CSE/ISE 300 Communication F11

• Time: Tue/Thur 5:20-6:40PM
• Location: Room 102  Light Engineering
• Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (2000), Authors: Strunk and White $10 (or $4 2007 reprint by Coyote)
• Online Technical Writing, Author: David A. McMurrey  http://www.io.com/~hcexres/textbook/
• Recommended Textbook: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2011). Author: Pfeiffer $42 list; $33 Amazon ($26+$4 used)
• Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie  TA: Sean Munson
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• Office Hours: 3:45-5:15PM Tue & Thu or by appointment
• Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300

Paper 1 My Weekend with Irene, printed and by email was due 9/13.
CSE/ISE 300
First Paper - My Weekend with Irene

Your printed final paper is was due in class Tuesday 9/13. Put the title centered at the top and your name plus the paper’s date under it. The paper should be 1.0 page (30+ lines) to 1.3 pages (~40 lines) in length. It should have lines spaced 1.5 (between single and double spaced), text lines at least 6 inches wide, 1.25 inch margins, and about 15 words per line. Use font 12 or larger. The title, your name, and blank lines do not count in the required 30+ lines. Aim for 36 lines of text to be safe.

Email .doc copy of your final paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Weekend with Irene.
Accept/Except

Accept is a verb meaning receive. Except is a preposition (or verb) meaning is (or make) a special case.

I will accept the job offer from IBM. Everyone except Mary wants to work for a large company next year.
(Uncommon as a verb: Please except me from today’s deadline. I have the flu.)

Affect/Effect

Affect is a verb meaning influence.
Effect is a noun meaning result.
(Uncommon: Effect is a verb meaning cause {a result}.)

Birth orders affect adults’ goals in life; more first-born than second-born children attend graduate school.

One effect of burning gasoline in cars is urban smog.
(Uncommon: The new boss will effect change in the company’s line of products. Better: The new boss will change the company’s line of products.)
Amount, Much, Less/Number, Many, Fewer
Amount, much, and less are used with the collective names for substances for which individual items cannot be counted. Number, many, and fewer are used for the names of items that can be counted.

The beach has much less sand this spring than last fall. Winter storms must have washed away a large amount of sand.
The beach has many fewer sand dollars this spring than last year. Summer tourists must have taken a large number of sand dollars home as souvenirs.

Between/Among
Both between and among are prepositions. However, between is used for two items and among is used for three or more items.
This agreement is between you and me.
The two pizzas were shared among the four graders for the course.

Separate
Separate is frequently misspelled as seperate. Remember there is a rat in separate.
Complement/Compliment
Complement is a verb (or noun) meaning \( \text{that which} \) make(s) complete.
Compliment is a verb (or noun) meaning praise.

We have a full complement of experts for the project.
The skills of a husband and wife often complement each other.
{The word complement contains the letters of complete.}
I like compliments. I compliment you on your stunning shoes.
{The word compliment contains an i.}

Continuous/Continual
Continuous means unceasing, without ever stopping.
Continual means repeated regularly, repeated after stopping.
The snow was continuous from 3 pm to midnight yesterday.
My clock loses a few minutes per month. I habitually and continually check it against the time from the radio news station.

Criteria is the plural of the Greek word criterion, not criterions.
The main criteria for selecting best shoes were comfort, utility, and style. The most important criterion was comfort.
Data is a **plural**, the plural of the Latin word **datum**, not **datums**. The data show the effectiveness of rimonabant (pronounced re-moan-a-bant) for weight loss.

**Due to / Because of**

**Due to** starts an **adjective** phrase that means “attributable to.” It must modify a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. Usually it follows a form of the verb “to be.” It cannot mean the same as a **prepositional** (and usually **adverbal**) phrase beginning with **because of**, **owing to**, or **as a result of**.

The cracks in the sidewalk are **due to** expansion on hot days.  
(Not: The cracks in the sidewalk are **due to too** few expansion joints.)

The sidewalk is cracked **because** it does not have expansion joints every three feet.

The sidewalk is cracked **because of** too few expansion joints.
The articles (adjectives) *a*, *an*, and *the*. The indefinite (no specific one) articles are *a* and *an*. The rarer form *an* is used only before words that start with a vowel sound.

*An* hour (pronounced like our) before sunrise is *an* excellent start time.

*A* ewe (pronounced like you or U) is *a* female sheep.

The definite article *the* is used to refer to a specific noun (or pronoun).

*An* hour before sunrise is *the* best time to start.

Dolly was *the* first cloned sheep. *She* was *a* ewe.

Joan was *the* first person across the finish line.

**Singular versus plural**

In a clause or sentence, subject and verb must agree in number. For subjects connected by *or*, the closest subject and the verb must agree.

*We* are here. *He* is there. *He and I* are leaving now. The players or the coach selects the most valuable player. The cow or the sheep are in the meadow.
Farther/Further
Both refer to longer distances, but farther refers to actual physical distances; further refers to other distances or it means “additional.”
{In Texan, a “fur piece down the road” means a “great distance”, not a mink shawl.}
In 15 minutes, Tom can run a mile farther than Bill.
After I left, Kasia read 20 pages further in her book on owls.
Please give further evidence that stress increases allergic reactions.
Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):

1. **Place yourself in the background.** Do not let your mood dominate your writing. Let your words speak to the reader.

2. **Write in a way that comes naturally.** Use words and phrases that come easily. The easily understood “idiomatic” phrases are the ones native speakers use frequently in their speech and writing. If English is not your first language, try hard to speak and to write in English in your daily life. If you live in a non-English-speaking community, start to read cheap paperbacks in English on whatever subject interests you. Do not look for high ideals in popular novels, just the words of the language. If you have a private place to read, try reading out loud so your ears and tongue get trained as well as your eyes and brain.

3. **Work from a suitable design.** Make an outline first. Know what you want to say before you start putting words on a page.
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Writing Style Rules

Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):
4. Write with nouns and verbs. Do not depend on adjectives and adverbs.
7. Do not overstate. If you say something that is not always true, your readers will not believe you when you are correct.
8. Avoid the use of qualifiers. Omit rather, little, pretty, and very. They suck the life juices out of what you write.
9. Do not affect a breezy manner. Avoid spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness writing. Only a few very talented writers of each generation can write well this way. People have learned that most such emotional noises are junk writing to be avoided.
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Writing Style Rules

Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):
10. Use orthodox spelling. Write *through*, not *thru*; *night*, not *nite*.

11. Do not explain too much. At least in prose, the best writers let readers fill in details from their own minds for more vivid images.

12. Do not construct awkward adverbs. It is too easy to add *-ly* to an existing word to make a new adverb. The word *tangledly* is itself a tangle. No one says it. Few people say *tiredly* correctly.

13. Make sure the reader knows who is speaking in a dialogue.

14. Avoid fancy words. Avoid the elaborate, coy, cute or pretentious.

15. Do not use dialect unless your ear is good. Readers may not pronounce misspelled words (representing dialectual variations) as you do. If not, they may not understand what you have written.

16. Be clear. Clarity is a virtue. Abandon it only for a good reason.
17. Do not inject your opinions, unless needed and clearly identified as yours.

18. Use figures of speech sparingly. Too many confuse readers, especially if you mix metaphors. A object called an hourglass in one sentence should not become a swordfish in the next sentence.

19. Do not take shortcuts at the cost of clarity. Novice writers of computer papers use too many acronyms and abbreviations known only to specialists in their subfield. Remember that many people do not know the short phrases in the jargon of your profession. Even people long in the computing field may not know the argot of your subspeciality or of your age group. Expand acronyms where first used - double data rate random access memory (DDR RAM).

20. Avoid words and phrases from foreign languages, especially if you are using them to show off your knowledge. They will just irritate some readers.