problem with processed low-fat foods is that the manufacturers must add a great deal of sugar so that we will eat them; otherwise, they taste terrible, or at least really boring. So while the "low-fat" part of the equation isn't unhealthy, all of the required additional sugar is.

## **Sample #2**

### **Does Beauty *Have to Mean Pain*? What's in Your Skin Care Products?**

We women use makeup to make us beautiful – to give us a "fresh" look and to bring out our best features. We lacquer our eyelids, plaster our lips with the season's most popular lip color and varnish our faces with moisturizer, all in the name of beauty. But did you know that even though the FDA controls the contents allowed in skin care products, there are dangerous chemicals that seep into our skin each time we apply them? What's even more terrifying is that our skin is our largest organ and absorbs 60% of what we put on it. There are over 80,000 different ingredients found in skin care products, including carcinogens, pesticides, reproductive toxins and hormone disruptors. And, 2014, a cosmetic ingredient review panel released the fact that 89% of ingredients in personal care products have not been evaluated for safety. Below is a

short list of the chemicals we should avoid when purchasing skin care and makeup products.

### **Heavy Metals**

Common makeup and other personal care products contain heavy metals, including arsenic, lead and mercury – in other words, poisons. The reason these metals continue to be added to makeup is because they are naturally occurring in some of the raw materials cosmetic companies use. But you won't find these ingredients listed on the jars because companies aren't required to disclose these contaminants. These heavy metals cause localized skin issues, but also have systemic effects once they are absorbed into our skin.

### **DMDM Hydantoin and Urea (Imidazolidinyl)**

These preservatives can often be found in shampoo, conditioners, skin care products and even baby wipes. They release formaldehyde, which can cause headaches, depression, chronic fatigue, chest pain, joint pain, cancer, dizziness and insomnia.

### **Sodium Lauryl Sulfate (SLS) and Sodium Laureth Sulfate (SLES)**

These chemicals are found in approximately 90% of personal-care products that foam. This is a major concern, considering how popular foaming products such as face cleansers and hand soap have become. And even scarier is that they are also used in garage floor cleaners and engine degreasers! They have been found to cause eye damage, depression, diarrhea, skin irritation and labored breathing.

### **PEG (Polyethylene glycol)**

Though it has been determined that this compound doesn't easily absorb into the skin and is actually safe, it is often contaminated with chemicals that *are* harmful and are absorbed easily, such as ethylene oxide and 1,4-dioxane. PEG is often found in cosmetic cream bases.

### **Triclosan**

This is a synthetic antibacterial ingredient that the EPA registers as a pesticide which poses risk to humans and the environment. It is classified as chlorophenol, which are chemicals suspected of causing cancer in humans. Since antibacterial products are all the rage, you can find it in many products.

Obviously, we can't depend on the FDA to keep us safe. (Of course, we knew this already.) It's important to carefully read the ingredients on all of our skin care products, including the ones we use on our children. Labels are misleading – don't trust a brand name just because it is marketed as "all natural" or "safe for babies." We must be

vigilant in choosing skin care products for our families because children's skin absorbs 40-50% more chemicals than adults' do, which can lead to health issues as they mature.

So what are we to do if we want to continue looking our best? Does beauty have to mean pain? There are reliable companies who produce safe, high-quality skin products. There are others, but here are a few to get you started: 100% Pure, Primal Life Organics, Alima Pure and Aubrey Organics.

### *Sample #3*

#### **The Top 10 Skills Employers Are Looking For**

You are attending college to master the information you need to be successful in your future career. True. But you should also be focusing on what many call "soft skills" such as effective communication and critical thinking to develop all of the qualities employers are looking for in recent college graduates.

A recent survey done by The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) describes the 10 most desired skills employers are looking for when they hire new staff. In the 2013 NACE survey, 93% of those surveyed agreed that "a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major." The possibility to develop these leadership and interpersonal skills are built into college curricula, and students would be wise to take advantage of these opportunities, while simultaneously training for their chosen career field, no matter what their major.

Why are "soft skills" important to employers? Because they are an integral part of any successful business or organization. To be an effective, productive member of the staff, regardless of the degree you earned or the industry you are in, employees need to add value to what they offer their employer by being a savvy, proactive member of the team. Below you will find the top skills that employers are looking for outlined. You may be surprised by some of the items you find there.

##### **1. Teamwork skills**

Due to the expansion of the global workplace, employees must be willing and able to work effectively as part of a team, especially with others who are different from themselves. Every industry now collaborates with other companies around the world to provide their goods and services, which means that employees must

be able to put aside any pre-conceived notions of people of other ethnicities, religions and cultures, as well as personalities. Being able to prove that you are a team player – someone who can effectively work in a team of differing personalities to reach a goal without allowing your ego to get in the way – will go a long way towards getting hired in and moving up the company ladder.

## 2. **Leadership skills**

Being able to effectively lead or motivate a team is of great consequence to businesses of all types. Employers look for job candidates who take the initiative on projects without alienating others. Many jobs will require employees to work in groups, who together, complete a large project. Focus, empathy, self-confidence, decisiveness and optimism are just a few of the qualities that true leaders have that you should develop while in college. Even though you won't have a lot of professional experience, you can work on these skills through group and academic opportunities that present themselves.

## 3. **Written Communication skills**

Written communication skills are required for most any job. Although students write a great deal in college, employers are still having a difficult time finding job candidates who can express themselves well "on paper." Regardless of the types of writing that are needed in the field, such as reports, proposals, and even emails, solid writing skills set candidates apart! The ability to write well is even more important in our global workplace, since much of our communication is done electronically in written form. Those whose writing includes grammar mistakes, spelling errors and awkward sentences will find the job market a challenge. Take the opportunity while in college to fully develop strong, formal writing skills. They will be even more important in the real world than they are in school.

## 4. **Verbal Communication Skills**

You may have the gift of gab, but can you ensure your listeners get the true message you wish to send? Many jobs offer the chance to speak with clients and influencers in the field, so it is essential that you perfect this talent early on. Because so much of our communication now is done via technology, verbal communication skills have deteriorated, even in those who are educated. But clear, formal speech is something that, while some find more natural, all can develop with some effort. Being able to change the tone and vocabulary used in different work situations is also a part of being able to provide clear information and persuade listeners to your way of thinking. Consider taking a speech class while in college and then use what you learn

when you speak with professors and other authority figures to get practice.

**5. Critical Thinking Skills**

The ability to think through complex problems is a requirement for all employees across all fields. Employees often see just their part of the process, but need to understand the “big picture” as well so they can critically think problems through to come up with viable solutions. College is often the first time students are asked to critically think, unfortunately. Focusing on building this ability at every opportunity, rather than just trying to get through school to start your career, is one of the best things you can do to increase your future job prospects.

**6. Problem Solving Skills**

Analyzing a problem and coming up with a workable solution is a life skill that every individual needs to make smart decisions. This is also true in the workplace. An employee with finely-developed problem-solving skills saves companies and organization time, and therefore, money. Because of this, job recruiters are always on the lookout for individuals who can define problems, generate alternatives and implement solutions for the company. During college there are a multitude of opportunities to build this trait. Not only will you be asked to do this academically, but you will also be living on your own for the first time, which means you will be in charge of problem-solving everyday issues that you may not have had to worry about before. Take advantage of this time to ramp up these skills before graduation.

**7. Big Picture Thinking Skills**

It is great to be able to break down problems or projects into pieces to easier analyze, yet it is just as important to be able to envision the problem or project in its entirety also. As mentioned earlier, because projects now often get completed by workers in different offices, and even different parts of the world, employers need employees who can work on their own piece of the “puzzle” within the framework of how their innovations will impact other aspects of the project. Being able to show hiring managers that you can think globally will benefit you greatly during the job search.

**8. Creative Thinking Skills**

Businesses and organizations are in stiff competition with their rivals and are therefore always looking for innovative ways to improve their branding, marketing, products and services. The ability to be creative and innovative in solving problems is a highly-regarded trait that is needed in any field, even those that are methodological or technological. Find ways to not only problem-solve in your college life, but seek out ways of solving problems with

out-of-the-box thinking that provides creative solutions.

#### 9. **Knowledge Applicability Skills**

While in college you are presented with a great deal of theory. Theory is important; it is the foundation for a true working understanding of your field of study. However, employers need workers who can apply the knowledge they have acquired in real world situations. It may be a challenge to practice applying what you have learned before you complete your degree, but you should grab any opportunity you find to develop this skill. No matter what your major, you will be required to use the theory, techniques, strategies and formulas you have learned to arrive at solutions that are applicable to the problems you confront in your job.

#### 10. **Strong work ethic**

Last, but certainly not least, employers rely on the work ethic of their employees to stay in business. These moral principles are vital for each position in the business or organization, and cannot be too strongly emphasized. Qualities such as honesty, commitment to quality, discipline and sense of responsibility can build or break a career because companies and organizations are defined by their employees' dedication to providing outstanding and trustworthy products and services. Developing a strong work ethic is definitely something that can be done while still in college. Doing your very best in your academics and extracurricular activities will help you build a work ethic that you can stand on throughout your career.

### *Sample #4*

#### **Increase your Recall: Study Hacks for Final Exams**

As finals week approaches, it is time to get into the groove of studying so that you can perform at your peak. It's not too late to get started, even if you have not been the best of students so far this year. These smart study hacks will help you focus on what needs done and help the material stick, so that it is all easier to recall when those big exams are put in front of you. Some of these hacks we all know...but rarely use, so they bear repeating. Putting these simple strategies into action are sure to lower your study stress while improving your scores.

**Plan**—Set up a study schedule and stick to it. Not only does this help ensure that you get all of your studying done without missing out on sleep, but it puts your mind at

ease that you can, in fact, get everything done that needs doing. Defeating stress goes a long way towards increasing your capacity to remember information.

**Review** – Studies prove that studying over a period of time produces much better test scores than cramming. Study for each class by reading over your notes and the highlighted sections in your textbook each day. This method of studying doesn't feel as daunting, plus it is much superior to pulling all-nighters!

**Chew** – Did you know that there is now scientific proof that chewing gum helps you focus? It's true, especially while chewing mint gum. Though I won't go into all of the neurological details, chewing gum considerably increases alertness, accelerates reaction time and increases the speed at which you learn new information. If you are feeling sleepy or restless while studying, chew some gum. And don't forget to use this tip while taking exams too. Not only will it improve your focus, it will recreate your study environment, which translates to better recall.

**Sleep** – Pulling all-nighters is heralded as a rite of passage in college, but it is one of the worst ways to retain the material you will need to produce on an exam. When you plan your study schedule, make sure to allow for the amount of sleep that you need to feel refreshed.

**De-clutter** – One of the biggest challenges for college students during exam times is the stress of it all. It's easy to feel that you don't have the time to stay organized, so you just throw your stuff around and leave it wherever it lands. But studies show that an environment that is cluttered leads to increased anxiety – a cluttered work space means a cluttered mind. During your short breaks, put items back where they belong, take out the trash, blow the crumbs out of your keyboard. This serves several purposes: it gets you moving, which increases blood to the brain, it makes you more organized so that you don't waste time looking for items you need and it helps keep your mind clutter-free. Each of these increases your likelihood of test success.

**Snack** – Keep healthy snacks close at hand so that if you get peckish, you don't give into going hungry or grabbing junk food. Snacks like dried fruit, nuts, jerky, vegetables and hummus or dip are all snacks that will keep your brain performing at its peak. Avoid skipping meals also. Food fuels your brain as well as your body.

**Play music?** – Even though many students believe that they can't live without their iPod, studying in silence may help you recall information on exams because it mimics the testing environment. For a majority of your exams, you are not going to be allowed to have your earbuds in, so it is best to study in silence, unless you know that your

professor is going to allow you to listen to music while taking the exam. If you are going to have this option, listen to the exact music while studying that you will listen to while taking the exam. This use of one of your five senses will make recalling the material much easier.

**Smell good** – One of our strongest allies for recall is our sense of smell. So why not use this fact to improve your test-taking? While studying, spray a pleasing scent in the air or on your body. Then, before taking that exam, spray the same scent on your wrists. During the exam, take sniffs of the scent to continue bringing up the memories of what you studied. You may want to get creative and use different scents for different exams. Make sure not to over-do how much scent you wear to the test though. Many people are allergic to or bothered by strong smells, even if they are pleasant. You don't want to make recall more difficult for those around you.

**Meditate** – When our minds are stressed, it's impossible for us to think straight so that we can do our best on tasks. And while meditation is no longer seen as a hippy-dippy activity, you may not have ever tried it. Now is the time! When you start to feel overwhelmed or like you can't remember one more thing, close your eyes and concentrate on your breath. Even just a few minutes of this can help your brain and body relax so that you can go back to studying in a more mellow state. Feeling stressed before or during an exam? No matter where you are, you can do this simple meditation to calm yourself so that you can recall the necessary information.

**Walk** – Instead of checking for your latest texts and notifications on your phone while you walk, study. Light exercise increases blood flow to your body and your brain, which keeps you from holding tension in your shoulders and neck, while improving your memory. Another great time to take a walk is right before an exam. You can clear your mind and get your blood flowing to improve your performance.

**Massage** – Another way to relieve stress and increase blood flow is through massage. This doesn't mean that you need to shell out \$100 to a massage therapist. Instead, suggest to your study group that you exchange massages for 10 minutes, focusing on the neck and shoulders. Or, ask your roommate to swap them. Most people will jump at the chance to get some relief from stiff, sore muscles from bending over their books and computers.

**Reduce distractions** – This is easier said than done in our technological world, but it is vital to your learning and preparation for test-taking. Turn off your phone – don't just put it on silent because you will still be distracted every time it lights up, letting you know you have a new text. If you are using your computer to study, use one of the free

programs available that block distracting websites for a certain period of time. Then, after you have studied undisturbed for that amount of time, reward yourself by taking a break.

**Write** – While you may believe that *writing* information is kicking it old school, studies show that the act of writing, rather than typing, engages the mind more completely. This occurs partially when acupuncture points in your hand are massaged while using a pen or pencil, which leads to the brain being stimulated. Also, if you will be writing down answers on the exam rather than taking it on a computer, it simulates the texting environment, which stimulates recall.

**Mind-map** – Many disciplines require students to make connections between smaller concepts so that the whole is understood. One of the best ways to understand how these concepts relate to one another is to map them out. You might choose to use one of the free mind-mapping apps available, or better yet, write them out on paper (see above). Go it one step better and use different colored pens to write out the information. This color-coding aids you in grouping ideas, which helps you remember their relation to one another better.

**Take breaks** – It's tempting to just keep plowing through material even though you are fatigued. Taking short breaks of 5-15 minutes between study sessions of up to 30 minutes improves retention of information because it helps you focus. You may want to use one of the free Pomodoro Technique apps or extensions available to help you remember to take breaks.

**Drink** – Most of us are habitually dehydrated. This is bad for our general health, and it also makes it difficult for us to focus. Instead of reaching for another energy drink or cup of coffee, drink water. While you may feel that those sugary, high caffeine drinks give you a boost, they also drop your blood sugar later, which will make you feel sluggish. These drinks also can make you jittery, especially if you are already anxious about your exams. Finally, since caffeine dehydrates you, choosing these drinks over water creates a vicious cycle of ups and downs that leave you feeling drained, which detracts from your ability to study.

**Write redux** – Right before your exam, write down the information you wish you could have with you during the exam. These pieces of information will be the ones you are most concerned about remembering, so it will be one last time to make that information stick in your brain before heading out to the exam. You may even want to read it over as you take a walk to help you relax and get your blood flowing before sitting down to the test.

## Sample #5

### Don't Be a Sally: Email Etiquette for WAH's

Let me tell you a story. I'm not proud of it, but here it is.

A couple of weeks ago, a friend and co-worker of mine and I were talking about some email correspondence we received from another employee where we work. This person is in a place of power within the college (yes, we work for a college, which makes it even worse), a director with many staff members under her.

My friend and I ended the conversation by bashing this individual, let's call her Sally, solely based on her emails...you see, neither of us have ever laid eyes on her because we work remotely, in fact, in another state.

What in the world could be so terrible about Sally's emails that we could think so poorly of her without knowing her? Oh, let me count the ways! She never proofreads, so her emails are full of typos and misspellings, not to mention grammar mistakes. She isn't clear about what she is talking about or what action employees should take. She is forever sending out emails and forgetting the attachments. She uses insipid subject lines...shall I go on?

Why am I telling you this? Because we can all learn from Sally.

Even though we now see email as an informal way of communicating in our tech-savvy world, it isn't...if you are using it to communicate with clients or potential clients.

Your emails are often the first impression you make in your at-home business. You may never meet a client face-to-face. So the question is: what type of impression do you want to make? Ignoring standard business writing practices, simply because they are going out in email form, can mean doom for your bottom line.

So, before you hit "send," go through this checklist to ensure you are putting a professional, intelligent, expert foot forward:

**Did you:**

✓ **Write a meaningful subject line?**

Try including an action word or descriptor before the main heading to tell the person what to expect. For example: “Request: Invoice Update” or “Update: Meeting Time 10/22.” We all know what a jungle our inboxes can be. Try to imagine what subject line would be meaningful to that client.

✓ **Proofread?**

Take the time to read that email out loud very slowly to yourself to check for typos and awkward phrases—every time. If the email discusses a sensitive or emotional issue, consider writing it and then holding off on sending it for at least a few hours, then see if the tone is appropriate.

✓ **Use professional language?**

No matter what you are writing, you need to know your audience. Make sure to avoid slang or “text-speak” (OMG) with clients, unless you feel *very* comfortable with them, and they with you!

✓ **Spell their name correctly?**

This is especially important when you are making initial contact or writing cold call emails. Your well-written email offering a service they need may end up in their “trash” box if their name is spelled incorrectly. Names are important. It is worth the time to double-check the spelling.

✓ **Remember the attachment?**

I force myself to add the attachment before I write the body of the email. Once this became a habit, I never had to worry about looking like I wasn’t paying attention. Your clients want to know that they have your undivided attention. Do they?

✓ **Double-check the date and time?**

Remember our friend Sally? This is one that she screws up almost every time she sends out an “informative” email. I know when I get an email from her about an upcoming meeting that within an hour I will get a “cancellation” email, letting me know that she wants to cancel that last email. *Then*, she sends out *another* one with the (usually) correct information. I’m assuming you are as busy as I am, and that you don’t have time to deal with that. Neither do your clients.

*Sample #6*

**How to Leverage your Online Education in Job Interviews**

Online colleges have been around long enough that countless employers have overcome their unreasonable bias against them. Employers also understand that online education is going nowhere soon, since the number of online college students continue to increase year after year. Even the Ivy League universities, such as Harvard and MIT, offer online courses now, so even if they aren't thrilled about the prospect, employers are getting accustomed to hiring employees who have at the very least a degree partially earned via online courses. Online education is not only for those nontraditional students who are returning to college; students can now earn a degree from almost any university around the globe, and many students who live on college campuses also take online classes. Having an online degree no longer makes you substandard in the eyes of the majority of employers.

You may, however, be concerned about job prospects if you earn a degree mostly or entirely online. While it is true that there is still some prejudice out there in the work sector that is leftover from the early years of online colleges, there are ways you can leverage your online college career to your advantage when interviewing for potential jobs.

### **Focus on the attributes mastered from online education**

There are definite skills that are required from all college students, but even more so for those taking online classes. These traits include time-management, self-motivation, organization and planning skills, among others. These are the leadership skills employers look for in all employees, so being able to demonstrate how you improved these skills and utilized them to manage your online educational goals puts you in a strong position as a job candidate. Offer examples of how you developed these skills during your college training when asked for proof of your productivity level.

### **Share how these attributes translate into job performance**

Once you have expounded upon the abilities you developed while taking specifically online courses, take it a step further and explain how you have put them to good use in real life applications. For example, describe how you used time management techniques in your online college courses to increase your productivity rate at work, so much so that your boss commented on it. Don't be shy – recount how the time-management, self-discipline and prioritization skills that you attained in college have already been beneficial in the real world and how these qualities will enhance your performance for their company.

### **Explain why you decided on an online degree**

Employers who have not put much thought into why someone would choose this type of learning experience most likely do not understand the convenience and rigor, in equal measure, that online education can offer. Prepare to be asked why you chose to earn your degree online. Express your desire to continue working and/or to be there to raise your family. These reasons show your determination, as well as your integrity. It shows that rather than taking the easy way, you chose the best way for you to do all of the things that were important to you, and to do them well. Or, perhaps the area in which you live does not offer the program you wished to pursue. This too shows thoughtfulness and purpose, since you obviously did your “homework” on various local colleges and decided not to settle for a degree you had little or no interest in. Critical thinking and the ability to prioritize are important skills in an employee, and you can take advantage of them during an interview.

### **Describe why you chose the college and program you did**

Since not all online colleges are equal, just as traditional colleges are not, discuss why you selected the college you did. Explain the process you went through to ensure you chose the very best program available. Things such as accreditation, reputation, quality faculty and rigorous program requirements all go to your benefit. Think back to your college research process. Did you engage with other online learners to discover the pros and cons of different institutions? Did you virtually meet with faculty or staff at the college? The process to determine what college to choose can be a difficult one; prove to the interviewers that you did the research required to locate the university that would teach you the skills necessary to compete in the workforce.

### **Expound upon the challenges you overcame**

One of the reasons students choose online education over in-person classes is because of the convenience. Did you choose online education so that you could more easily balance education and job and/or family? Did you desire to go to a traditional college, but chose online because you could not move to an area where the degree was offered? How about the tools you learned in online classes that you may have missed out on if you had attended a traditional college. These skills might include, for example, strong writing skills, solid information literacy skills and excellent online research capabilities. For instance, although traditional colleges have many writing-intensive courses, most online courses can be considered writing-intensive. Because writing is the main way communication occurs between students, faculty and peers, online students are challenged to learn strong writing skills that will serve them well in the workforce. Point out how you struggled with written communication in the beginning of your

classes, but how you developed those writing skills to a place where professors would thank you for your clear, concise writing. Also, demonstrate your ability to handle multiple responsibilities with grace, due to the practice you got while completing your online degree. Give specific examples of times when juggling all of your responsibilities was a trial, but that you persevered by implementing the tools you had learned by attending the virtual classroom. Make sure to state the fact that you will bring this skill to your job position.

### **Discuss positive experiences with group learning and collaboration**

Though it is true that much of the time online students work alone, it is important to show your ability to work as part of a team to produce solid results. This is also a great time to underline your leadership skills. Discuss specific group learning projects that demonstrate your ability to work well, and perhaps even lead, in a group. This also includes times when you communicated with your peers when seeking help or answers to questions. Consider how you can use the time spent working with others in your online classes for your gain.

### **Deliberate on your knowledge of current technology**

One of the great perks online education offers is the necessity to use the latest technology to complete tasks successfully. Online students often have to have the latest software programs and utilize them in their courses, while traditional classes may offer the option, though not mandate their use. This puts online students one up. So make sure to mention the various ways you used state of the art technology to complete particular assignments as to successfully earn your degree.

Keep in mind that the fact that you got called in for an interview in the first place demonstrates that the recruiter for the employer sees something on your resume that makes them believe that you might be the person for the job – regardless of your online degree. Focus on the strengths of the program and the skills you had to develop to succeed in online education. Offer specific examples of how these skills have benefited you, both in the classroom and outside of it. Find ways to demonstrate your qualifications and focus on the positives of your online college degree.

Finally, consider meeting with your college career counselors. They can not only give you more advice for overcoming a stigma residue regarding online degrees, but will even likely be happy to practice your interviewing techniques with you. In our technological age, employers are being forced to implement all types of online programs, and online college degrees are one of those. If you know that you received a

great education, be confident in your decision to earn your degree in the best way for you.

## *Sample #7*

### **It's Hip to Be Square: Keeping Language Alive in the Social Media Age**

Do you catch yourself writing in "text speak" when dashing off a note to your child's teacher? Do you think "thru" and "enuf" are real words?

It is true that WAHM's these days must be hip enough to speak the lingo of the social media world we live in. Yet, as an English professor, I have noticed a worrisome trend in smart, savvy WAHM's writing. Reverting to punctuation-free, capitalization-free and acronym-ridden writing can wound your good business reputations if you use them in the wrong situations.

Vigilance to what your English teachers taught back in the day is still a must: audience & purpose rule the day...always. If you don't keep your target audience & reason for writing in mind, you stand to lose your reputation as a professional, along with clients and bucks!

### **Commas, Periods and Semicolons, Oh, My!**

Even though we don't use much, if any, punctuation on social media and in texts, it is still an important part of getting your meaning across to your audience. Whether you are writing a cold call letter to a potential client or typing up your latest blog post, using correct punctuation makes your meaning translate more clearly to your reader.

### **Capitalization...It's Still a Real Thing**

It's like we have forgotten capitalization rules since we seldom use them. But they still apply, even if you can't locate the shift key on your new i-phone.

### **Spelling Shortcuts Cut Your Meaning**

Want to know a great way to lose your audience? Use acronyms that they don't understand. Making your audience feel like old fogies doesn't sell anything, and makes us look unprofessional.

## **Complete Sentences, Please**

Maybe I have just read too many poorly written college essays, but sentence fragments make me cranky! I personally refuse to purchase the products or services of a company who can't be bothered to hire someone who can write a solid sentence for their ads! I figure, if a company doesn't care enough to get the grammar right in their ads, how can I trust them to provide quality products or services?

So while it is important in this day & age to be in touch with tech-speak, it is nevertheless vital to our business (and checkbooks) to pay carefully attention to when it is appropriate to be hip & use shortcuts and when to demonstrate that we are true professionals.

*Sample #8*

## **5 Ugly Truths about Taking Classes Online**

There is no doubt about it – online learning is awesome! It provides a world of opportunity for students who otherwise could not easily access a college education. But there are some ugly truths about taking classes online that students need to be aware of before they register.

### **Work Load**

In a traditional classroom, students can choose when they wish to participate in discussions. If they feel they have nothing significant to add or, dare I say, they didn't get through all of the reading for that class period, they can stay silent, yet still learn from what their professor and peers contribute.

But in an online class, students must submit meaningful discussion postings to all of the topics which the professor assigns. That means there is no slacking off if too many responsibilities fill your calendar that week – you still must be prepared to offer insight into the discussion. This often ends up being more work than students anticipate. Preparing yourself for a heavier work load will go a long way towards making the class more enjoyable.

### **Professor Availability**

Another misnomer about taking classes online is that students will have access to their professor all the time, unlike in a brick and mortar classroom where they can usually only see them during class time or office hours.

But professors have many obligations, just as students do. They are real people attempting to balance their work and home lives. They most likely teach several classes each semester, meaning that their work schedule cannot be devoted to only the students in your class. It's especially important to keep this in mind when taking an online class where the professor lives in a different part of the country than you do. The differences in their time zone will determine when they are online versus when you are.

### **Assignment Timelines**

When students take a traditional class, they know that they must look ahead so that they can ask questions regarding assignments before the due date, since they may not see their professor again until the final submission date. But, for some reason, when students take classes online they often feel it's appropriate to wait to look at the assignment guidelines until the day of (or just a couple of hours before) the deadline.

If you get into this habit you will end up frustrated and angry because your questions probably won't get answered in time. Remember, just because you are online right before an assignment is due doesn't mean the professor is. Make sure that you take responsibility for your learning and budget your time wisely from the first assignment on, so that you can move through the class with ease.

### **Technical Requirements**

Universities and colleges want students to succeed. That is why they make it very clear what types of technical resources a student must have easy access to before registering for online classes. And yet, students often register for these classes when they know that they don't have access to reliable internet or when they can't afford a specific computer program necessary for the class.

If you are considering taking online classes, review the college material on technical requirements carefully. If you don't have access to certain necessary programs, can you afford to buy them before the online class starts? What will you do if your internet goes down and you have an assignment due? Once you can access a class, find out what common programs, such as Adobe and Flash, are needed to access class materials and then don't wait until you need them to download them. Install everything that you will need for the semester before it really gets busy. That way you will be prepared. A "Plan B" is always necessary when dealing with technology, and online classes are no different.

### **Formal Writing Expectations**

There is a good deal more writing required in an online class because students can't respond to assignments or discussions orally like they do in a traditional classroom. This, added with the belief that online classes are less formal and our culture's addiction to "text speak" can all do irreparable damage to your final grade if you aren't careful.

What students need to understand is that no matter what they write for the class, the quality of writing makes an impression on their professor. Think about it. Your professor probably will never meet you or even see a picture of you. Your first impression is your writing. Academic writing is required for all online classes, even if such things as grammar and mechanics aren't spelled out in the syllabus or rubrics. An online class is not the place to disregard all writing conventions or standards. You are not texting friends, tweeting or writing a thank you card to Grandma. You must uphold quality, formal writing standards to be successful taking classes online, no matter what the subject or discipline.

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