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Yes, it’s true—writing skills still matter on the job. Many entry-level job applicants do not have these skills, which is why employers prize them so much. The easiest way to remain in the applicant pool is to use correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Once you get the job, don’t rely on spell-checking programs as a substitute for your skills. Always check your own writing before sending any message. This includes keeping sentences short, avoiding jargon, and getting to the point quickly. Employers want you to communicate with impact. Use the subject line of your email message to get
the reader’s attention. Long sentences and paragraphs are especially hard to read using a mobile device, so stay on target with your subject. Write in the active voice using strong verbs. Use more, smaller text blocks than fewer, longer ones. Include your name and contact information at the bottom of your message. Re-read everything before you hit send.

You might be tempted to rely only on email and social media. Sometimes, a phone call or in-person meeting could be the better choice. Make sure that your nonverbal communication does not subtract from your message. Make eye contact, use a pleasant tone of voice, and listen carefully before responding. Never interrupt the other person.

Giving presentations is a common job task in many careers. Learn the basics of presentation design and delivery—and practice often. Know what to leave out of a presentation—too many slides, too much text, and too many transitions.
These are ways you can build and demonstrate the skill for employers:

- Keep project samples that include instructions for other people to follow.

- Give presentations as a CTSO* member or as a member of a club or association.

- Participate in CTSO competitive events.

- Give a demonstration or a persuasive talk to a group.

- Keep graded essays, reports, or speeches.

- Contribute to a newsletter or blog.

- Take a course in graphic design principles or learn how to use graphic design software.

- Design a brochure, poster or other document using graphic design tools.

- Get comfortable using PowerPoint or similar presentation software and keep digital samples of your work.

* CareerTech student organization—BPA, DECA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, SkillsUSA, and TSA
• Keep a journal as a part of a class.

• Learn another language or sign language.

• Apply “plain language” guidelines to your writing. (You can look up the guidelines online.)

• Use feedback from other people to improve your writing.