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)
- 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
- Office: CS Building, Room 1308
- 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

Return copies of class-edited paper1 drafts today, 9 Feb 2012
Graded paper1 drafts back in class Tuesday, 14 Feb; use for 16 Feb.
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 at least 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 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. Number the pages of all three papers in ‘300.

Email *doc for your 16Feb paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Favorite Shoes.
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{By Susan Jones, formerly of North Georgia College and State University}
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.
Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):

4. Write with nouns and verbs. Do not depend on adjectives and adverbs to add color to weak or imprecise nouns and verbs.


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 are leeches that 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.
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.
Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):
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)* transfers two units of data per clock cycle, not one.
Rules (for all English writing, not just technical writing):

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.

21. Prefer the standard to the offbeat. Youths invariably speak to other youths in a tongue of their own devising; they renovate the language with a wild vigor. Today’s slang has little place in technical writing; *psyched*, *nerd*, *rioff*, *dude*, *geek*, and *funky* are already words of yesteryear. Advertising phrases break the norms of language to gain attention. “This new kitchen range is so revolutionary it *obsoletes* all other ranges.” Write such mutilated English at your own peril. Business people say that toner cartridges are *in short supply* and that they will *finalize* the new returns policy at the next committee meeting. Will they terminate the policy or just finish rewording it?
Aggravate/Irritate  
*Aggravate* means “to add to” or “to make worse” a bad situation. *Irritate* means “to annoy” or “to chafe.”

Don’t aggravate me!  
Don’t irritate me!

All right  
Idiomatic in casual speech as a phrase meaning “O.K.” “Do we have a deal?” “All right.”

Allude/elude/refer  
You *allude* to a book; you *elude* a pursuer. An *allusion* is an indirect mention; a *reference* is a specific mention.

Allusion/illusion  
An *allusion* means “an indirect mention”; an *illusion* means “a false impression” or “an unreal image.”

Alternate/Alternative  
*Alternate* means “every other one in a series.”  
*Alternative* means “one of two possibilities” and always connotes a choice. *Alternate* can mean “a substitute” where there is no choice. The flooded road left them no alternative; they took the alternate way.
Among/Between  

*Among* is normally used if more than two persons or things are involved. *Between* is used when each of two or more is considered individually.  

**You and I will split the work between us.**  
**The money was split among the four players.**  
**There is an agreement between the six heirs.**

And/or  

*And/or* is a confusing shortcut that should be avoided.  

**Would an honor system cut down on the amount of stealing and/or cheating?**  

**Would an honor system reduce the incidence of stealing, cheating, or both?**

Anticipate/expect  

Use *expect* to mean “believe in advance.” Use *anticipate* to connote actions other than simple belief.  

**I anticipated that he would look older.**  
**I expected that he would look older.**  
**My aunt anticipated the upturn in the market by buying stock.**
Anybody/Any body

*Anybody* means “any person.” *Any body* means “any corpse” or “any human form” or “any group.” Similarly write *everybody, nobody, and somebody* as single words in normal usage.

Anyone/Any one

*Anyone* means “anybody.” *Any one* means “any single person or thing.”

As good or better than

Avoid by rewriting the sentence.

My opinion is as good or better than his.

My opinion is as good as his, or better.

As to whether

*Whether* is sufficient.

As yet

*Yet* nearly always is as good, if not better.

No verdict has been reached as yet.

No verdict has yet been reached.
**CSE/ISE 300**

**Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words**

**Being**  
*Being* is not proper after *regard.. as.*

He is regarded as being the best programmer.  
He is regarded as the best programmer.

**But**  
*But* is unneeded after *doubt* and *help.*

I have no doubt but that …  
I have no doubt that …

He could not help but see it.  
He could not help seeing it.

**Can/May**  
*Can* means “is able.”  
*Can* is not a substitute for *may,* meaning “has permission.”

Can I play now?  
May I play now?

**Care less**  
The dismissive “I couldn’t care less” is often erroneously shortened to “I could care less”, destroying the meaning.
Case  
Case is often not needed.
In many cases, the rooms lacked air conditioning.
It has rarely been the case that any mistake has been made.

Certainly  
Certainly is used indiscriminately by some speakers to intensify every statement. This mannerism is bad in speech and worse in writing.

Character  
Character is often used from a mere habit of wordiness.
acts of a hostile character  
hostile acts

Claim (verb)  
With an object, claim means “lay claim to.” Claim is not a substitute for declare, maintain, or charge.
He claimed that he knew how.  
He declared that he knew how.
Clever  
Clever has a special meaning when applied to horses. A clever person is ingenious; a clever horse is good-natured.

Compare with/to  
To compare to is to point out resemblances in highly different objects; to compare with is to point out differences in highly similar objects. Life has been compared to a drama. Congress may be compared with the British Parliament.

Comprise/Constitute  
Comprise literally means “embrace” or “hold.” Constitute literally means “stand together.” A zoo comprises mammals, reptiles, and birds. Animals constitute a zoo.

Consider/Consider as  
Consider, meaning “believe to be,” is not followed by as. Consider, meaning “examine” or “discuss,” uses as. I consider him as competent. I consider him competent. The lecturer considered Eisenhower first as a soldier and second as a manager.
CSE/ISE 300
Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Contact  As a transitive verb, *contact* is vague. Do not *contact* people; get in touch with them, look them up, meet them, or phone them.

Cope with  *Cope* is an intransitive verb always used with *with*. I knew they’d cope. I knew they would cope with the problem.

Currently  Used to mean *now*, *currently* is usually redundant; emphasis is better achieved by a more precise reference to time. We are currently reviewing your application. At this moment, we are reviewing your application.

Data  Like *media*, *phenomena*, and *strata*, *data* is plural and is best used with a plural verb. The data is misleading. These data are misleading.
Different from/than  Since one thing differs from another, the correct usage is different from. Avoid different than. Substitutes for different from include other than and unlike.
Her dog is different than mine.  Her dog is different from mine.  Her dog is unlike mine.

Disinterested/uninterested  Disinterested means “impartial.” It is not a substitute for uninterested, which means “not interested in.”
Let a disinterested person judge our dispute.
This person is clearly uninterested in our dispute.

Divided into / Composed of  A quartered apple is divided into sections, but it is composed of skin, flesh, and seeds. Composed literally means “placed together.” A play is divided into acts, but a poem is composed of stanzas.