

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PAPERS

by

Raymond P. Fisk

and

Jerry R. Goolsby

for Professor [Insert Professor's Name]

[Insert Class Name] Class

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Executive Summary

The following guidelines for preparing papers were created to help college students write more professional reports. The guidelines cover mechanical issues for formatting the paper, procedures for presenting the written narrative, detailed instructions on any references that might be needed, how to structure appendices, style and grammatical errors to avoid.

The first section addresses many common mechanical issues that affect the perceived quality of any paper. Instructions are provided for properly creating sentences and paragraphs, for correctly binding your report, and for how to use fonts. It also discusses properly spacing various parts of the document, handling hyphenation and how to paginate the document.

The second section concerns the presentation of the written narrative. It discusses the sequencing the main sections of the paper, formatting the cover page, formatting the table of contents, writing the executive summary, structuring the main text (including introduction, body of the paper, and conclusion), and using footnotes and endnotes.

Referencing sources in the body of the paper requires correctly citing the source in the paragraph. Instructions are offered for single authors, multiple authors, and specific quotes. The distinction between paraphrasing and plagiarism is also explained. All references must be listed on the references page. Examples are offered for referencing books, journals, magazines or newspapers, conference proceedings, personal interviews, government documents, electronic sources, miscellaneous works, multiple citations, reprints, and secondary citations.

A variety of appendices may be used in student papers. Instructions are provided for tables, charts and graphs. Finally, style and grammatical errors are discussed.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PAPERS

Introduction

Guidelines for preparing papers are established in this manuscript. There is no universally accepted method for preparing papers for submission to professors. Students often find this to be a major source of frustration. Unfortunately, many students have never been taught any method for preparing papers. We created these guidelines to avoid having to assign bad grades to students who don't know how to prepare papers. Nothing is magical about these guidelines and students should not use these guidelines in another class without first asking the professor for that class.

College professors require college students to demonstrate an acceptable level of writing skills. Nonetheless, many professors and business people point to the lack of written communication skills as a major shortcoming of college students. These guidelines will help you enhance your writing ability by giving you a methodology for preparing professional reports.

The guidelines are developed around the following general structure. First, general mechanical issues are addressed. Second, the presentation of the written narrative is discussed. Third, common style and grammatical errors are listed.

Mechanical Issues

This section discusses instructions that you must follow in your paper for several mechanical issues: sentences and paragraphs, binding, fonts, spacing, hyphenation, margins, and pagination.

Sentences and Paragraphs

In written communication there are two essential units of thought: the sentence and the paragraph. Effective and persuasive communication requires well-structured sentences and paragraphs. If you can't express your thoughts clearly, it will be difficult to succeed in business.

Write in complete sentences. Carefully edit every sentence after you write it. Incomplete sentences or poorly written sentences are clear signals to the reader of sloppy work.

Make sure that each of your paragraphs is a cohesive unit of thought. For expository writing (as opposed to paper guidelines), a good paragraph has a beginning, middle, and end (often called the rule of three). *This translates into a minimum of three sentences in each of your paragraphs.* Of course, the typical paragraph may require more than three sentences.

Binding

The preferred method of binding your paper is with a carefully placed *staple* in the upper left hand corner. If your paper is too thick to staple, then you may bind it with a large paper clip or other metal clasp. Please don't use fancy packaging. It will not improve your grade.

Fonts

Select and use just one font that is either in *10 or 12 point*. Larger or smaller point sizes will not be acceptable. The easiest font to read is Times Roman. [These guidelines are printed in Times Roman, 12 point.] The hardest fonts to read are typewriter fonts like Courier or Prestige or novelty fonts like Flintstones or Shotgun. Except for first and second level headings, the font color should always be black.

Spacing

The lines of text of all papers must be *double-spaced*. This includes the Executive Summary, the body of the paper, and the References. It does not include the Table of Contents or the Appendices. Double-spacing your paper leaves the reader space to make comments.

All headings must be separated by one double space (two single spaces) before and after. All headings or titles containing more than one line must be single-spaced. A double space must precede and follow a visual support (table, graph, chart, etc.) placed within the text.

All paragraphs must be indented a ½ inch. Spacing between paragraphs must also be double-spaced (two single spaces).

One space should follow every period at the end of a sentence. Also, one space should follow every colon. Prior tradition was to use two spaces, which was based on using a typewriter and fixed fonts, but one space is becoming preferred with the use of computers and proportional fonts.

All sections of the paper must follow each other with a minimum of wasted space. Don't leave half of a page empty in the middle of the paper.

Don't leave *orphans* or *widows*! At least two lines of text in a paragraph must remain together when going to the following page. That is, do not leave one line of a paragraph's text at the bottom (orphans) or top (widows) of a page. The only exception is unavoidable situations (e.g., a paragraph containing three lines). Most word processing programs will automatically manage orphans and widows. Turn this feature on!

Hyphenation

In general, avoid hyphenating whole words between lines. This does not apply to words like "one-third," "twenty-five," etc. Turn hyphenation off in your word processing software.

Margins

Papers must have *one-inch margins* surrounding the text, i.e. one inch at the top, bottom, left and right sides. All text must be printed inside this one-inch border. The page number must be outside the one-inch margin. The text must begin two lines below the page number. These guidelines are prepared in this manner.

Margins must be left justified or fully justified (like these guidelines). All paper must be 8.5" x 11" in size, except for large visual aids that are folded to the proper size.

Pagination

With only the cover page as an exception, all pages in the paper must be numbered. With Microsoft Word, it is necessary to set section breaks (next page) in the paper to enable different page

numbering and number locations. The Table of Contents is given page “i” (lower case, Roman numeral 1) centered at the bottom of the page. Each following page before the first page of the text is given the next Roman numeral in sequence. This includes the Executive Summary.

Using the footer feature of your word processing software, set the pagination on your first page of text so that *an Arabic number 1 is placed on the bottom center of the first page of regular text (outside the one inch margins)*. On all following pages of text, using the header feature of your word processing software, set the pagination so that the next Arabic numeral (2, 3, etc.) is placed in the upper right hand corner of the page (within the margins). The text on each page begins two lines below the page number. This should automate the numbering for all of the following pages of text. However, the references page and any appendices should be numbered with the page numbers at the bottom center of the page. This will require inserting “next page” section breaks and using the footer feature. **Note:** Due to poor software design, these pagination instructions are difficult to complete in Microsoft Word.

Presentation of the Written Narrative

This section shows students how to structure their written narrative. Topics covered include: sequence, cover page, executive summary, structure of the main text, footnotes and endnotes, referencing sources in the body of the paper, the references page, and appendices.

Sequence

Following a logical sequence is critical. The paper should follow this general outline:

1. The Front Matter
 - a. Cover Page
 - b. Table of Contents (p. i)
 - c. List of Tables (p. ii, if used)
 - d. List of Figures (p. iii, if used)

- e. Executive Summary (p. ii (or iv))
2. The Main Text
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Body of Paper (Don't use this label as a heading)
 - c. Conclusion
 3. The Back Matter
 - a. Footnotes and Endnotes (if used)
 - b. References
 - c. Appendix or Appendices (if used)

Your paper may not contain all the parts of these three sections but it must follow the sequence explicitly. *Sections 1.a, 1.b, 1.e, 2.a, 2.b, 2.c, and 3.b are required in all papers.*

The Cover Page

Every paper must have a cover page. It must present the title of the paper, the author's name(s), the professor's name, the course title, the date, and the name of the institution.

All information must be centered on the cover page. The title must be placed *3 inches* from the top of the page. You may use a larger font and/or a fancy font on the title. The name of the university must be placed *2.5 inches* from the bottom of the page. The author's name(s) must be evenly spaced beneath the title. The course information must be grouped together and double-spaced. The date and university name must be grouped together and double-spaced. See the cover page of these guidelines for an example of these instructions.

Table of Contents

The table of contents must list every heading and subheading contained in the paper. Each heading and subheading must be followed by a line of periods that end with the page number for that

heading. The page number must be positioned “flush right” to avoid a jagged right margin. Most word processors can accommodate these instructions and many have procedures that significantly simplify the creation of a table of contents. See the table of contents of these guidelines (p. i) for an example of these instructions.

The Executive Summary

“In the real world” managers will seldom be willing to read a lengthy report. Most business managers only want very specific information. Executive summaries are included so a busy executive can, in a short time, determine the essence of the document. If the summary triggers an interest, then the executive can continue to read and determine where in the document to look for the information desired. The executive summary must succinctly describe the purpose of the report and all major topics addressed.

The executive summary is normally no more than one page in length. It is not a one-paragraph abstract. When page constraints are placed on the report, the executive summary does not count as a page. The executive summary is numbered as page “ii,” “iii,” or “iv” depending on whether lists of tables and figures are included.

Structure of the Main Text

A common weakness in student’s presentation of the narrative is the lack of structure. The narrative must be presented such that an individual looking for a specific item of information can locate it rapidly. In addition, the writer should assume that the reader approaches the narrative with less interest than the reader of a Stephen King novel. Furthermore, structure enhances the clarity and comprehension of the text. There is an old and very simple description of the desired structure for expository writing (or speaking) that is easy to remember: “Tell them what you are going to tell them,” “Tell them,” and “Tell them what you told them.”

The *introduction* of the paper must identify and explain the paper's topic, and explain exactly what is to be presented, why it is being presented, and in what sequence it is to be presented. The sequence is best explained in a plan of procedure paragraph at the end of the introduction.

In the *body of the paper*, the writer must remind the reader where the narrative is in the sequence of the paper. The narrative should be developed in a logical, systematic fashion as a person would develop a persuasive argument. Be careful to *follow any special instructions from your professor* about the content or structure of the body of the paper. Also, the body of the paper must properly reflect the subject of the class and the subject of the paper. It is amazing to a professor when a student turns in a paper for a marketing class and the paper contains no marketing content.

The presentation of the narrative should carefully use headings and subheadings. Table 1 displays the commonly accepted levels of headings in descending order. Examples of the first three levels are used in these Paper Guidelines. It is not necessary to use all four types of headings; however, the order must be followed. For example, you may only need headings 1, 2 and 3. All topics having the same level must be of similar importance in the narrative. If this is not the case, more heading levels are needed.

The *conclusion* must remind the reader what the purpose of the paper was, summarize the main points of the paper, and note how the written narrative has accomplished its objectives.

Table 1: Levels of Headings

Heading Level	Appearance
1. Centered heading	Upper and lower case letters (may be bolded and dark blue)
2. Major side heading (flush with left margin)	Not underlined (may be bolded and dark blue)
3. Minor side heading (flush with left margin)	Underlined
4. Paragraph heading (beginning of paragraph, followed by a period)	Underlined

Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes should be avoided. Only when a clarification of information in the text is explicitly needed should a footnote or endnote be used. In business publications, endnotes are preferred to footnotes. A raised number should be placed in the text at the point where the endnote is referenced. A separate page entitled “Endnotes” follows the last page of text with the notes appropriately numbered.

Referencing Sources in the Body of the Paper

A properly prepared paper must use outside sources. As a general rule of good referencing, you should never start or end a paragraph with a quote. *Proper referencing requires that you identify your sources both in the text of your paper and at the end of your paper.* The following are general guidelines to follow for citations in the body of the paper:

Citations in the Text

Citations in the text of the paper must be listed by the author’s last name (or names if there is more than one author) and the year of publication enclosed in parentheses. *Note that no punctuation is used between the name and date.* Normally, the citation will go at the end of the sentence (or in a logical sentence break). If practical, the citation should stand by a punctuation mark (usually a period). Example:

The expanding interest in services marketing is partially related to economic trends such as the deregulation of various service industries and the growth of franchising (Lovelock 1984).

If you use the author’s name within the sentence, there is no need to repeat the name in the citation; just use the year of publication in parentheses:

Grönroos (1985) has suggested that services are performances that are evaluated for the technical and functional excellence of the service worker and his/her support.

If there is no author identified in the citation, then you should list the publisher's name instead:

One retailer that has successfully used extensive sales training is Nordstrom (Advertising Age 1987).

Multiple Authors

For multiple authors, use the last names for up to three authors; but, if you have four or more authors, use the first author's name and indicate the other authors with "et al." Examples:

Other contemporary issues facing services include efforts to personalize services (Surprenant and Solomon 1985).

Pricing services is a formidable task because calculating the underlying costs of services is difficult (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985).

The often subtle, yet pervasive influence of a service's physical setting cannot be overlooked (Lovelock et al. 1981).

Multiple Citations

For multiple citations in a paragraph, separate the citations with a semicolon as follows:

Service scholars have focused more research on service quality than any other topic (Parasuraman 2010; Zeithaml 2011).

Specific Quotes

If a particular paragraph, sentence, or equation is quoted, the page number(s) must be placed within the parentheses:

“The quality of services, and their ability to satisfy the consumer, depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs.” (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

In some situations, you may prefer to skip part of a quote. This is done with the use of three periods (...) marking the position of the text that is skipped:

“The quality of services ... depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs.” (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

Long quotes should be kept to a minimum and should not exceed one paragraph from the original source. Any long quote requiring more than four lines of text must be *indented on both sides* (instead of placing quotation marks on both sides) and single spaced as follows:

Although segmentation is applied in both goods and service companies, the consequences of reaching an inappropriate segment with part of the advertising are less serious for goods than for services. If the wrong group of consumers buys our detergent, for example, then we don't really care; we still generate sales. (Bateson 1989, p. 399).

Plagiarism vs. Paraphrasing

Writers must always properly reference the words and thoughts of others. To do otherwise is plagiarism. *Plagiarism* occurs when students try to pass off someone's exact words as their own. Plagiarism is a very serious breach of academic integrity and may result in expulsion from the university.

Paraphrasing is the proper way to restate the work of another person without plagiarizing that work. When you paraphrase you are stating the essential ideas from a passage of text. You must still cite the original source because the paraphrased version is derived from that source. As an example, the previous quote from Bateson is paraphrased below:

Reaching an inappropriate segment with an advertising message is less troublesome for goods companies than services companies. Goods companies still make sales even if the wrong consumers buy their product (Bateson 1989).

Note that after paraphrasing the quote from Bateson the basic meaning of the sentences was the same, but the new sentences are different from the original sentences. Note also that the paraphrased version was shorter and simpler. When paraphrasing, only an occasional short phrase may be repeated without risk of plagiarism. The phrase “reaching an inappropriate segment” was repeated. Had any more than one or two phrases been repeated it would have been far better to do the sentences as a partial quote with the appropriate quotation marks. As an example, the previous Zeithaml (1981) quote may be done as a partial quote:

Service quality will “depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs.” (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

As a rule of thumb, when you find it hard to paraphrase an author’s words then you should quote all or part of the words. Do not take the risk of getting caught plagiarizing!

The References Page

All sources referenced in the body of your paper must be listed on the references page. The complete reference list must be typed on a separate page(s) following the written text of your paper. The reference page must be titled “References.” The page number is placed at the bottom center of the first reference page, and the rest of the page numbers are placed in the upper right hand corner. The page number follows the sequence from the text.

The body of each reference must be double-spaced with a hanging indentation of a 1/2 inch. A hanging indentation means that the last name is placed against the left margin and all later lines of the citation are indented.

All references are to be listed alphabetically, with the author's last name first, followed by their first names and middle initial. If the reference has no author, the work should be alphabetized by the publication's name. The name is followed by the publication date in parentheses. Next, the title of the work appears, the source of the work, and the page number(s).

Several methods of citing the work of others are available. These instructions are adapted from the referencing instructions of the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and the *Journal of Consumer Research*. See the following examples for additional details:

Books

Single author reference for books (include author's name, publication date, book title (*in italics*), location of publisher and name of publisher):

Pirsig, Robert M. (1974), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*. New York: Bantam Books.

Multiple author reference:

Fisk, Raymond, Stephen J. Grove, and Joby John (2008), *Interactive Services Marketing* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Single and multiple author references for an article or case in a book edited by another author(s):

Grove, Stephen J., Joby John, and Raymond P. Fisk (2006), "Back to the Future: Putting the People Back in Marketing," in *Does Marketing Need Reform?* Jagdish N. and Rajendra Sisodia Sheth, ed. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

Books with no author:

Standard Rate and Data Service (1987), *Business Publication Rates and Data: Direct-Response International*. 69 (5), May 24, 1612.

Edited books:

Brown, Stephen W., Evert Gummesson, Bo Edvardsson, and Bengtöve Gustavsson, eds. (1991), *Service Quality: Multidisciplinary and Multinational Perspective*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Journals

Single and multiple author references for journals (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of journal (*in italics*), volume number, month or issue number of publication, and the page numbers):

Fisk, Raymond P. (2009), "A Customer Liberation Manifesto," *Service Science*, 1 (3), 135-141.

Patrício, Lia, Raymond P. Fisk, João Falcão e Cunha (2008), "Designing Multi-Interface Service Experiences: the Service Experience Blueprint," *Journal of Service Research*, 10 (4), 318-34.

Magazines or Newspapers

Single and multiple author references for magazines and newspapers (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of magazine or newspaper (*in italics*), month and day of publication, and the page numbers):

Engardio, Pete (1994), "Why Sweet Deals are Going Sour in China," *Business Week*, December 19, 50-51.

Fisk, Raymond P. (1995), "New Insights on the Peter Principle: My Years as an Interim Chair," *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1-2.

Magazine or Newspaper articles with no authors should be alphabetized by the name of the publication (include complete name of magazine or newspaper, publication date, article title, month and day of publication, and the page numbers):

Advertising Age (1987), "The 100 Leading National Advertisers," November 29, 130-132.

Conference Proceedings

Single and multiple author references for conference proceedings (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of conference publication (*in italics*), editors' names (all of them), location of publisher, name of publisher and the page numbers):

Dabholkar, Pratibha A. (1991), "Using Technology-Based Self-Service Options to Improve Perceived Service Quality," in *1991 AMA Educators' Proceedings: Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing*, Mary C. Gilly, F. Robert Dwyer, Thomas W. Leigh, Alan J. Dubinsky, Martha L. Richins, David Curry, Alladi Venkatesh, Masaaki Kotabe, Ruby Roy Dholakia and Gerald E. Hills, eds., Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 534-535.

Personal Interview

When listing a personal interview (whether in person or by telephone), the format should include the words "Personal Interview" or "Personal Telephone Interview" followed by the person's title, the organization they represent, and the exact date and location of the interview:

Garcia, Manny (1998), Personal Interview, President, Davgar Restaurants, Inc., February 1, Orlando, FL.

Dunlap, Dennis D. (2007), Personal Telephone Interview, Chief Executive Officer, American Marketing Association, January 9, Chicago, IL.

Government Documents

Government documents should be listed by the name of the government agency that produced the report:

U.S. Bureau of the Census (2008), *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2008*, 127th edition, Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.

Electronic Sources

References to websites and CD databases should be included in the reference list as follows:

MarketingPower.com (2009), "American Marketing Association," (accessed January 15, 2009), [accessed at <http://www.marketingpower.com>].

New Orleans CityBusiness (2005), Book of Lists, (CD Database), Disk 1, August 12.

Miscellaneous Works

References to doctoral dissertations, class notes, working papers, brochures, corporate seminars, company documents, annual reports, etc., should be included in the reference list as follows:

Lewis, John Robert (1992), "A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis of Prospect Theory in a Services Marketing Setting," doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Fisk, Raymond P. (2011), "Services Marketing Class Notes," November 7th, Texas State University - San Marcos.

Goolsby, Jerry R. (1990), "Nonsurgical Alternatives to Lobotomy: A Report From the Wasteland," Oklahoma State University, Working Paper.

Greater New Orleans Chamber of Commerce (2009), "Welcome to New Orleans," Brochure.

Hibernia Bank (1999), "Our Financial Services for Small Businesses," Corporate Seminar.

Walt Disney Corporation (1995), "Traditions 101," Company Document.

Xerox Corporation (2010), Annual Report.

As a rule, miscellaneous works should not be major reference sources for your paper. *Your professor must approve any exceptions to this rule.*

Multiple Citations

If an author appears more than once, substitute a one inch line for the author's name. If a team of authors appears more than once, substitute the line for each name that repeats:

Green, Paul E. and Vithala R. Rao (1971), "Conjoint Measurement for Quantifying Judgmental Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8 (August), 355-363.

_____, and Yoram Wind (1973), *Multiattribute Decisions in Marketing: A Measurement Approach*, Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.

_____, _____, and Arun K. Jain (1972), "Benefit Bundle Analysis," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 12 (April), 31-36.

If two works published in the same year by the same author are cited, they must be differentiated. The convention is to alphabetize the works by title and then to place an "a" beside the year on the one article and a "b" by the year on the other, e.g., (1977a, 1977b). The references in the text of the paper are made in the same fashion.

Wind, Yoram (1977a), "Brand Loyalty and Vulnerability," in *Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior*, Arch Woodside, Jagdish N. Sheth, and Peter D. Bennett, eds., New York: American Elsevier.

_____ (1977b), "The Perception of the Firm's Competitive Position," in *Behavioral Models of Market Analysis: Foundations for Marketing Action*,

Francesco M. Nicosia and Yoram Wind, eds., Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.

Reprints

If the source you are citing is a reprint, the original citation is listed and then the source of the reprint is listed:

Grönroos, Christian (1983), "Innovative Marketing Strategies in Organization Structures for Service Firms," in *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, Berry, Leonard L., Shostack, G. Lynn, and Upah, Gregory D., eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 9-21. Reprinted in Bateson, John E. G. (1989), *Managing Services Marketing: Text and Readings*. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 506-521.

Surprenant, Carol F. and Michael R. Solomon (1987), "Predictability and Personalization in the Service Encounter," *Journal of Marketing*, 51 (April), 86-96. Reprinted in Bateson, John E. G. (1989), *Managing Services Marketing: Text and Readings*. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 184-197.

Secondary Citations

A secondary citation occurs when the writer is quoting or paraphrasing a source that was cited in a publication by someone else. *Secondary citations should be avoided*, if possible. The writer should always find and cite the original sources rather than secondary sources. However, if a secondary citation is unavoidable, the following format would be used:

Green, Paul E. and Vithala R. Rao (1971), "Conjoint Measurement for Quantifying Judgmental Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8 (August), 355-363. As cited in Lovelock, Christopher H. and Charles B. Weinberg (1989),

Marketing Challenges: Cases and Exercises, Second Edition, New York:
McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Appendices

Some items that you create for your paper may be too lengthy to place them in the body of the text. These items can include copies of important documents, technical notes, tables, charts and graphs. Such items are placed in the Appendix. All appendices should be titled in sequence beginning with Appendix A. Each page of the Appendix is numbered in sequence continuing from the reference page(s). Only appendices that are discussed in the text should be included.

Tables, Charts, and Graphs

Where appropriate, tables, charts, and graphs should be used to summarize or clarify the text. Often visual representations can greatly clarify many pages of text. Many business executives strongly recommend students become familiar with the process of developing such visual supports.

Tables, charts, and graphs should be clearly labeled with a centered title containing the number of the exhibit in a sequence and its subject. For example, the second table might be labeled, "Table 2: A Statistical Summary of the Population of Orlando." It should be placed on a separate page in the appendix and should be centered on the page from top to bottom. Refer to visual supports in the text by their title (e.g., Table 2). If possible, the visual supports should be presented in the same physical direction as regular text, so the reader does not have to turn the page. If the visual support takes less than one-fourth of a page, place it in the body of the paper as close as possible to where it is discussed in the text.

Style and Grammatical Errors

Errors made in style and grammar seriously damage the credibility of the writer(s) and the entire research project. No substitute exists for careful and thoughtful proofreading of any document.

Raymond P. Fisk 4/27/12 3:04 PM

Comment [1]: Redo this section as Tables and Figures.

This requires that the document be prepared far enough in advance that corrections can be made in time to meet deadlines. The lack of adequate proofreading is the most common source of student's writing problems (i.e., the writer hurriedly prepares the document and does a sloppy job.) An effective tip on proofing is to read the paper backward. Whenever possible, other individuals should be asked to proofread the document as they may spot errors not detected by the writer.

Students are urged to purchase a copy of *The Elements of Style* by Strunk, White and Angell (2000) for consultation about grammar, punctuation and style. Another valuable and more detailed reference is the *Handbook of Technical Writing* by Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu (2003).

The following is a list of *common and inexcusable errors* often committed by students in their writing:

1. Misspelled words are hard to forgive in this day of word processors and spell checkers.
2. Normally, possessive nouns should contain an apostrophe, e.g., "Bitner's."
3. Verb and subject tense do not match, e.g., the data is analyzed.
4. Absence or misuse of commas.
5. No use of semicolons or misuse of semicolons.
6. Use of the indefinite "you," e.g., "When you hire folks like him, you could get burned."
7. Use of they, them, this and other pronouns that could reference more than one noun.
Beginning sentences with such pronouns is weak, because the pronoun must modify the entire preceding sentence.
8. Lack of specificity and use of ambiguous terms and expressions, e.g., the foreseeable future.
9. Failure to be specific or "say what you mean and mean what you say."
10. Constructing two very short sentences that could easily be combined into one sentence.

11. Beginning several sentences in a row with the same word or phrase. Such structure is only acceptable when done deliberately and sparingly for emphasis.
12. Starting almost every sentence with “there.”
13. Do not start sentences with numbers unless they are written out, e.g., “Twenty-five people...”
14. Using double negatives, e.g., “We didn’t do nothing to deserve this.”
15. Writing in passive rather than active voice.
16. Use of the past tense exclusively; avoidance of the present tense.
17. Paragraphs that contain only one or two sentences. You are not writing for a newspaper. Your paragraphs need more content and structure than is possible in one or two sentences.
18. Paragraphs that contain several non-related thoughts. In business writing style, paragraph breaks should be used frequently, especially when thoughts change.
19. Using a conversational tone, e.g., “Oh, you know what I mean.”
20. Sentences that contain a string of several pronouns, e.g., “They did it to them so they would know that he could do business with them.”
21. Splitting an infinitive, e.g., to vigorously investigate. The correct form is to investigate vigorously.
22. Using the words “firstly,” “secondly,” and “thirdly” instead of “first,” “second,” and “third.”
23. Avoid writing in the first person, singular (I) and plural (we).
24. Avoid the use of colloquial expressions, e.g., “fit as a fiddle.” If a colloquial expression is unavoidable, then show it in quotation marks.

25. Using colloquial two-word verbs, e.g., talk over (discuss), look into (investigate), and throw out (discard).
26. Ending sentences with prepositions, e.g., "...seeing where he is at."
27. Using "which" when "that" is more appropriate. "Which" should be used with nonrestrictive clauses that do not change the meaning of the basic sentence. "That" should be used with restrictive clauses. "That" is often overused. One per sentence.
28. Ending sentences with abbreviations or using abbreviations as if they were regular words. Example: "Reps" is not a word. The word is "representatives."
29. Using the word "feel" when the correct term is "think." Learn to distinguish between emotions and thoughts.
30. General sloppiness! Too many papers are submitted with penciled in corrections, no page numbers, no references, improper margins, etc.

Conclusion

Numerous mechanical issues that affect the quality of written papers were given in these guidelines. Second, detailed instructions for presenting the written narrative were reviewed. Finally, common style and grammatical errors were identified.

Students usually have the ability to write well, but fail to exercise this ability. No substitute can be made for careful diligence, thoughtfulness, and adequate time allotment. We urge you to acquire, develop, and polish your written communication skills before entering your professional careers. We sincerely hope this brief document aids that process.

References

Alred, Gerald J., Brusaw, Charles T., and Walter E. Oliu (2006), *Handbook of Technical Writing, 8th Edition*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Strunk, William, Jr., E. B. White, and Roger Angell (2000), *The Elements of Style, 4th Edition*, New York: Longman.

Appendix A

Point-Saver Checklist

Mechanical

- _____ Did you bind your paper correctly?
- _____ Did you format the cover page correctly?
- _____ Did you format the table of contents correctly?
- _____ Did you sequence your paper correctly?
- _____ Did you double-space your paper (except where instructed otherwise)?
- _____ Did you format any headings, subheadings, and visual supports?
- _____ Did you use the correct indentations for paragraphs and long quotes?
- _____ Did you use the correct one inch margins?
- _____ Did you print your paper in the correct font size (10 or 12, 12 is preferred)?
- _____ Are all pages in your paper properly paginated?
- _____ Were you careful not to leave widows or orphans?
- _____ Did you edit your sentences and paragraphs carefully?
- _____ Did you carefully review the list of style and grammatical errors?

Written Narrative

- _____ Did you write a one-page executive summary?
- _____ Did you write an introduction and does it include a plan of procedure paragraph?
- _____ Did you write a conclusion?

Referencing

- _____ Were you careful to paraphrase rather than plagiarize?
- _____ Did you reference all sources that you used within the text (and only those sources) of your paper?
- _____ Did you use the proper form for citations used in the text of your paper?
- _____ Did you create a separate references page in your paper and titled it "References"?
- _____ Are your references listed in alphabetical order beginning with the author's last name (when applicable)?
- _____ Did you use the proper form for referencing the books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc. that you have used as sources for your paper?