CSE/ISE300 Communications S12

- Time: Tue/Thur 5:20-6:40PM
- Location: Room E4315 Melville Library, 4th floor, east wing
- Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (Sep 1999), by Strunk & White, 978-0205313426, $10 new (or $5 bookstore rental)
- Free Online Webbook: Technical Writing, by David McMurrey
  http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/
- Recommended Text: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2010), by Pfeiffer, 978-0135063965 $43 SBU new, $22 rent; $29 Amazon new
- Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie   TA: Eric Papenhausen
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- Phone: 631-632-8750  (not 2-8456)
- Email: lw@ic.sunysb.edu
- Office Hours: 4-5pm + 7-7:30pm Tue/Thu or by appointment
- Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300
The first writing assignment, a one-page draft on My Favorite Shoes, was done in-class last Thursday 1/26/12. Today, I am handing back a copy of your edited and graded draft from Thursday. All deadlines have been shifted later by one or two class periods. See the bottom two lines of this slide.

Center the title My Favorite Shoes at the top of a page. Print your name and today’s date on your paper below the title.

The assignment on 1/26 was to list 2 to 4 phrases about ideas for your paper. Here are some suggested topics for your paper.

- Describe your favorite pair of foot coverings. Explain why you like them.
- Tell an interesting story about special times when you wore these shoes.

[For 1/26,] Write a few sentences expanding each of your ideas.

For each printed version of all your papers, use
- Margins - 1.25 inch all four edges
- Medium line lengths – about 60 characters per full line
- Proper spacing - space & a half for your paper

Bring a typed 2nd draft to hand in at the start of class Tues 2/7/12. Graded 2nd drafts back Tues 2/14/12. Final paper due Thurs 2/16/12.
CSE/ISE 300
First Paper - My Favorite Shoes

Your printed completed paper is due at start of class Thursday 2/16/12. Center the title, your name, and the date at the top. The paper should be 1.0 page (30+ lines and more than 450 words) to 1.3 pages (~40 lines, about 600 words) in length, with lines spaced 1.5 (between single- and double-spaced), text lines at least 6 inches wide, and about 15 words per line. Use font 12 (or larger). The title, your name, the date, and blank lines do not count in the required 30+ lines. Aim for 36 lines (540 words) of text to be safe.

Email a *doc copy of your paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Favorite Shoes.
Earlier Problems with First Classroom Writing

1. Text not broken into paragraphs
2. Use of contractions (I’m) instead of full phrases (I am).
3. Use of “due to” instead of “because of” in an adverbial phrase.
   I was late due to an accident.  I was late because of an accident.
   The accident was due to bad weather.  (adjective phrase)
4. Misspellings
5. Run-on sentences
6. Sentence fragments
7. Over-capitalization {feeling faint, chest pains, shortness of breath}
8. Lack of parallelism {need same part of speech for items in a series}
9. Lack of organization - sentences fit together into paragraphs (and sections with section headers, in longer papers).
CSE/ISE 300
Notes from First Classroom Writing - S12

1. I use the paragraph mark ¶ (pilcrow symbol) to say “Separate sentences here to start a new paragraph”.
2. Avoid vague words like “nice” and non-specific phrases like “a lot of” and “another university”.
3. Avoid abrupt transitions between paragraphs
4. Avoid repeated thoughts, words, and phrases.
5. Do not use any contractions, no don’t, no can’t, and no it’s.
6. Avoid calling a pair of boots “it” in talking of two boots (“they”)
7. Avoid sentences starting with “So”, “Thus”, and “Also”.
8. Avoid lack of organization. Have sentences that fit together into paragraphs (and sections with section headers, in longer papers).
9. Read, edit, and re-read what you write, preferably after a night of sleep the last time.
Rules:

29. Avoid misplaced participles, phrases that begin with the -ing or past form of a verb but do not modify the nearest noun or pronoun. Rewrite the sentence.
   Studying in the lobby, the nearby snack machine is irresistible.
   Studying in the lobby, we cannot resist the nearby snack machine.
   Frightened by the flames, the exit was barely visible to them.
   Frightened by the flames, they could barely see the exit.

30. Avoid run-together sentences.
   I cannot access my data, please restart the file server.
   I cannot access my data. Please restart the file server.

31. Avoid sentence fragments.
   Two hundred error messages from each job. New students of C!
   New students of C often get 200 error messages from each job.
rules:

32. Spell out abbreviations where they first occur, and use too few rather than too many. Abbreviations and acronyms are very common in computing documentation. If used extensively, they can render a technical document almost illegible. The first time you use an abbreviation, spell its word(s) in full, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. The only exceptions are abbreviations that are so widely used in general literature that they have replaced the complex word(s) that they represent, such as LSD for lysergic acid diethylamide and DNA for deoxyribose nucleic acid.

FabLab has the latest computer-aided design (CAD) tools. Search the Association for Computing (ACM) digital library. The central processing unit (CPU) uses a Pentium III chip.
Rules:

33. Omit punctuation (. and -) inside and after abbreviations, except titles and initials used in formal names and abbreviations spelled like small words.

   Dr. M. L. King will speak at 7pm to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
   This CPU uses 4 megabytes (MB) of electrically programmable read-only memory (EPROM) to hold its instructions.
   Fig. 7 in the text shows a small fig tree.

34. An abbreviation uses the same capitalization as the specific word or phrase it replaces, with the exception that acronyms are always completely capitalized unless for units of measure. An acronym abbreviates a phrase by the first letters of its major words.

   In 1974, the USA adopted a maximum speed limit of 55 mph.
   Dr. David R. Smith is a prof at Stony Brook University (SBU).
   Our department was founded by Prof. Smith.
Rules:

35. Avoid using signs for units of measure (" for inch, ‘ for foot, and # for pound), except in tables. Instead, use the words or their abbreviations (in. for inch, ft for foot, and lb for pound).

   Not “Your 7# baby is 18” long”, said the 6’ Dr. Watson.
   “Your 7-pound baby is 18 inches long”, said 6-foot Dr. Watson.

36. Capitalize trade names.

   The name fiberglass came from the trade name Fiberglas.
   The 1921 slogan “I’d walk a mile for a Camel” refers to cigarettes.
   We do not have a Xerox photocopier in our department.

37. Do not capitalize words to emphasize them.

   Not Remember that Ethics is important in Computer Science.
   Remember that ethics is important in computer science.
   I learned to use the Computer in 2 Hours with Video Professor.
   I learned to use a computer in 2 hours with Video Professor.
CSE/ISE 300
Abbreviation and Capitalization

Rules:
38. **Capitalize the full formal names of companies, departments, and other organizations.** Do not capitalize words that are only parts of formal names.

   - **Not** Our monitors cost too much. Talk to Engineering before asking Marketing for a new price.
   - **Say** Our monitors cost too much. Talk to engineering before asking marketing for a new price.
   - **Or** Our monitors cost too much. Talk to the Engineering Division before asking the Marketing Division for a new price.

39. **Capitalize all proper nouns, even those naming scientific laws and units of measure unless they are so frequently used that they are no longer associated with their original formal names.**

   - At Mach 1, a jet plane flies exactly as fast as its engine noises.
   - We own diesel cars. Ernst Mach and Rudolf Diesel were German.
CSE/ISE 300
Technical Writing Style

Rules:

40. Use the active voice, not the passive voice.
   Say Mary wrote the code.  Not The code was written by Mary.

41. Use plain and direct words, not complex or elegant language.
   Say Rain falls.  Not Droplets of condensed water vapor become massive enough to precipitate to earth.
   Say I was fired.  Not Corporate managers laid off many workers without any warning.

42. Delete words, sentences, and repeated phrases that do not add to your meaning.
   Say I worked hard to act properly.
   Not I had to find a way to make an ethical decision when it was very emotionally draining even to ask myself what was the ethically proper decision to make.
43. Use specifics, not vague generalities. Do not just say something is long, fast, or valuable. Say how long, how fast, or how valuable.

My shoes were cheap. My Timberland boots cost only $40 on sale.

44. Use vivid colorful language in places to help readers remember.

Not just: Blood platelets help form clots.
But: “Prick us and we bleed, but the bleeding stops; the blood clots. The sticky cell fragments called platelets clump at the site of the puncture, partially sealing the leak.” Scientific American 12/81, p 126.