CSE/ISE300 Communications S13

- Location: Room 2205 Computer Science, 2nd floor, Multimedia Lab
- Time: Tue/Thur 5:30-6:50PM
- Free Online Webbook: Technical Writing, by David McMurrey
  http://www.prismnet.com/~hcexres/textbook/
- Instructor: Professor Larry Wittie
- Office/Lab: Room 1308 Computer Science, 1st floor, Network Lab
- Office Hours: 3:55-5:25pm Tu/Th, if 1308 door is ajar, or by appointment
- Phone: 632-8750 (not 2-8456)
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- Course Homepage: http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300
CSE/ISE 300
First Paper – My Week With Sandy

Your printed completed paper is due at the start of class today, Tuesday 2/19/13. Center the title at top of page 1 with your name beside the printing date on the second line. Paper 1 must be 1.0 page (30+ lines and 450+ words) to 1.3 pages (39 lines, 600 words) of text, with four 1.25” margins, lines spaced 1.5 (between single- and double-spaced), and lines 6 inches wide. Use font 12 (~15 words and ~80 characters per line). The title, your name, the date, blank lines, and list entries do not count in the 30+ required lines of prose text. To be safe, write 36 text lines (540 wds). Number the pages of all three papers in ‘300.

By Tuesday 2/19, email a *doc copy of your paper to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with Subject: 300 paper 1 - My Week With Sandy. Bring a printed paper 1 to class.
Offputting/Ongoing  Avoid the newfound adjectives ongoing and offputting because they are clumsy and inexact. As a simple test, transform the participles to verbs. Can one offput or ongo?

One/One’s  One in the sense of “a person” must not be followed by his or her. One’s is the correct possessive form. One must watch his step.  One must watch one’s step.

One of the most  Avoid this feeble formula in your writing.

-oriented  Avoid this clumsy, pretentious device.

It is a manufacturing-oriented company.  It is chiefly a manufacturing company.
Partially/Partly  

*Partially* is not always interchangeable with *partly*. *Partially* is best used in the sense of “to a certain degree” when speaking of a condition. *Partly* carries the idea of a part of a physical object as distinct from the whole object.

The log was partially submerged. **The log was partly submerged.**

I am partially resigned to it.

People/Public/Person  

*The people* is not the same as *the public*. *The people* give political support or opposition; *the public* give artistic recognition or commercial success. *People* should not be used with numbers, as a substitute for *persons*. One can say “five persons” or “one person,” but “one people” is not “one person.”

Personalize  

Avoid this pretentious *-ize* word in your writing.

a highly personalized affair  

personalize your stationery  

* a highly personal affair  

design a letterhead
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Personally   *Personally* is often unnecessary.
Personally, I thought it was     I thought it was a good book.
a good book.     It was a good book.

Possess    Avoid using *possess* simply because it sounds more
impressive than *have* or *own*.
She possessed great courage.     She had great courage.
He was the fortunate possessor of

Presently   *Presently* has two meanings: “soon” and “currently.” To
avoid ambiguity, use it only when it means “soon.”
She will be here presently.     We are reviewing your resume
We are presently reviewing     now.
your resume.
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Strunk and White: Commonly Misused Words

Prestigious  *Prestigious* is another vague adjective to avoid.

Regretful  *Regretful* means “full of regret”, but is carelessly used as a substitute for *regrettable*, meaning “must be regretted.”
The mixup was due to a regretful failure in planning.  
The mixup was due to a regrettable failure in planning.

Relate  *Relate* should not use intransitively to suggest rapport.
I relate well to Janet.  
Janet and I agree a lot.

Respective/Respectively  These words usually should be omitted.
Works of fiction are listed under the names of their respective authors.  
Works of fiction are listed under the names of their authors.
The mile run and the two-mile run were won by Jones and Cummings respectively.  
The mile run was won by Jones, the two-mile run by Cummings.
Secondly/Thirdly … Do not prettify numbers with -ly. Use first, second, third, and so on.

Shall/Will The future tense normally is expressed by I shall, you will, she will. To express determination or emphatic consent, the uses of shall and will are reversed - I will, you shall, he shall.

So Avoid the use of so as an intensifier: “so good”; “so warm.”

Split infinitive Avoid placing an adverb between a to and its verb infinitive, unless you want to place unusual stress on the adverb. to diligently inquire to inquire diligently

We hope to soundly defeat our opponents in tonight’s game.

State State should not be used as a mere substitute for say or remark. Restrict state to mean “express fully and completely.” What did he state at the party? What did he say at the party? She refused to state her objections.
Stationary/Stationery

Stationary means “motionless”; stationery means “paper and envelopes to write letters.” Think e for envelope.

Student body

Almost always replace student body by students.

- a member of the student body: a student
- popular with the student body: liked by students

Than

To avoid ambiguity, examine any sentence using than (to express comparison) to see if any essential words are missing.

I am probably closer to my mother than my father.

I am probably closer to my mother than to my father.

I am probably closer to my mother than my father is.

Thanking you in advance

Avoid this phrase. It just says that you will not bother to write again, even if common courtesy suggests that you send an acknowledgement.
That/Which

*That* is the defining, or restrictive pronoun; *which* is the non-defining pronoun. Avoid reversing the two words.

- The lawn mower **that is broken** is in the garage. (which one)
- The lawn mower, **which is broken**, is in the garage. (extra fact)

The foreseeable future

Avoid this fuzzy cliché.

The truth is …/The fact is …

Avoid these bad starts to a sentence. If you have the truth, just state it without advance billing.

They/He or she

Do not use the plural pronoun *they* when the antecedent is a singular noun, *anybody, somebody, someone*, or a distributive expression such as *each, each one, everybody, every one*, or *many a man*. Use the singular pronoun *he, she, or he or she*.

- Every one of us knows they are fallible.
- Every one of us knows he is fallible.
They/He or she (continued) Consider these strategies to avoid awkward overuse of he or she or unintentional emphasis on the masculine.

Use the plural rather than the singular forms of words throughout.
The writer must address his readers’ concerns. Writers must address their readers’ concerns.

Eliminate the singular pronoun altogether.
The writer must address his readers’ concerns. The writer must address readers’ concerns.

Substitute the second person for the third person.
The writer must address his readers’ concerns. As a writer, you must address your readers’ concerns.
The pronoun *this*, when used to refer to the sense of the complete preceding sentence or clause, may seem to refer to just the last part, making the meaning ambiguous. Reword to correct.

Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. *This* is the first visible evidence of the university’s plans for modernization and expansion.

Visiting dignitaries watched yesterday as ground was broken for the new high-energy physics laboratory with a blowout safety wall. The ceremony afforded the first visible evidence of the university’s plans for modernization and expansion.
Thrust

This showy noun, with its suggestion of power and hint of sex, is much abused by executives and politicians. Use it sparingly and in its specific technical meanings.

The thrust of his letter was that he was working more hours than he had bargained for. The point he made in his letter was that he was working for more hours than he had bargained.

The piston has a five-inch thrust.

Tortuous/Torturous

A winding road is tortuous; a painful ordeal is torturous. Both words derive from Latin for “twist.”

With its many turns, the mountain road was torturous. With its many turns, the mountain road was tortuous.

Transpire

Use transpire only to mean “become known” or “leak out.” Do not use it to mean simply “happen” or “come to pass.”

What transpired yesterday? What happened yesterday?

Eventually, the account of his villainy transpired.
Try and/Try to  
*Try* takes *to*, the infinitive form of a verb, not *and*.  
Try and mend it, please.  
Try to mend it, please.  

Type  
*Type* is not a synonym for *kind of*.  
that type employee  
that kind of employee  
I dislike that type publicity.  
I dislike that kind of publicity.  
small, home-type hotels  
small, homelike hotels  
a new type plane  
a plane of a new design  

Unique  
*Unique* means “without like or equal.” There are no degrees of uniqueness.  
It is the most unique coffee maker on the market.  
The balancing act was very unique.  
The most unique spider lives under water in a bubble.  
It is a unique coffee maker.  
The balancing act was unique.  
A unique spider lives under water in a bubble.
Utilize/Use  Prefer simple *use* to the *-ize* word *utilize*.

- I utilized the facilities.  I used the toilet.
- He utilized the dishwasher.  He used the dishwasher.

Verbal/Oral  *Verbal* means “of words” and may refer to expressions in writing or in speech.  *Oral* means “of mouth” and limits words to those that are spoken.  *Oral agreement* and *written agreement* are very precise phrases; *verbal agreement* is less clear.  We reached verbal agreement.  We reached oral agreement.  We reached written agreement.

Very  Use the word *very* only sparingly.  Where emphasis is needed, use words strong in themselves.
While Avoid using *while* as a substitute for *although*, *and*, or *but*. Prefer *while* in its literal sense: “during the time that.” Where *while* is used for *and* or *but*, it often can be replaced by a semicolon.

The offices and salesrooms are on the ground floor, while the rest of the building is used for manufacturing. While temperatures reach 90 or 95 degrees in the daytime, nights in the high desert are often cold.

**-wise** The pseudosuffix *-wise* can wrongly be added to any noun, usually with distasteful results: *taxwise*, *pricewise*, *poemwise*, *taffywise*. It is chiefly useful to mean: “in the manner of”: *clockwise*. Avoid the temptation to coin new words by adding *-wise*. 
Worth while/Worthwhile

Not worth while is overworked as a phrase for vague disapproval. Avoid using it. Worth while is correctly applied only to actions. The one-word adjective worthwhile is weak and should be avoided. (oe: while = the while that)

His books are not worth while.  
His books are not worth reading.  
His books are not worth one’s while to read.  

a worthwhile project  
a promising project  
an exciting project

Would

Would is commonly used to express habitual or repeated action. When repetition is indicated by such phrases as once a year, every day, each Sunday, the past tense without would is better.

He would get up early and prepare his own breakfast before he went to work.

Once a year he would visit the old mansion.  
Once a year he visited the old mansion.