

**Note:** For this article, I have assumed you are using a Windows-based computer and have common office software (like Microsoft's Word, Excel, and Access) loaded on your machine and have access to the Internet. I also assume you know how to open, close, minimize and maximize software programs, navigate to folders and files, and save a file to a disk. If you are using a different operating system, the concepts are applicable but the instructions are likely to be inaccurate.

For many of us, the past few years have been challenging, to say the least. Many high-tech folks, baby bombers, manufacturing personnel, recent college grads and others have been facing a very difficult job market. While networking is the source of most career opportunities, few of us pass up the opportunity to use the Internet and our computers to "cover all the bases." Near the end of this article, we will talk about some getting ready for the job search and how to set up agents. In a later article, will talk about some job search web sites and how to research companies online. But, for now, let us begin with some basic computerized job hunting tips and tricks.

Although this is the computer and the internet age, many people find turning to their computer a scary endeavor. I intend to break down some of these fears by break the tasks into less scary, manageable steps so that you can take advantage of this tool.

Many major companies access resumes over the Internet **IF** you cut and paste your resume into their program or create or re-create your resume on their job site. While this may be time consuming and a bit annoying to job seekers, it does provide uniform and safe input to the company. So, it falls to the job seeker, in this economy, to cut and paste your resume in a text or ASCII format into the company's candidate database.

(ASCII stands for American Standards Code for Information Interchange. It is a format-free, special character-free, text-based standard that people have set and agreed to for exchanging information.)

Even if the companies let you send job queries directly to their personnel department or the hiring manager, because of virus and security precautions, many companies do not allow employees to receive files over the Internet. Again, you will be asked to cut and past your resume into an e-mail message in a text or ASCII format.

One thing that I learned pretty quickly in my job search is that many people who gather the information job seekers send to companies may or may not know enough about computers to save or print an attachment. Even if they do know how to save or print an attachment and their company will let them receive

documents over the Internet, their company may not support the version of Word on your computer. The short story is they are not able to read my resume. After talking to some of some of these people, they told me that they receive so many resumes that they do not usually have time to let applicants know that there was a problem.

(You should not run into file size transmission limitations unless you are sending samples with graphic, video, or more complex files. Some companies do not allow any files to be transmitted.)

To ensure that potential employers could receive my information in an easily accessible format, I began doing the following:

- Send a carefully written, targeted e-mail cover letter that concludes with a paragraph explaining which formats of my resume I am sending.
- Attach a Word version of my resume saved to the earliest version of Word that I could unless the person I have talked to or their web site suggested something else. (As long as potential employers have a version of Word newer than the version you saved your file to, they will be able to bring it into their version of Word.)

If my job market tended to use Apple software or something other than Word, I would have saved my file in Rich Text Format. (Your file will end in .rtf.) This format is more portable between different operating systems and word processing packages.

- End the e-mail letter with a text (or ASCII) version of my resume.
- Send a paper copy or fax copy of my resume (noting that it was a copy) if I was very interested in the position.
- Call the potential employer after a day or so to ensure he/she received my information and to make a personal contact.

## **Preparing Electronically for the Job Search**

In this section, we will talk about using your computer to get ready for the job search. In this section, I will explain how to:

- Create a text version of your resume (so you can include it in an e-mail message or paste it into a form at the target company's web site).
- Create blocks of text that can be used in a cover letter or e-mail message to highlight some of your skills. Also, we will talk about using cut and paste to copy this information in the appropriate cover letter.
- Get or create some networking cards.
- Set up agents at appropriate web sites so software on the web sites automatically sends you job leads.
- Introduce ways to maintain and use contact information.

After spending a lot of time creating and formatting that wonderful resume that you have, it may be a little difficult for you to see it turned into something less attractive. But, in this job market, speed and content is, oftentimes, more important than presentation.

(When you save your Word document to an earlier version of Word or to a text file, some of the formatting that you so carefully perfected may be lost because earlier versions of the software may not support the features that you used to create your work of art in a more current version. Text editors will not read formatting commands at all. So, before you send that resume anywhere, see how it appears saved as a Word 6.0/95 document. The best way to do this is to copy the file onto a disk, take the disk to a computer with an early version of Word on it, and open the file. Notice how it appears in that version of Word. See if you need to make any additional changes.)

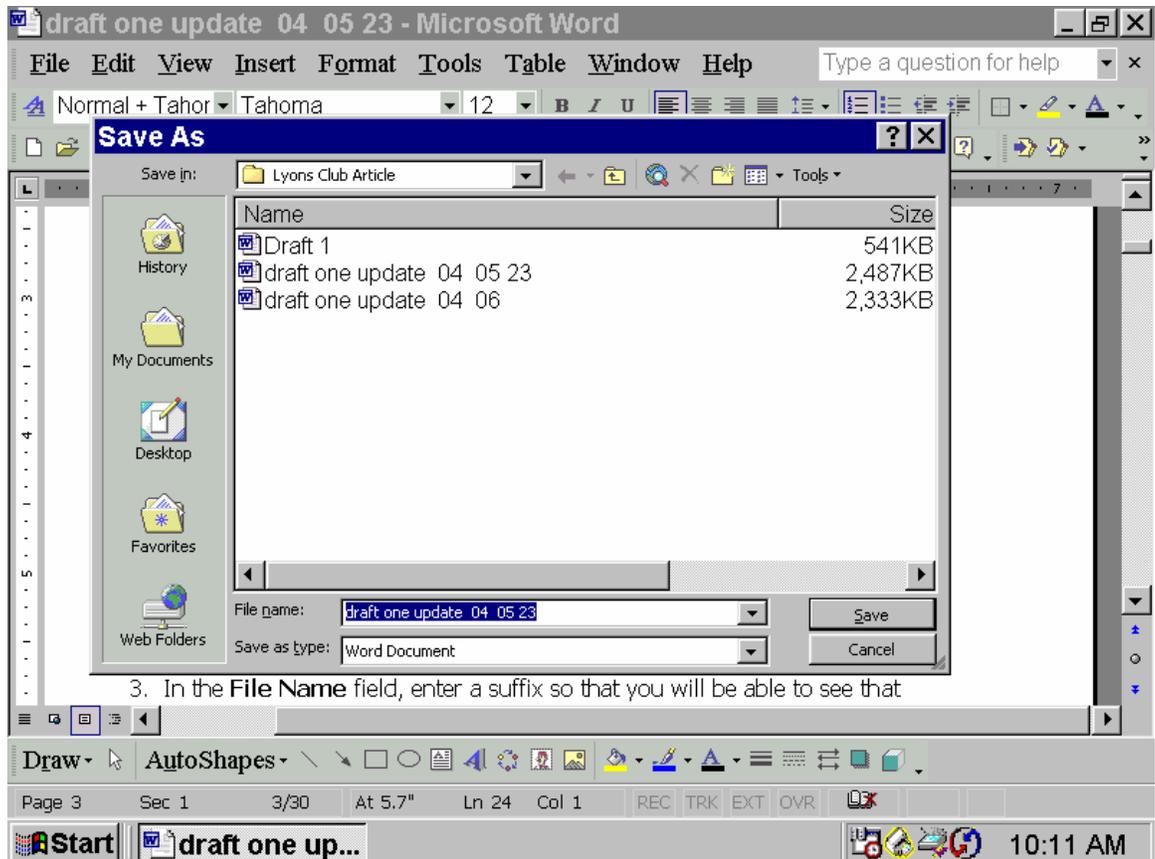
## **Saving your Resume to an earlier version of Word (.doc) or in Rich Text Format (.rtf)**

Here are instructions on how to save your Word document to an earlier version of Word or different file format.

**Remember** to take advantage of your program's spell and grammar checking software first. (In Word, go to the **Tools** menu option and pull down to **Spelling and Grammar**. Release the mouse button. The Spelling and Grammar checking software checks your document and flags words, sentences, and punctuation marks it believes are incorrect. Use your own judgment because while these tools are very helpful, they have limitations. They will not, for example, catch the incorrect word spelled correctly.)

When you have finished checking your document,

1. Go to the top of your screen to the **File** menu. Select **File** and pull down to **Save As ...** and release the mouse. A screen similar to the one below is displayed.



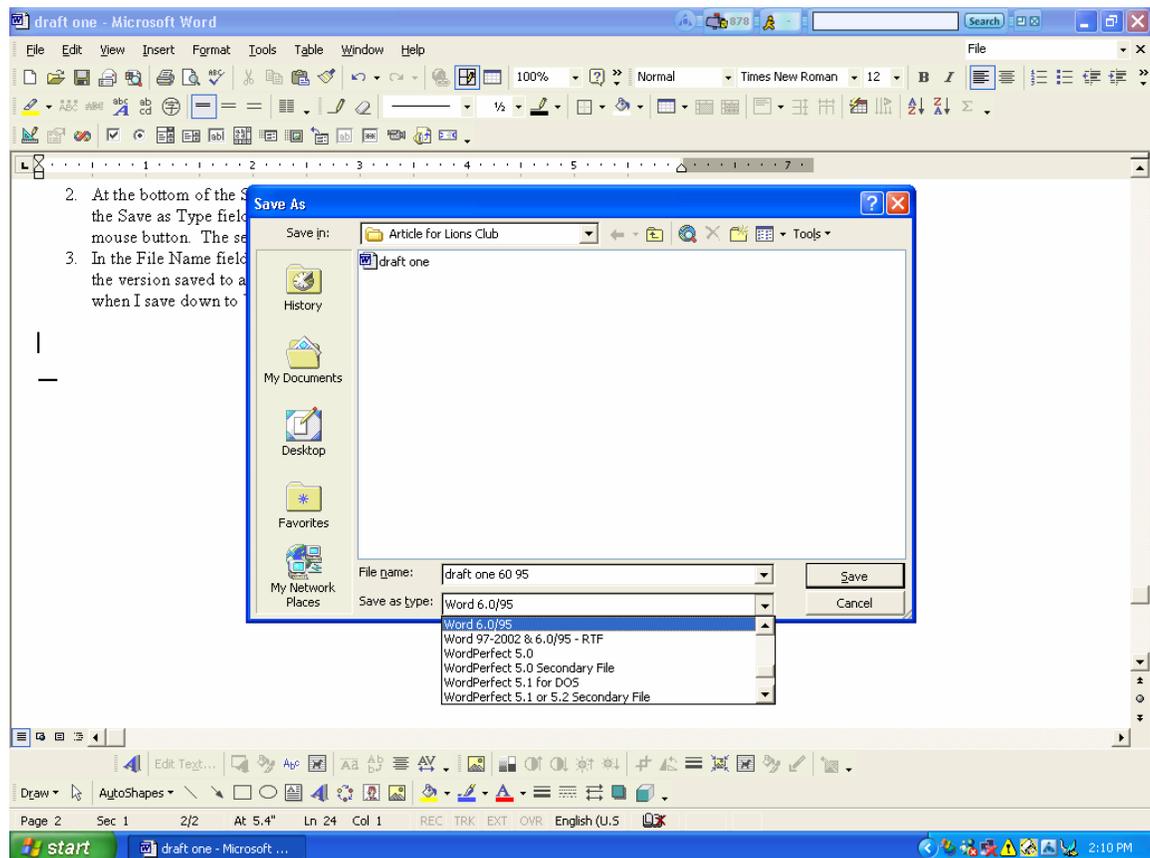
2. At the bottom of the **Save As** window, select the little arrow button to the right of the **Save as Type** field and pull down to the desired version of Word. Release the mouse button. The selected version of Word is displayed in that field.
3. In the **File Name** field, enter some text that will enable to see that this file is the version saved to an earlier release. (I usually end the file name with 60 or 695 when I save down to Word 6.0/Windows 95.)

**Note:** You could also safely save the file to an .rtf file. This file type should be easy to pull into other word processing packages written for other operating systems. Some people, though, may not recognize the extension (.rtf) and tell you they do not know how to handle the file. If you do save the file as an .rtf file, I suggest adding a note to the end of your cover letter explaining what you did and that the receiver can pull this into his/her word processing package. Remember that an .rtf file is likely to be much larger than a .doc or .txt file.

## Saving your resume to a text file

Saving your resume to a text file is a little more ... interesting. First, you need to save your Word file to a text file and then, chances are very good that you will need to edit it to ensure the format of your resume is somewhat presentable and to change characters that might have been converted strangely.

1. Go to the top of your window to the **File** menu. Select it and pull down to **Save As ...** and release the mouse. A window similar to the one below is displayed.



2. At the bottom of the **Save As** window, select the little arrow button to the right of the **Save as Type** field and pull down to **Plain Text** (or **ASCII** text). Release the mouse button.

**Note:** When you save to a text file (**Plain Text** or **ASCII**), your graphics and most formatting is ignored. Your word processing package may let you save to a text file that saves line breaks. (This means that you won't have one long line per sentence that you'll have to break up so it will

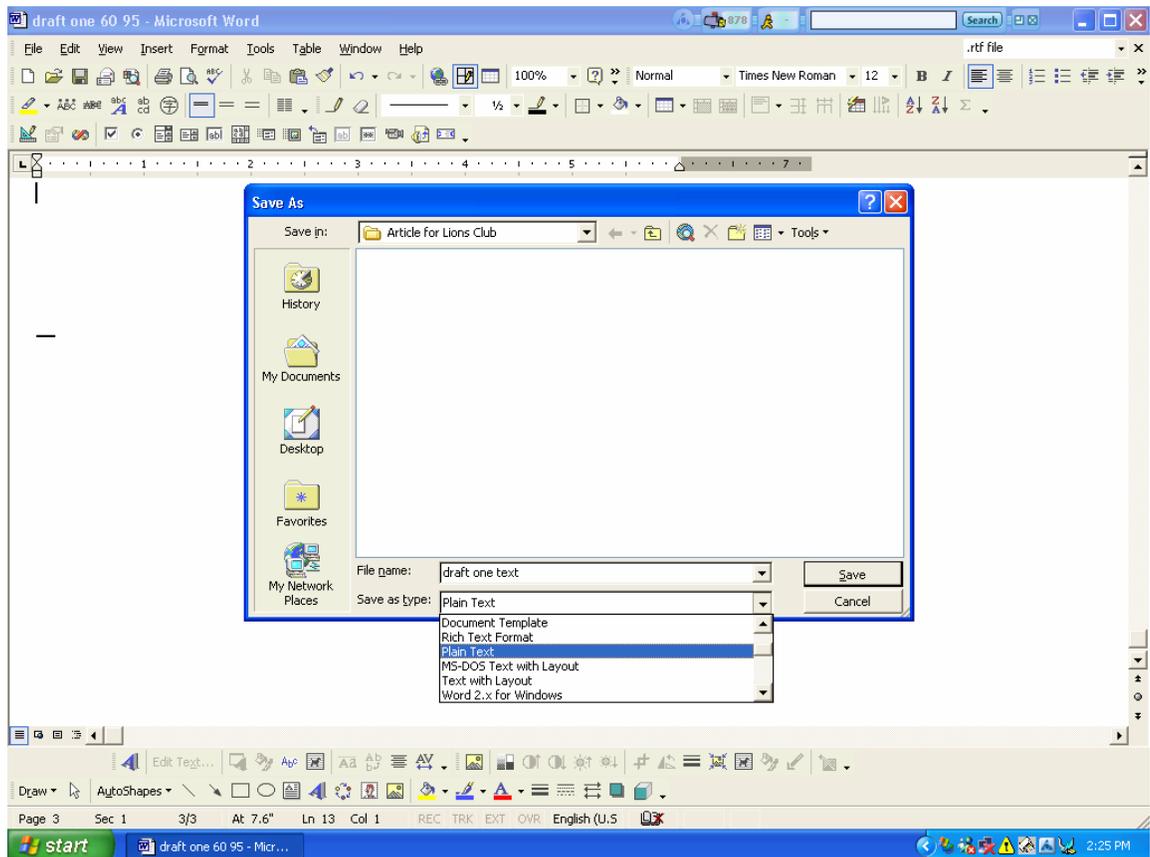
remain in the viewing area.) If you have multiple options, you might want to experiment by saving your resume using these options.

**Remember** to add something to the file name so you will remember which option you used that worked best for you.

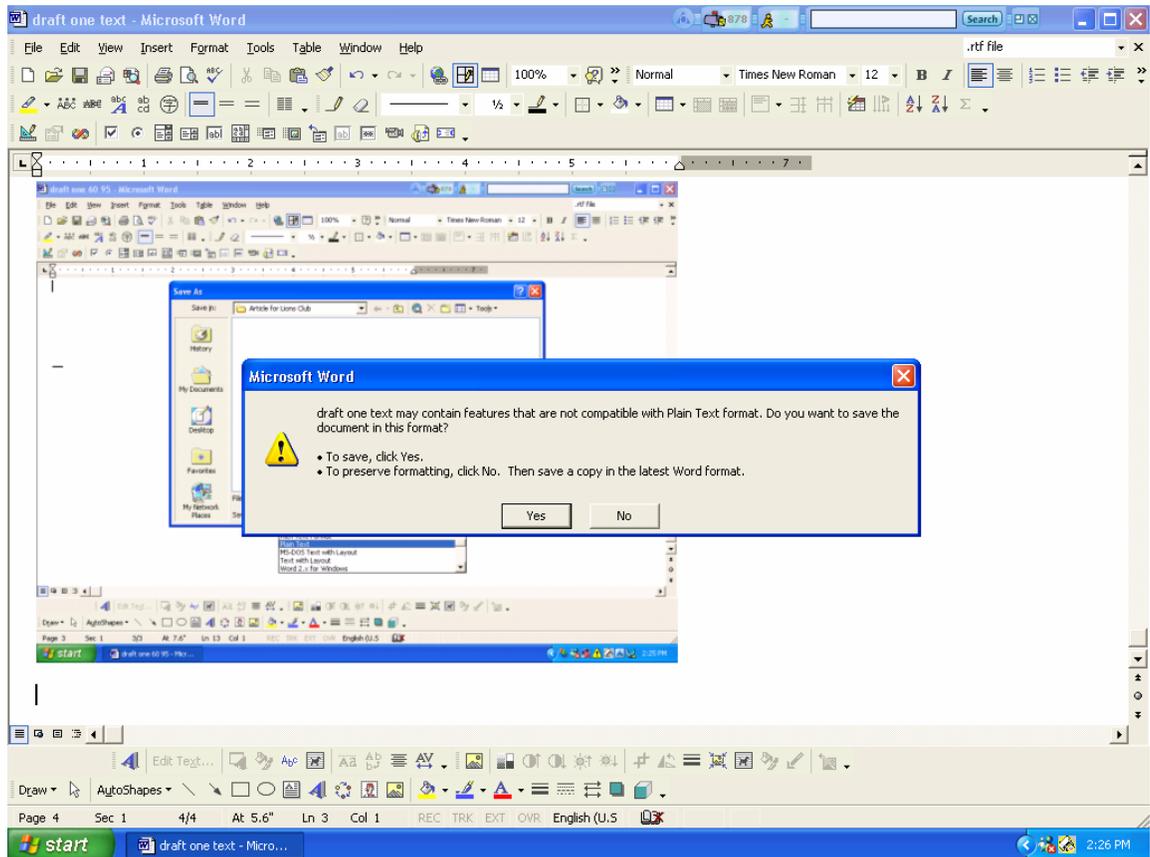
**Remember** that when you view or edit this file in your version of Word, the software pulls the saved text into your current version. To retain the earlier version formatting, you need to use the Save As function as you did in this step.

(Text files end in the extension .txt. If you save your resume using different text options and do not add to or change the file name, your resume.txt file will be over written by the most recently saved file.)

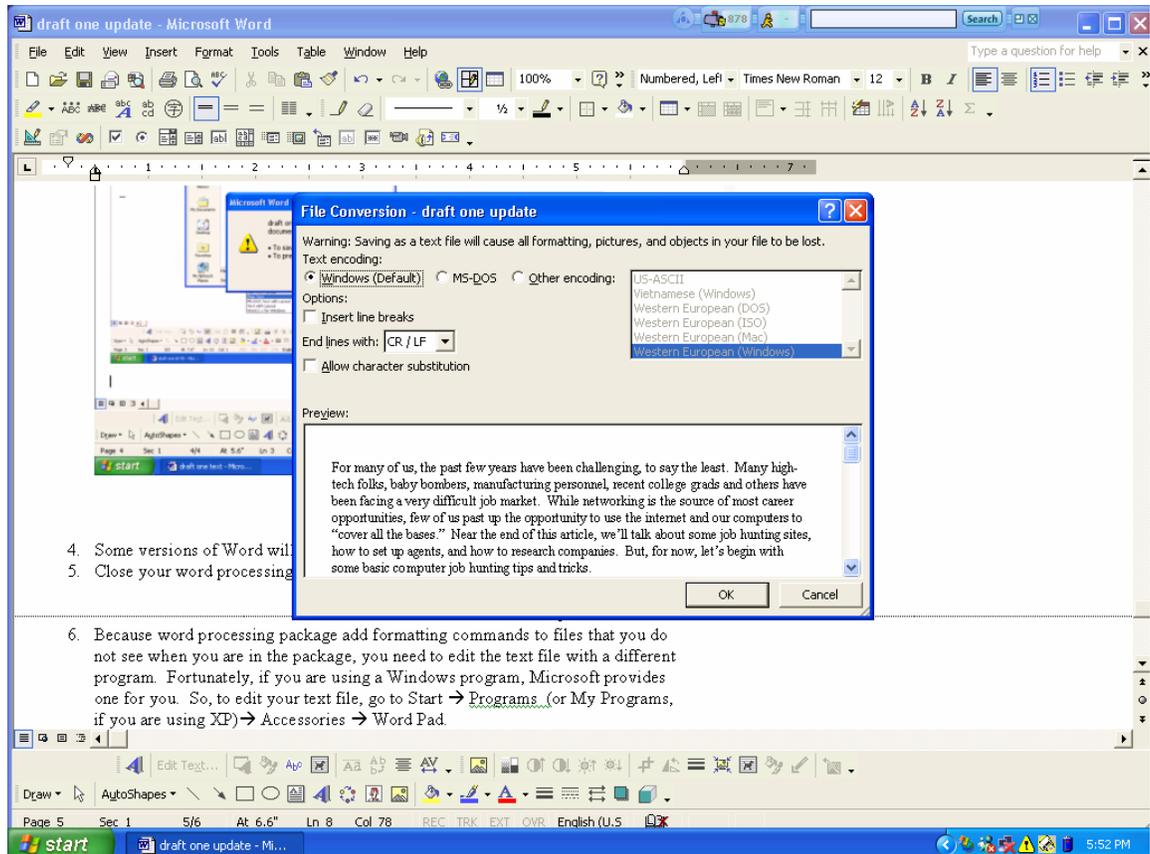
**Remember** where you have saved your file.



3. After you save your file, you may get a message that explains you will lose formatting and graphics in the converted file. (The graphics and formatting remains, however, in your original file. Even if you use the same file name, the extension will be different. Your Word documents end in .doc; the text/ASCII files end in .txt. If you do not see the extensions on your window, go to the procedure “Changing the Way Information about Files Is Displayed” below.) Select **Yes**.



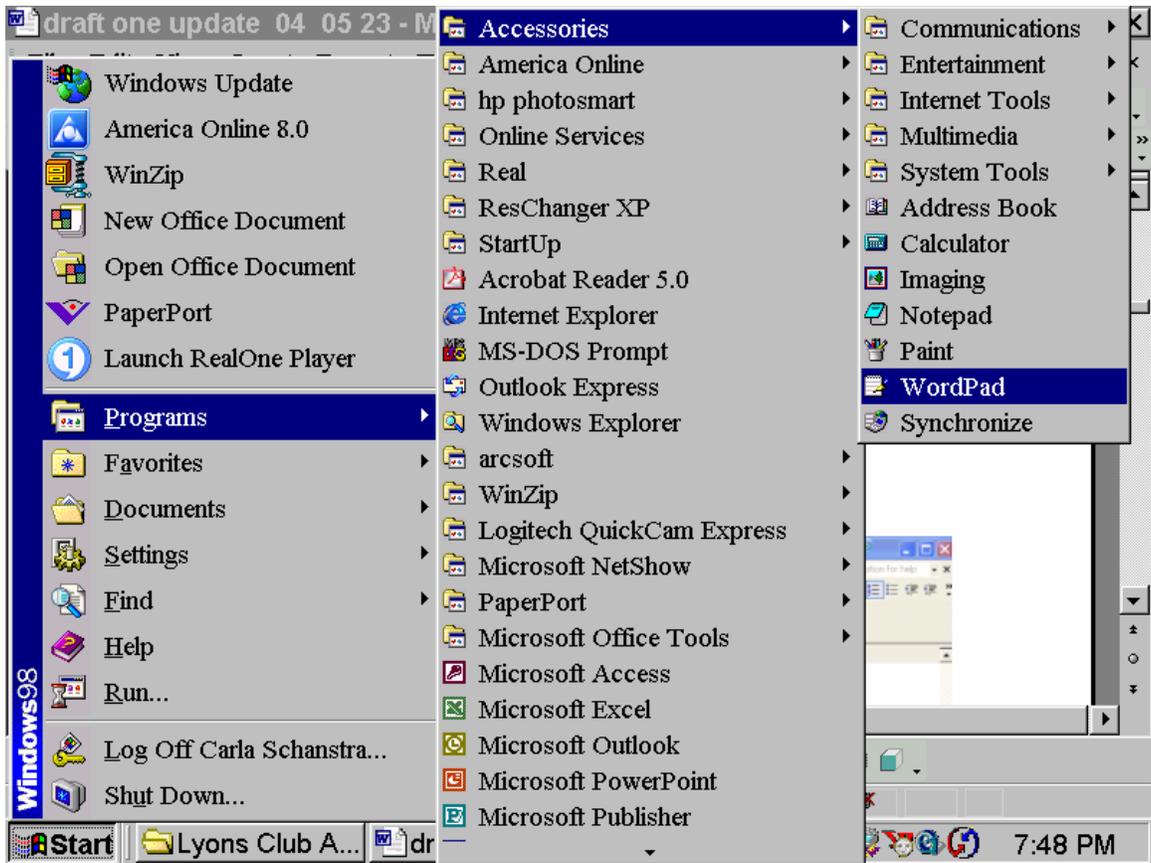
4. Some versions of Word will show you a sample of your output and allow you to choose some additional options. If you have these options, you can experiment with them and see the results in the **Preview** section of the window. If you used bullets, for example, in your resume, you may want to have the system substitute a different character for the code string for a bullet or whatever the program has chosen to represent a bullet and the spacing following it. When you think you have gotten the computer to do the translation about as good as it can, select **OK**.



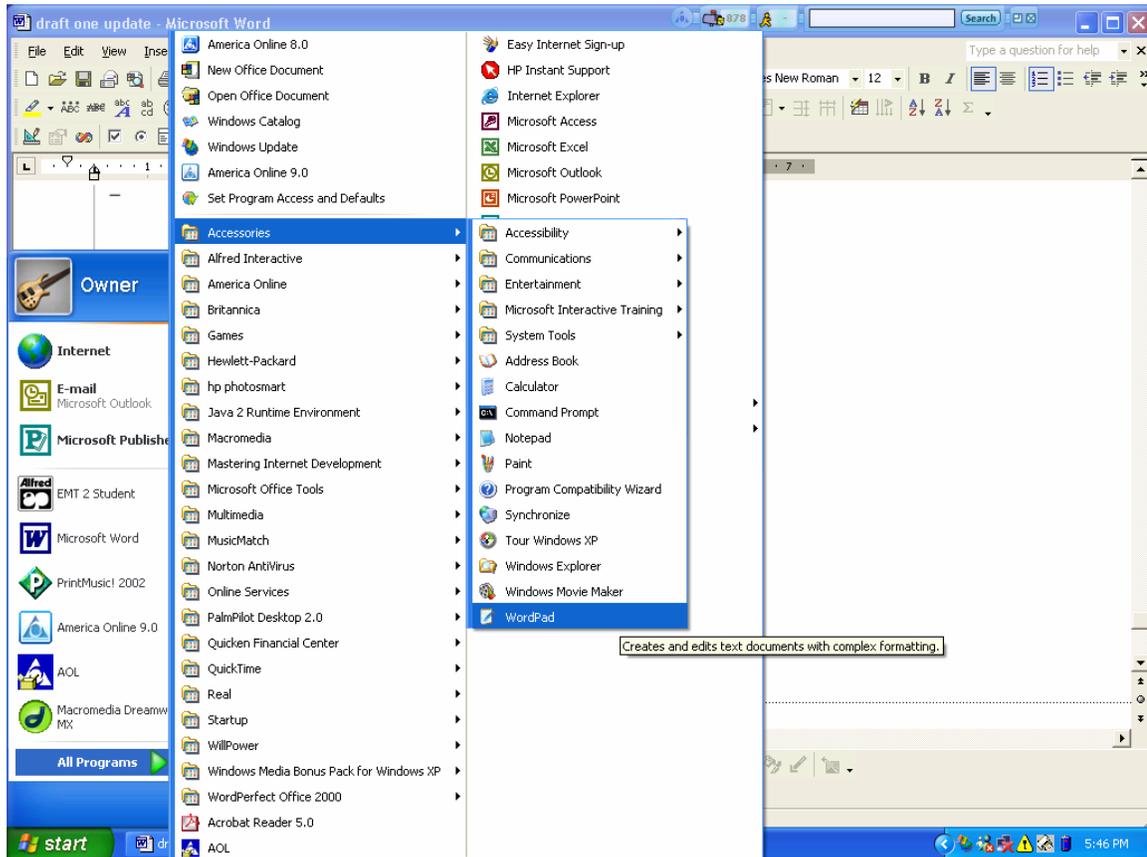
5. Minimize or close your word processing package.

6. Because word processing packages add formatting commands to files that you do not see when you are in the package, you need to edit the text file with a different program—a program that shows you exactly what your results will be. Fortunately, if you are using Windows, Microsoft provides one for you. To edit your text file, go to **Start → Programs** (or **All Programs**, if you are using XP) → **Accessories** → **WordPad**.

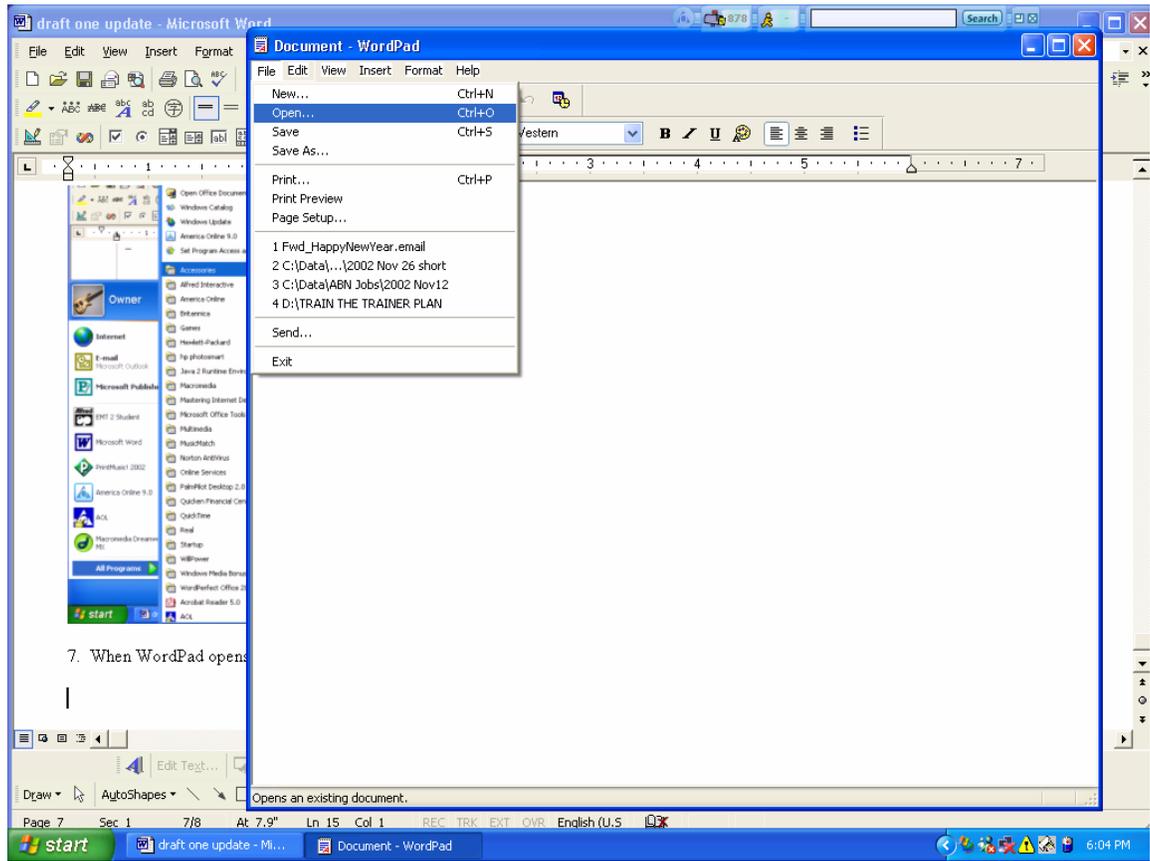
The following graphic was captured on a Windows 98 machine so it may be different than yours.



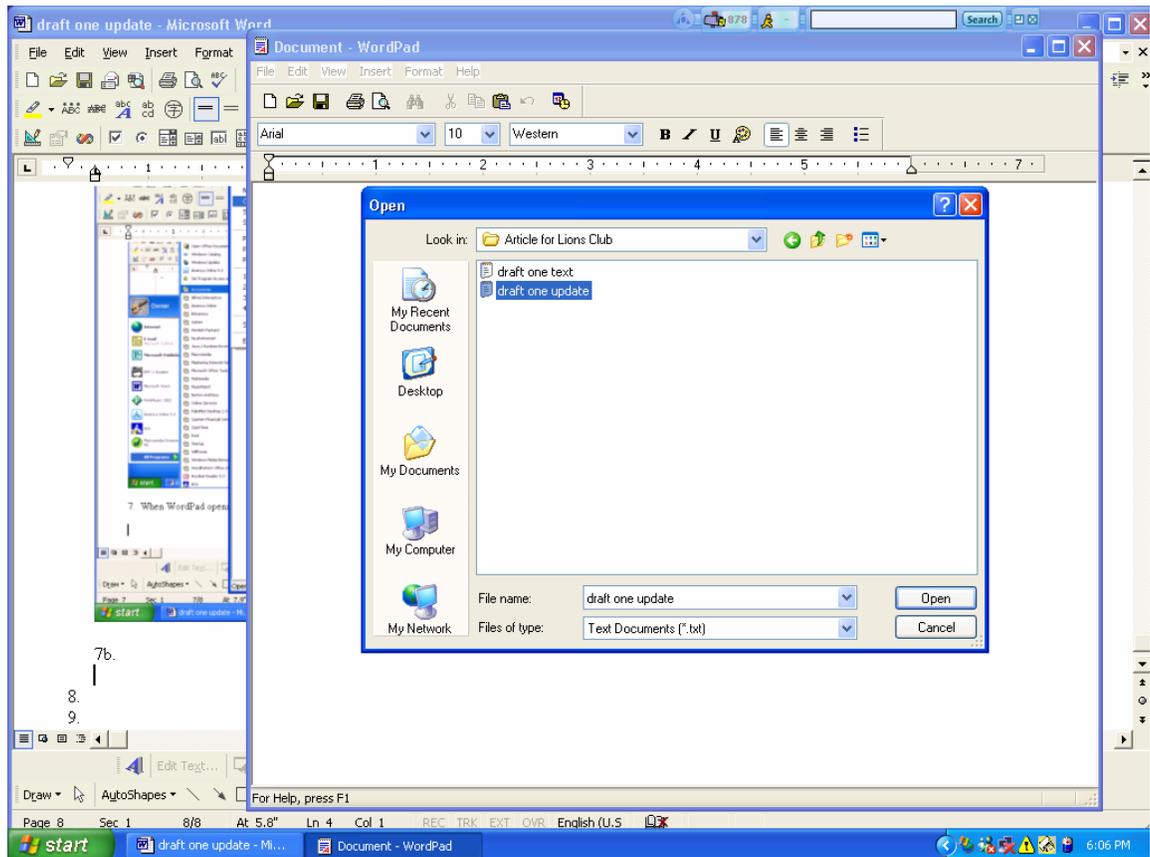
The following graphic was captured on a Windows XP machine so it may be different than yours.



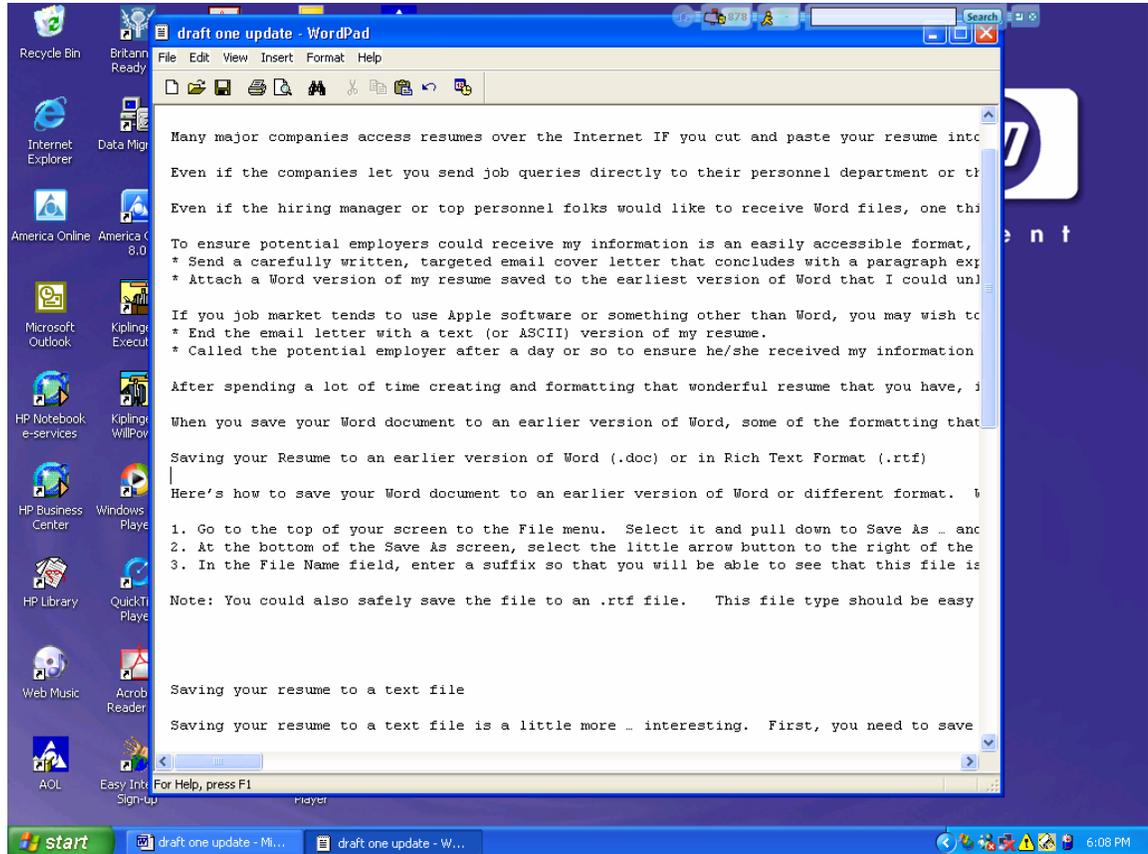
7. When WordPad opens, go to **File** → **Open**. When the **Open** window is displayed, navigate to your text file. At the bottom of the window, select **Open**. Your text is displayed in the WordPad window.
  - 7a. Go to the **File** menu and pulled down to **Open**. Release the mouse button.



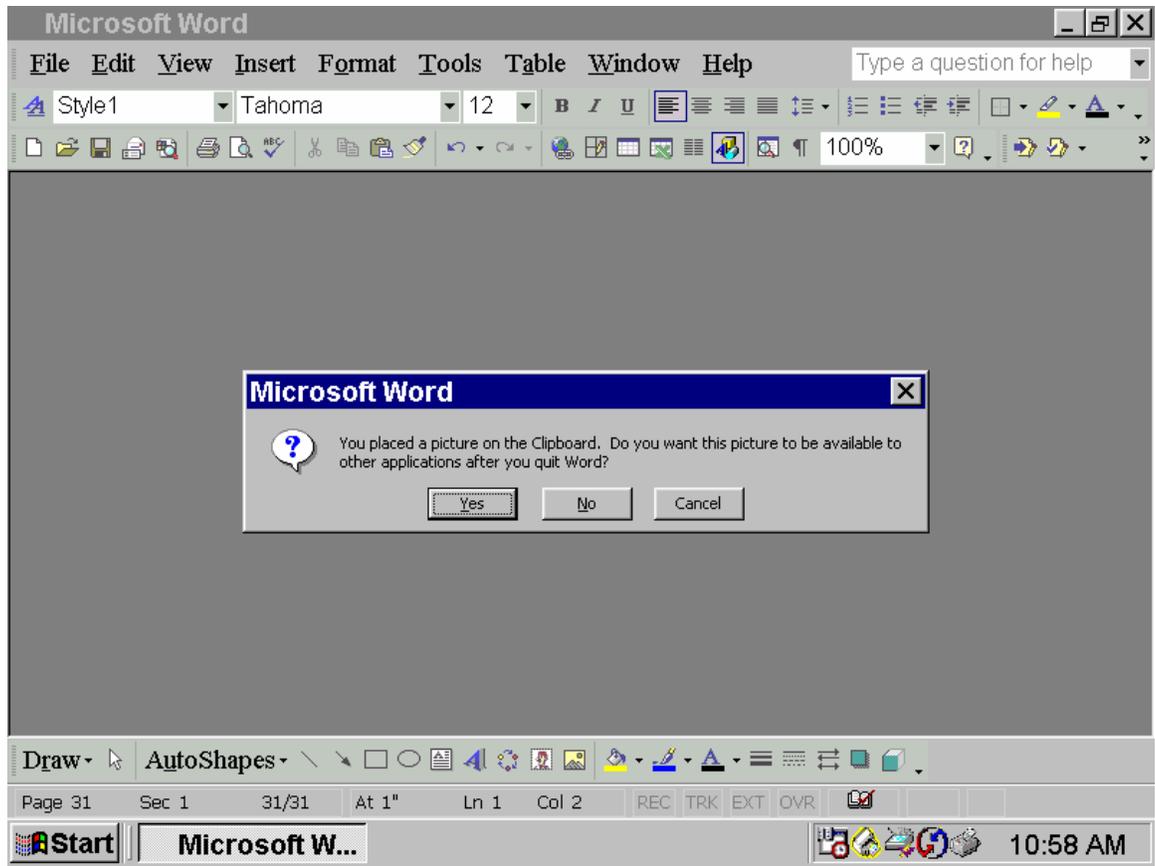
7b. When the **Open** window appears, move to the appropriate folder and find the text file you want to edit. (Ensure that the **Files of Type** field (specified on the bottom of the window) is set to **Text Documents (\*.txt)** or **All**. If the **Files of Type** field is set to Word, for example, text files will not appear.) At the bottom right of the **Open** window, select **Open**. Your text file is displayed in WordPad.



8. Edit your text file so that it appears exactly as you want it to appear. When you are done, select **File** → **Save**. Then, **Exit** or minimize the program. (To **Exit**, go to **File** → **Exit**. To minimize the program, select the minimize icon (the minus sign at the top right on the window).)



**Remember** that if you exit any program and tell the computer not to keep information on the Clipboard, it will not be available to you because the Clipboard is "cleared" when you exit. You want to select the option that keeps the information on the Clipboard. (See sample screen shot below.)

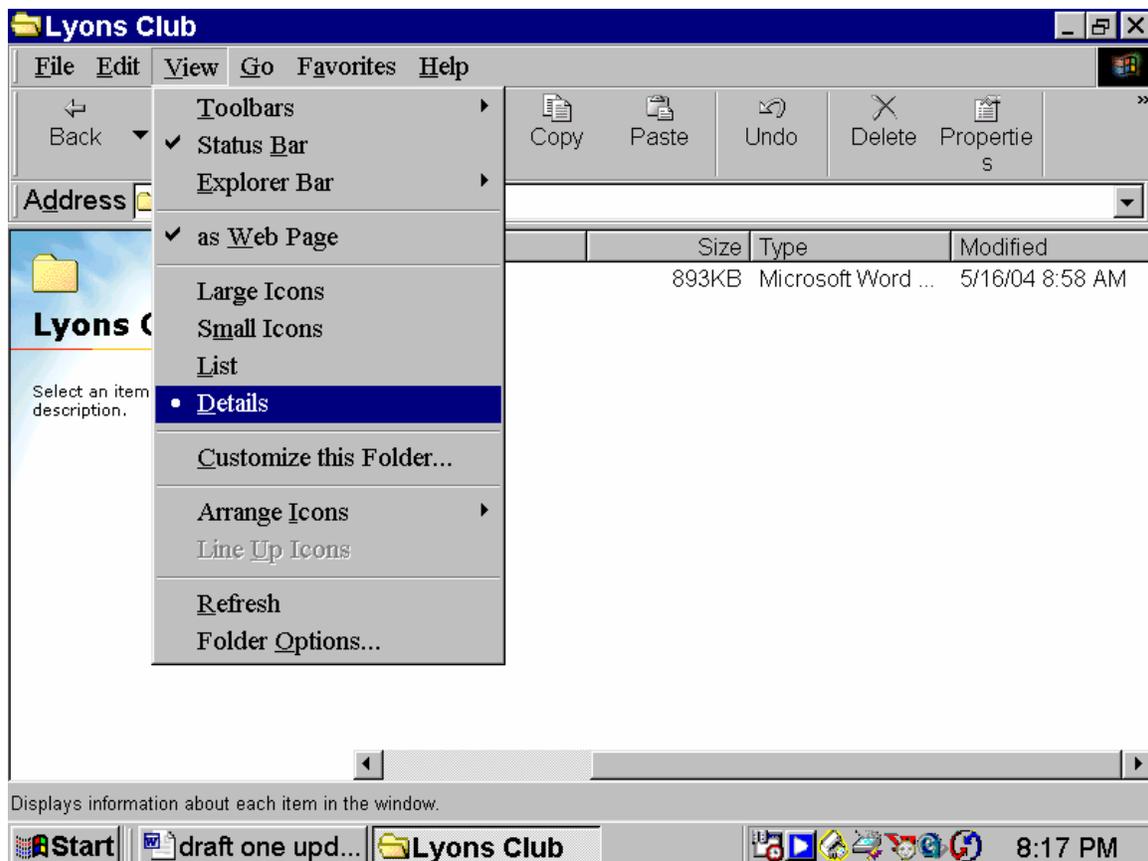


9. Now, when you need to send your resume in text format in an e-mail message or when you need to paste it into a form at your dream company's web site, all you have to do is go back into WordPad and copy the edited text and paste it into the e-mail message or into the company's form.

## Changing the Way Information about Files Is Displayed

If you do not see the information about the files in your directory that you want to (for example, if the extensions do not appear), you can change the way information is displayed by following these instructions.

1. Navigate to the folder in which your file is located.
2. At the top of the window, select the **View** menu option. Pull down to **Details** and release.



3. If you still do not see the information you desire, you probably need to move the scroll bar (at the bottom of the window) to the right.

## Copying and Pasting Blocks of Text

Sometimes, you get the wording exactly right and you do not want to lose it. Sometimes, you just want to save time. Because I was applying to a few basic

kinds of jobs that required certain skills and experiences, I created a Word file that had copies of my favorite paragraphs and lists of reasons (projects/experiences) why I was qualified for a specific position. I saved bullet items of projects, experiences, and success stories by category so searching for the right text was pretty easy. By selecting from these prepared lists and editing them, I felt I had the best of the best to choose from. Oftentimes, I could copy and paste these paragraphs into forms on different company's web sites. (Because many forms do not have spell and grammar checking software, checking your text in Word gives you an advantage.)

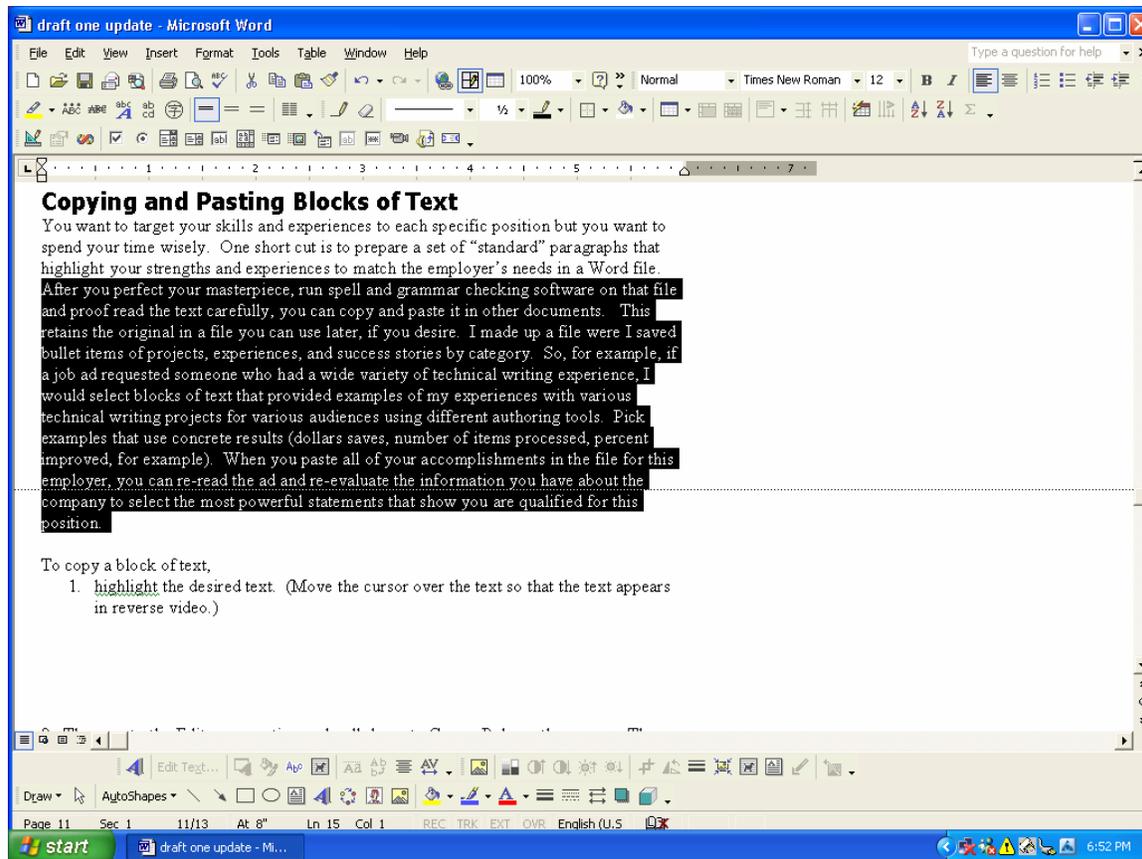
You want to target your skills and experiences to each specific position but you want to spend your time wisely. This set of "standard" paragraphs that highlight your strengths and experiences should be used to match the employer's needs. If these paragraphs changed, I also saved them to the Word file. After you perfect your masterpiece, run spell and grammar checking software on that file and proof read the text carefully, you can copy and paste it into other documents. This retains the original in a file you can use later, if you desire

So, for example, if a job ad requested someone who had a wide variety of technical writing experience, I would select blocks of text that provided examples of my experiences with various technical writing projects for various audiences using different authoring tools.

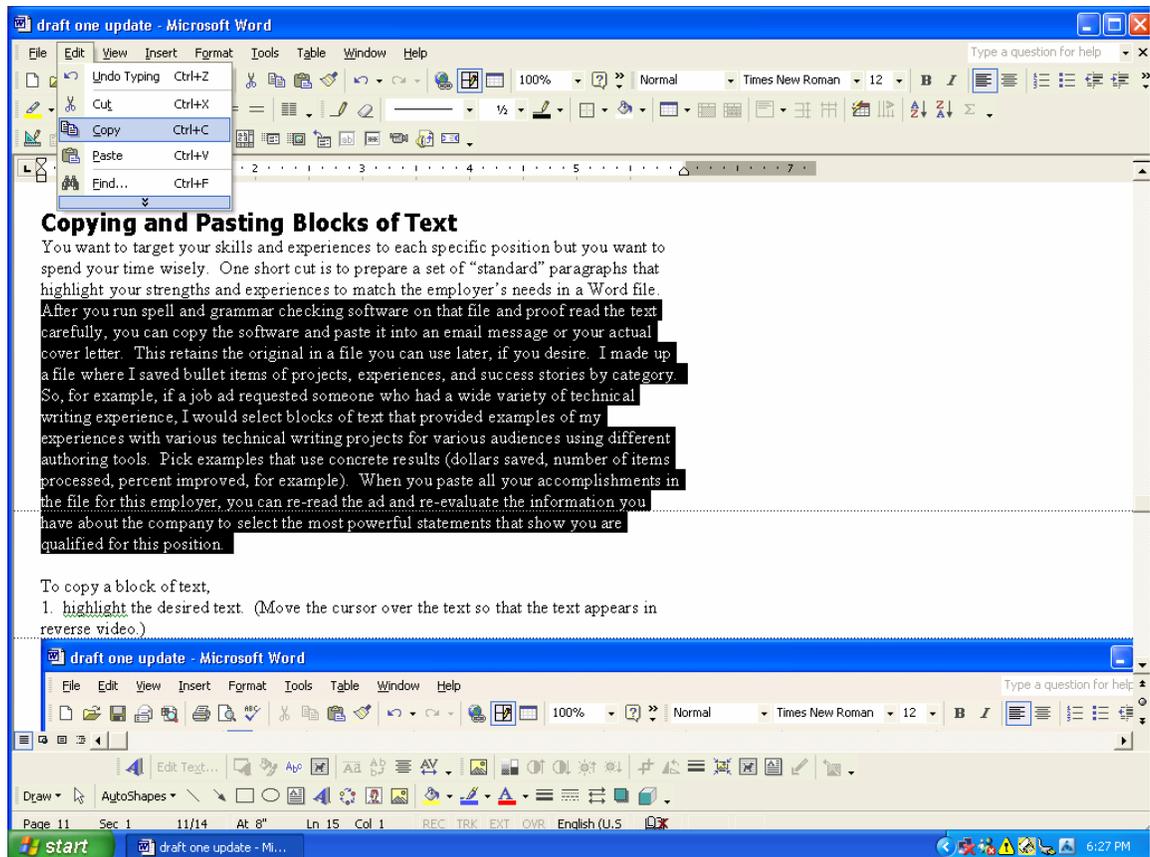
**Hint:** Pick examples that use concrete results (dollars saved, number of items processed, percent improved, for example). When you paste all of your accomplishments in the file for this employer, you can re-read the ad and re-evaluate the information you have about the company to select the most powerful statements that show you are qualified for this position.

To copy a block of text,

1. highlight the desired text. (Move the cursor over the text so that the text appears in reverse video.)



2. Then, go to the **Edit** menu option and pull down to **Copy**. Release the mouse. The highlighted text goes to a temporary storage space, called the Clipboard on a Windows computer.



When you select **Copy**, a copy of the text is held in a temporary storage area (sometimes more technically called a buffer), called the Clipboard, and remains in your file. The text remains on the Clipboard until you exit the program (and tell the program not to save the text). In earlier versions of Word, remember that if you save more than one block of text (or photo or graphic) on the Clipboard, it overwrites what you saved before. (More recent versions of Word, however, allow you to save more than one item on the Clipboard.)

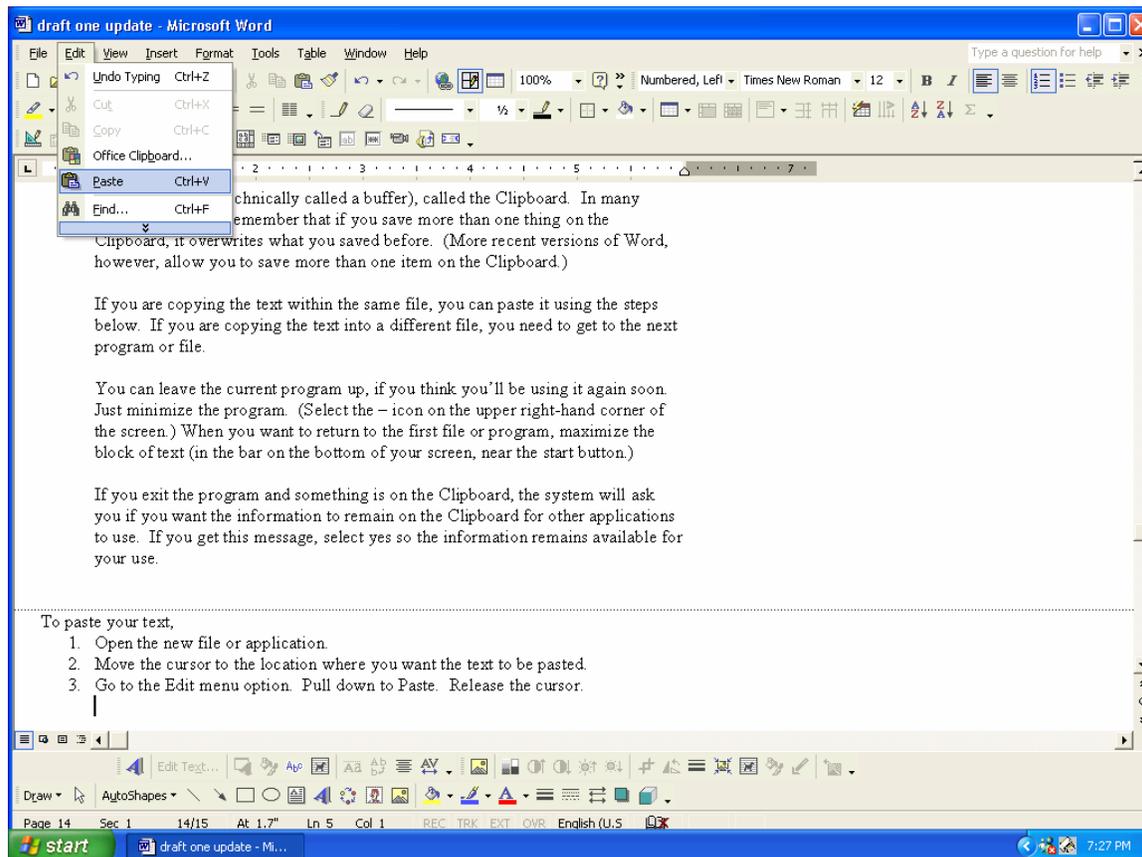
If you are copying the text within the same file, you can paste it using the steps below. If you are copying the text into a different file, you need to get into the next program and file.

You can leave the current program up, if you think you will be using it again soon. Just minimize the program. (Select the – icon on the upper right-hand corner of the window.) When you want to return to the first file or program, maximize the block of text (in the bar on the bottom of your window, near the start button.) If you leave the program running, you do not have to worry about clearing the Clipboard when you exit the program. You do still have to worry about overwriting the Clipboard.

If you exit the program and something is on the Clipboard, the system asks you if you want the information to remain on the Clipboard for other applications to use. If you get this message, select yes so the information remains available for your use.

To paste your text,

1. Open the new file or application.
2. Move the cursor to the location where you want the text to be pasted.
3. Go to the **Edit** menu option. Pull down to **Paste**. Release the cursor.



**Note:** You can paste the same text in more places, if you wish, until you close the program or put something else on the Clipboard.

## Creating Networking Cards

If you go to a networking club or have read some of the recent job hunting articles, you will find that many people recommend the networking card. Networking cards are very similar to business cards but the ones that seem the

most effective are printed on two sides. The first side has the usual information: your name, title or area of expertise, address, phone number, fax number, cell phone number, e-mail address, web site, and other information. On the other side, many people list the areas where their talents excel. Or, if you are going into your own business, on the other side you could list the products or services that you are marketing.

Depending on your needs and budget, you can create the cards yourself or have someone else create the cards for you.

If you are a do-it-yourselfer, you have a few options. You could create the cards using a program, such as Word or Microsoft Publisher or use a web-based card creation site, such as VistaPrint.com.

One package I find very easy to use for business cards is Microsoft's Publisher. You can probably get a copy of Publisher for less than \$100 (or less at a used software store) and it provides templates for business cards, as well as other business stationery and marketing vehicles. If you select an office supply product from one of the vendors listed in the software, ensuring the information prints correctly on the stock is a piece of cake. Just select the appropriate form number.

**Remember** that the better the printer you use, the better your output. If you do not have a photo-quality printer, maybe some of your friends will let you do some printing on their printers. You may also be able to take your file to a neighborhood office reproduction center and have them print from your file.

**Hint 1:** Use the finely perforated cards. While their edges will not be as sharp as edges cut at a printer's, they can almost pass.

**Hint 2:** If you want to print on the back of these cards, you will probably find, as I did, that the less expensive card stock will accept ink on both sides while some of the more expensive cards will not. (The print just smears.)

If do not have money for more software, do not despair. You can write your text and, with some experimenting, copy and paste the information so it will fit on the form you have selected. (This is, of course, more time consuming, but has a lower initial outlay.) You can use or copy the templates (provided in most business card stock packages) to check the spacing on regular paper without printing on the more expensive card stock.

If neither of these ideas sound good to you, you can go to the web. Go, for example, to [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com). This site will allow you to create "free" business cards in a limited number of formats with a subset of available graphics

and/or photos. You do have to pay for shipping. At Vistaprint, if you want to use any of their non-free designs, you will be charged extra. If you want to move the text, or print on the back of the card, there are extra charges. But, these cards can make a very professional impression. If you go for the "free" cards, shipping may take weeks. Also, on the back of the free cards, you will see a small ad for the printing firm. I have done some upgrading on these cards and noticed they were shipped promptly. From time to time, Vistaprint has specials that can save you some money. They also have capabilities that allow you to make other customized office stationery products.

## **Setting up agents at appropriate web sites**

Although statistics show that most people find most of their jobs through networking, do not overlook some of the resources on the Internet. Many people in the job clubs I have joined find jobs through job boards, such as Monster.com, Career Builder.com, and web sites of their target companies. I would suggest using any web site that a professional organization in your area has created, job search web sites from your college or university, association job web sites for your profession, and sites serving the area in which you want to work first. I have found a much better response rate at these sites.

When an employer posts a job at a site like Monster.com, the employer is likely to be buried in responses. If your resume matches their job description very closely, you might get a response but, otherwise, you may never hear from them again. Searching all these sites could be a full-time job but, fortunately, many sites let you set up agents. These software programs search the web site and send you e-mail when a job or jobs meet the criteria you have set for that agent.

Each site is likely to have different ways to set up an agent but, for this example, we will use monster.com. I have set out some basic steps and provided more details for Monster.com.

1. Go to the job web site. If the agent has a link that directs you to set up an agent, select it. Otherwise, select Search Jobs. (You might have to perform a search before you will be prompted to save it as an agent.)

You will probably need to set up an account on the system so that you will have some security and so that the program will know where to send the listings. Be careful about information you transmit over the web. A legitimate job search company will not ask you for credit card information, your social security card number, etc. Be aware.

You will also probably be prompted to refine your search so that you are not

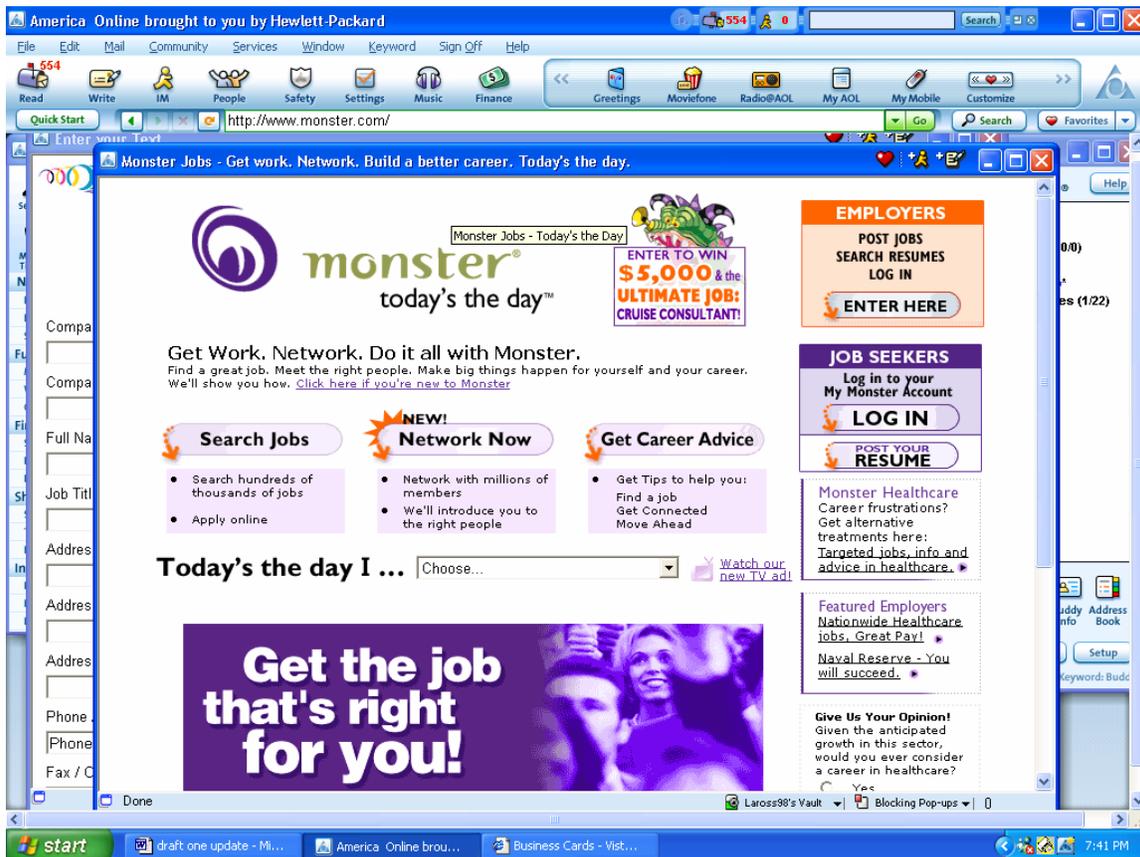
buried in job leads that you would find inappropriate. I would suggest trying a search or two with the criteria you define before you make it an agent. You might want to tweak the job location area after you find out, for example, what cities are included in a certain major city search. Or, the job titles you are looking for may be hidden in a category that you would not have expected.

You will probably also be asked how frequently you want to be notified about new positions.

You may be asked if you want to hear about full-time, part-time, contract or other types of positions.

Example:

1a. On Monster.com, you need to select Search Jobs first. (Some other sites also allow you to set up agents after you have searched for jobs. Then it will often save your criteria as an agent.)



1b. Select **Click here to get started.**



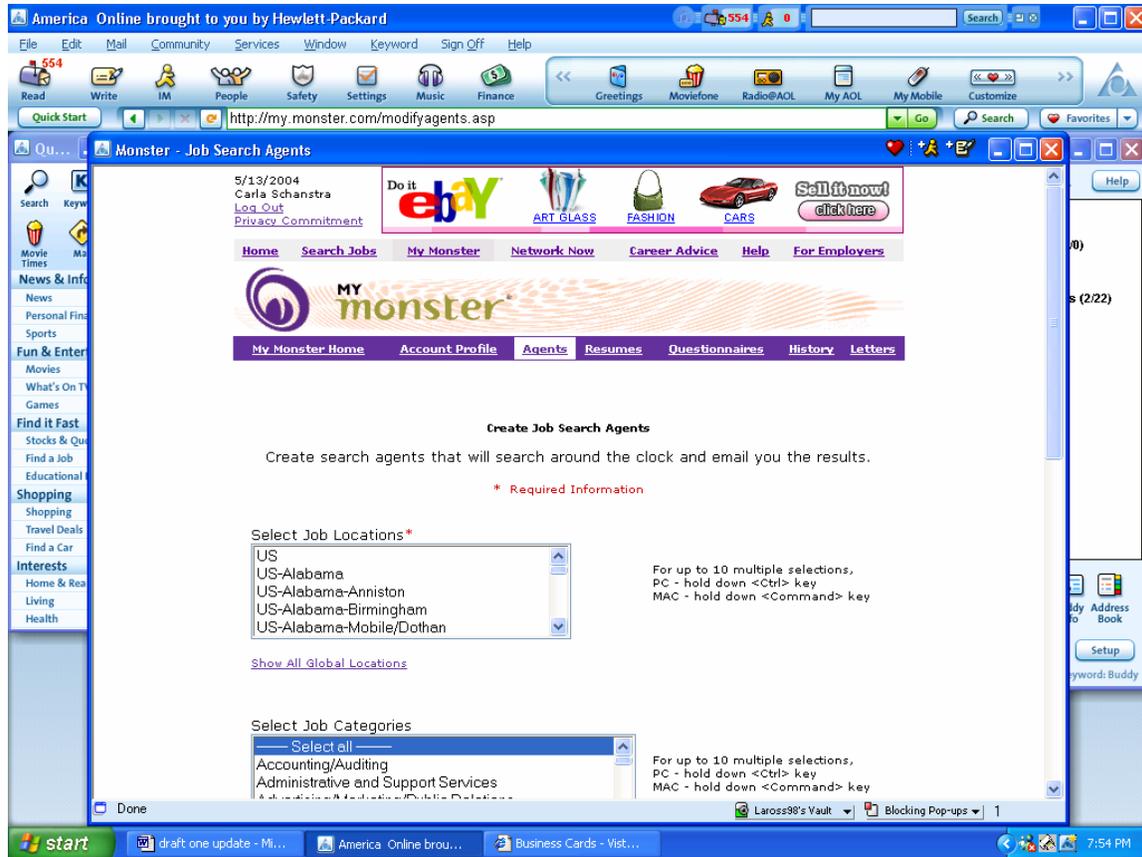
- 1c. Select My Monster Login.
- 1d. If you are not a member, under **Not a Member yet?** select **Continue**.  
Fill out the member information form.  
If you are a member, enter your user name and password. Select **Login**.



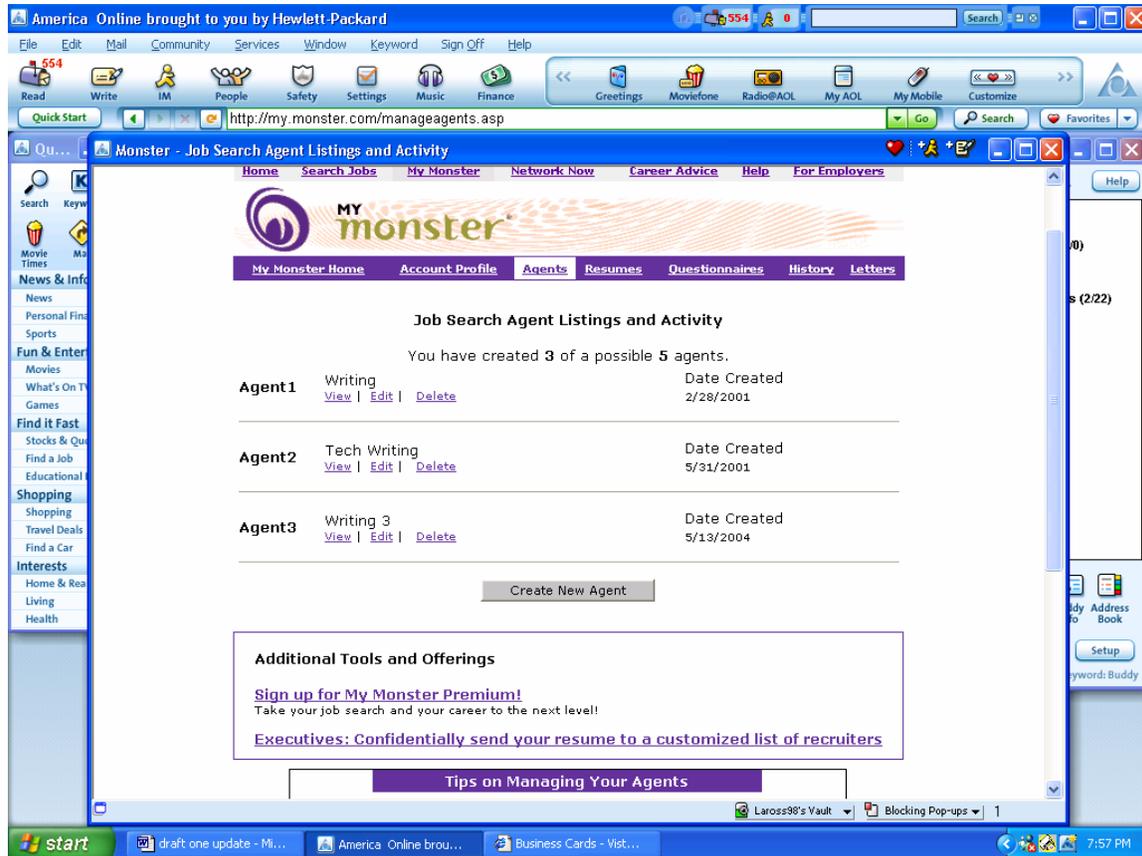
1e. Under **My Job Search Agents**, select **Create New Agent**.



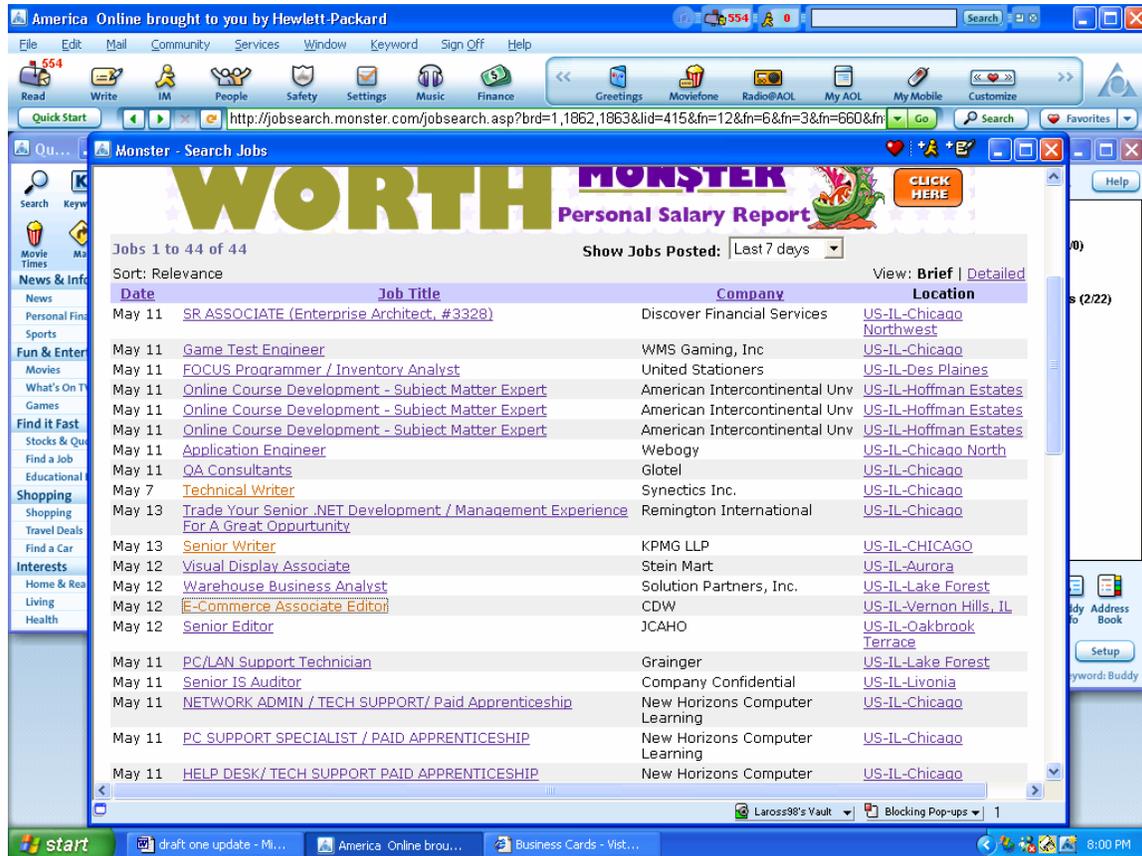
1f. Select **Create New Agent**.



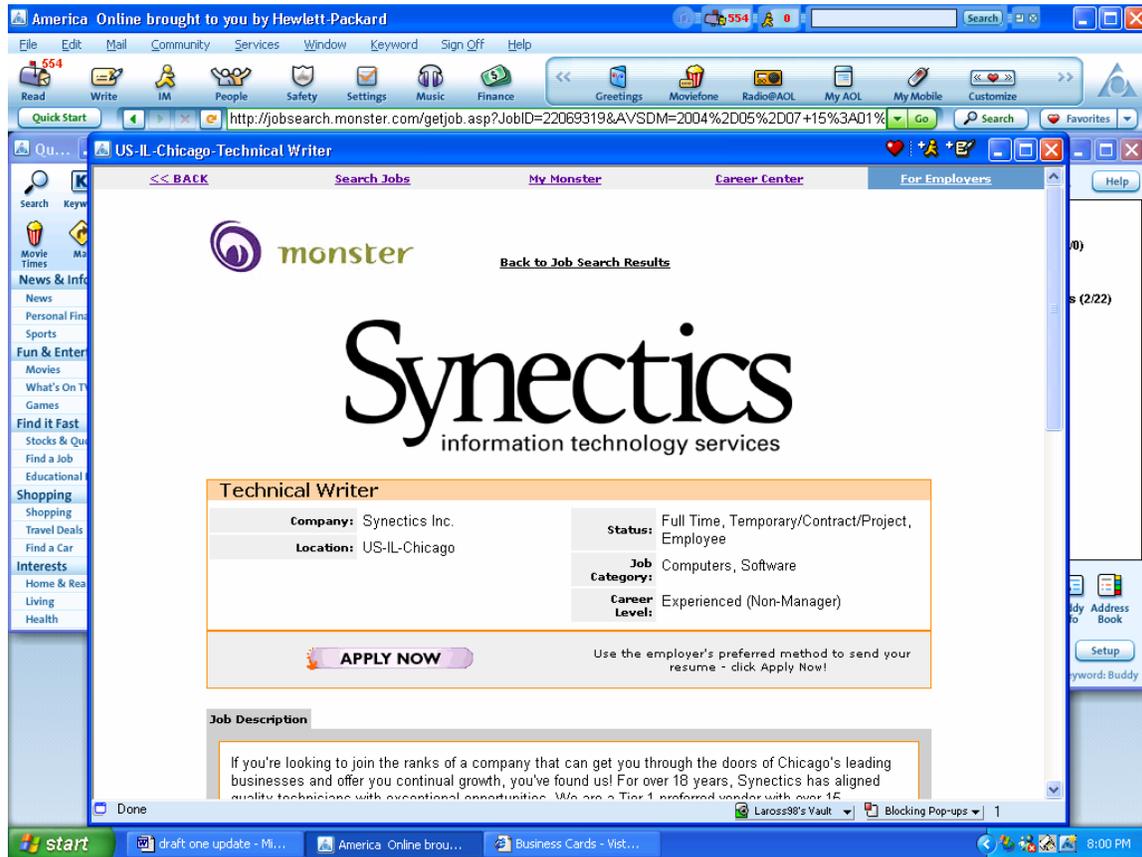
1g. Enter or select the criteria of the job lists you would like to have delivered to your e-mail address. Select **Save Agent**.



1h. Select **View**.



1i. Review the detailed job description. Apply to appropriate positions following the instructions given.



2. After your agent has been saved, check the e-mail account to which you had your positions sent frequently. If you set up the agent to update you daily, check your e-mail daily. If you set up the agent to send you mail weekly, check your e-mail weekly. Some sites will send you a link to a page that will list jobs matching your criteria. Some sites will send you actual listings of the positions. Some many send you an e-mail message containing a combination of these presentations.

3. When you have your dream job, remember that you will probably have to go back to the web site to turn your agent off. (For this reason and others, it is a good idea to have a list of the sites where you have agents set up.)

### **A word about posting resumes**

The only responses I have received from posted resumes were from contract houses and someone trying to sell me something. I would suggest that you keep your private information under your control.

### **My dream company's web site does not have agents**

If the company of your dreams does not have agents to help you set on top of their job postings, check out WatchThatPage.com. This web site allows you to specify a page. Whenever that page is updated, you will receive an e-mail message letting you know that something on the page has changed. You still need to visit the page to see if your dream job has been posted but you do not have to worry about missing it.

## **Maintaining and using contact information**

If are looking for a position while you are on unemployment, the government requires you to keep records of the companies to which you applied, how you applied, contact names, and so forth. Even if no one is requiring you the keep information, it is a good idea to maintain this information for yourself because:

- When a company calls you, you want to be able to converse with them intelligently about the position, where you found it, who you have talked to, and so forth.
- You want to be able to contact companies at various times to check on the status of your application.
- You want to be able to see where your best leads are coming from to you can do the things that give you the best results.
- You may want to send form letters to the companies to which you have applied at a latter date.
- You want to be able to track costs (plane tickets, limos, mileage, tolls, parking fees, business lunches and other legitimate business expenses) relative to your job search so you can deduct them from your income taxes, if appropriate.

## **Maintaining contact information**

I like to use a database for my job search record keeping because it allows me to sort the information is many different ways. You can also use Excel to do some sorting but a database, such as Access, is much more flexible. (If you do not happen to have Access or Excel on your machine and cannot afford more software right now, using Word will allow you to do some searching through the **Edit → Find** command.) You can use Access or Excel to perform automatic calculations for you (such as adding up job search expenses for your taxes). If

you have never used Access or Excel, you will need to invest some time to learn about the programs but I think you will find the time well spent. And, you can add some new skills to your resume!

The columns that I have found helpful for a database include:

- Contact Name
- Contact Title
- Company Name
- Company Address
- Company City
- Company State
- Company Zip Code
- Phone Number
- Fax Number
- Web site address
- Lead Origin (for example web site, newspaper, or networking)
- Publication Date of Lead
- Position Title
- Key skills needed for Position
- Personal or Networking Contacts at Company
- Date of Initial Contact
- Initial Contact Name
- Initial Contact Title
- Initial Contact Phone Number
- Initial Contact email address
- Date of First Follow Up
- Date of Second Follow Up
- Date of Third Follow Up
- Date of Interview
- Interview Contact Name
- Interview Contact Title
- Interview Contact Phone Number
- Interview Contact email address
- Date Thank You cards were sent
- Thank You cards sent to Names
- Interviewer Name 1
- Interview Name 1 Title
- Interview Name 1 Phone Number
- Interview Name 1 email address
- Interviewer Name 2
- Interview Name 2 Title
- Interview Name 2 Phone Number
- Interview Name 2 email address
- Mileage to Interview and Back

- Tools
- Parking
- Hotels
- Air Fair
- Meals
- Other expenses
- Notes

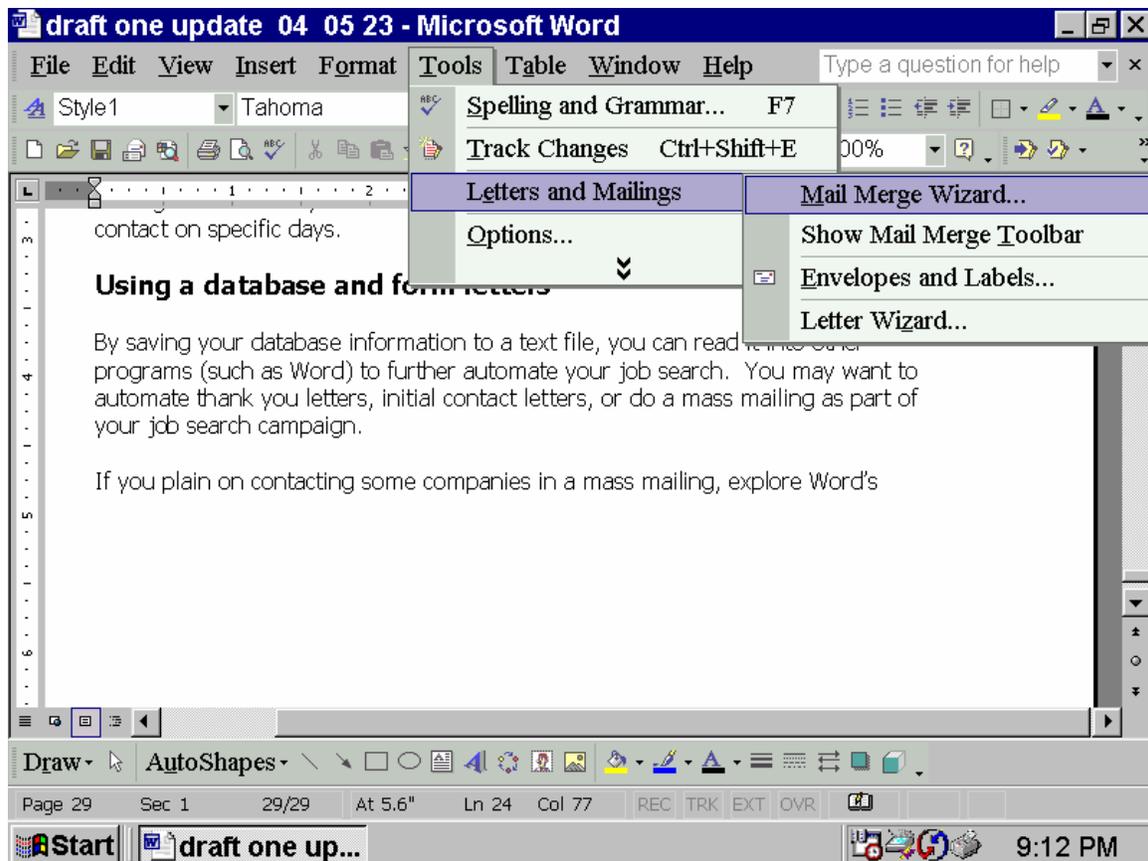
You may think of other information to capture. I like to have this information available in case someone calls so having it in a file makes it readily accessible for me. I can sort the information in different ways so I can quickly respond to questions more intelligently and talk about skills mentioned in their ad. Also, by sorting on date fields, I can find out which companies and people I need to contact on specific days.

If you would like a copy of an Excel spreadsheet for travel expenses, you may download on from our web site at [www.lionsclubs.org/folder/file](http://www.lionsclubs.org/folder/file). You will have to update it for the dates you desire and make any other changes but it is a free start. Instructions for downloading the file are on the web site.

### **Using a database and form letters**

By saving your database information to a text file, you can read it into other programs (such as Word) to further automate your job search. You may want to automate thank you letters, initial contact letters, or do a mass mailing as part of your job search campaign.

If you plan on contacting some companies in a mass mailing, explore Word's Mail Merge and Letters Wizards. Although this may seem "advanced" at first, I am sure you will see how easily the computer can help you make a professional presentation and assist you in attracting the attention of the decision makers who can help you to your dream position. We do not have the space in this article to go through all the details of these features but I hope this introduction gives you the confidence to explore it on your own.



Happy job hunting!!!!

If you would like a copy of this article with all of the screen shots, it is available in .pdf format on our web site at [http://www.lionsclubs.net/folder/article\\_filename](http://www.lionsclubs.net/folder/article_filename). If your system did not come with a version of Acrobat Reader or you have not downloaded a reader for .pdf files, you will need to do so. The web site provides a link to the appropriate web site.

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