CSE/ISE300 Communications S13

• Location: Room 2205 Computer Science, 2nd floor, Multimedia Lab
• Time: Tue/Thur 5:30-6:50PM
• Required Book: The Elements of Style, 4th edition (Sep 1999), by Strunk & White, 978-0205313426, Hardback ($8 new, Amazon.com) or ISBN 978-0205309023, Paperback ($10 new, $5 rental, SBU Bookstore)
• Recommended Text: Pocket Guide to Technical Communication, 5th ed. (2010/2011), by Pfeiffer, 978-0135063965 ($47 new, $23 rental, SBU) or ($38 new, Amazon)
• 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)
• Email: lw@ic.sunysb.edu or larry.wittie@stonybrook.edu, not both
• Course Homepage: [http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300](http://www.cs.sunysb.edu/~lw/teaching/cse300)
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Testing Lab Accounts For Next Paper Draft

Login to your iMac in the MultiMedia Lab
Use your 9 digit SBU ID number as your account name
I will tell you your starting password in class

I will show how to change your password

Today, using the Safari (or another) browser on the iMac
Access your web-based email client
Send “Your Name is in cse300-3” to lw@ic.sunysb.edu
Include a Cc: to Your Email Address
Attach a Word .docx (or TextEdit .rtf) file saying “Hello”.
Logout, wait a minute, and put your iMac to sleep.
Technical writing has a purpose: to get something done

The writer must convey knowledge to the reader(s)
“there’s a tendency to assume readers know more about the subject than they actually do.”, p. 2
Solution: technical writing must be well-organized

Readers: usually multiple readers with diverse needs

Nine steps to better technical writing follow.
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Nine Steps

Nine steps to better writing
1. Write a brief purpose statement
2. Consider readers’ obstacles
3. Determine technical level of readers
4. Determine decision-making levels of readers
5. Find out what decision makers want
6. Collect and document information carefully
7. Write an outline
8. Write first draft quickly
9. Revise draft in stages
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Step 1

Write a Brief Purpose Statement

Why are you writing this? What is expected to be achieved?

Example: This report presents the findings of our fieldwork at Trinity Dam, along with our recommendation that the spillway be replaced.

Example: The purpose of this report is to compare and contrast two computer systems being considered for Greenway, Inc. The report draws conclusions about the system best suited for Greenway’s long-term needs.

Does NOT present summary points, conclusions, or recommendations

Is NOT an abstract, a conclusion or a summary

Purpose is just to get you started, knowing where you are going
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Step 2

Consider Readers’ Obstacles
   a. They have interrupted life to read your writing
   b. They are impatient
   c. Their backgrounds and knowledge are not yours
      i. What are the readers’ technical backgrounds?
      ii. What do they want to know from you?
      iii. What do you want them to learn?
      iv. What aspects of a reader’s personality may affect the person’s reading?
      v. Does the person have preferences about document style or organization?
Determine Technical Level of Readers
(Remember, you tend to overestimate it.)

Type 1: Managers
   Need summaries, background information, and definition of technical terms

Type 2: Experts
   Need supporting details and references

Type 3: Operators
   Need clear organization (to find what they want), well-written procedures, and clarity

Type 4: General readers
   Need definitions, graphics, statement of how document affects them
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Step 4

Determine the Decision-Making Levels of Readers

Decision Makers: busy persons who must decide

Advisors: people helping others make quick decisions

Receivers: people affected by the decisions, but not involved in making them.

How do you need to speak to each? What do they want?
Find Out What Decision Makers Want
How?
A: Write down what you know about decision-makers

B: Talk with colleagues who have experience with the same readers

C: Remember that all readers prefer simplicity

KISS (Keep It Short and Simple)
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Pfeiffer, \textit{PGTC5}, The Writing Process: Step 6

Collect and Document Information Carefully

RECORD information collected carefully
Consider using index cards to collect research details
Each card contains:
\begin{itemize}
  \item a: Source, where information came from
  \item b: The key information
  \item c: Whether it is a summary, paraphrase, or quotation
  \item d: Page or URL (\textit{Uniform Resource Locator}) of the source
\end{itemize}
How do you summarize, paraphrase? Why clearly label?

TRANSFER information to document carefully
Determine if “common knowledge”
Common knowledge need not be given a reference.
If a quote, transfer “exactly”: can introduce ellipsis (... leave out words).
Retain meaning (no quoting out of context, changing context by ellipsis).
If using summary or paraphrase, be sure to use your words and your sentence structure.
Read card to get the idea, look away, and write the idea yourself.
Write an Outline
Show organization and content in a brief summarized form.
See if outline makes sense, covers what you wish, and flows well.

To create:
1. Record “random” ideas quickly by “brainstorming”.
   In idea gathering step, include anything that might be related.
2. Group ideas, showing relationships.
   Add structure to all the ideas, how they relate, how they group
   This is organization and filtering step. Some things are left out.
3. Draft final outline from ideas and their relationships.
   Depth: must be complete enough to develop paper draft.
   Balance: all main points have similar level of supporting detail.
   Parallel: points in same group have same grammatical form.
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Step 8

Write First Draft Quickly
Schedule blocks of time (30-60 uninterrupted minutes)

Tips:
1. DO NOT stop to edit
   Just get your planned thoughts down

2. Do easiest sections first

3. Write abstract and summary last
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, The Writing Process: Step 9

Revise Draft In Stages

A. Adjust and reorganize content.
B. Edit for style.

Shorten sentences.
Sentences should be direct and declarative.
Avoid overuse of subjunctive mood and future tenses.
No “I think”, “I believe”, “X would”, “X should”, “X will”.
Avoid overuse of passive constructions (except for stress).
Define technical terms.
On first use of an acronym, give its expansion (e.g., URL).
Add headings, lists, and graphics (images, tables, charts).
Replace longer words with synonyms that are shorter, easier to understand, and not “flowery”.
Rewrite to eliminate repeated words or phrases in the same or closely neighboring sentences or paragraphs.