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
• Office: CS Building, Room 1308  TA Help: 12-1:30pm Wed, 2110 cs
• 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

Graded quizzes and shoe papers back soon.

Printed draft of memo2 due at start of class today, Thu, 1 March.

Th1mar12  Lect12Slide  1
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Pfeiffer, *Pocket Guide to Technical Communications, 5e: Structure: Achieving Order and Design* (Chapter 2)

Basics of Organization:

“Write for your reader, not for yourself”

Rule 1: Write different parts for different readers.

Rule 2: Emphasize beginnings and endings.

Rule 3: Repeat key points.

ABC Format: Abstract - Body – Conclusion

Page Design: Formatting Techniques
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Pfeiffer, *PGTC5*, Structure: Rule 1

**Write Different Parts For Different Readers**

Almost no one will read the document from beginning to end in one sitting (unlike an exciting fiction novel).

Readers will make:

1) A quick scan: (who, how?) *most readers*
   Abstract, Intro, Figures/Tables, Conclusion, Recommendations, Headings

2) A focused search: (who, how?) *managers, technicians*
   Use headings, figures, tables to find what they need:
   Recommendations, Tables of facts, Costs

3) Short follow-ups: (who, how?) *advisors, managers, experts*
   Refresh facts before meetings, at final decision making, to clarify and argue points.
Must write for all types of readers. Sections should make sense (to the appropriate people) if read separately AND must be consistent and hang together as a whole.

ORGANIZATION: clear organization allows readers to know what they are reading and how to place it amid the parts of the whole document, whether they read sections out of order or in sequence.
Emphasize Beginnings And Endings
A reader’s attention is highest at the beginning & end of a whole document, each section, and each paragraph;

All that quickest scanners will read is:
Abstract, Conclusion, i.e., beginning and end.
At the beginning a writer must answer the reader’s key questions:
"So what does this document mean to me?"
"Why should I read more of this text?"
Repeat Key Points

Readers should get the key points even when they do not read the whole document from beginning to end. Judicious repetition can help. Repetition does *not* mean duplication. Give key ideas again in *different* words.

Why is repeating effective?

a) most readers do not read all of the text,

b) even for readers who do, repetition clarifies points.

Repetition should be from different points of view or with slightly different twists. People often do not understand something the first time. They need to see it several times.

Repeat without the reader feeling that she's being spoken down to. It should not be obvious that you are repeating.

Again, writers often assume readers know more than they do; repetition that you see may not be repetition to the reader.
ABSTRACT: Gives the "BIG PICTURE". It gives a summary of the main points; it says what the document does and maybe why it is important. The goal is to give readers an understanding of what the document contains and why they should read it.

The abstract answers four questions.
   1. Purpose: why are you writing the paper?
   2. Scope: What work did you do?
   3. Results: What are the main points that decision-makers want to know?
   4. Contents: What main sections follow?
BODY gives supporting details
1. Background: what led up the project, why it was undertaken
2. Methods: How did you gather information
3. Data: Resulting information, from research, field, or lab work

The body is the main supporting content of the document; it makes the full argument and gives supporting details.

It has multiple sections, with headings. Each section should have an introductory part that tells what the section is doing and what will be covered. It gives readers a "roadmap" of what they will be reading in this section.

Readers should always know how they should understand what they are reading; where the text fits in the writer's argument or story.
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Pfeiffer, \textit{PGTC5}, Structure: ABC Format
Abstract - Body – Conclusion Continued

BODY should include listings – bulleted or numbered - to help the reader understand parallelism of sections

Use graphics (including tables); they make data easier to understand, when well used.

Separate facts from opinions clearly in each section. Readers should know what are facts and what are your opinions, but avoid saying "I think", "I believe", "we believe" too often.
CONCLUSION: wrap-up
  Results: conclusions and recommendations
  Action: what to do next?
  Emphasis: What is single most important take-away?
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The Next Paper Is a Two-Page Memo2

Memo2 is an English essay due Thursday, 8 March 2012 as one printed copy in class & a .doc file emailed to lw@ic.sunysb.edu

Subject: 300 memo2  Why I Need a New Work Computer.

Put a title, your name and the paper’s last print date centered on a cover page for your “2.2-page” memo. Use 1.5 lines spacing. Make memo lines 6 inches long with 30 lines per page of text. Make the text of your memo from 60 to 75 lines (2 to 2.5 pages, 850 to 1150 words). Address your boss politely. Number your pages.

Assume the reader is your computer-savvy, but non-expert boss in a company with 20 or fewer employees. The boss has announced that the firm will buy new computers for some employees, those most needing one for their jobs. Justify why the firm will benefit from buying you (or your team) new computer(s). Be specific on why you need a new machine, what computer model with what features, and what price from what source. After the 2.2 pages of memo text list all web and printed references used for your paper.
Write a technical essay in English on the topic: Why I Need a New Work Computer

Explain why you need a new computer, what type, and how it will increase your value to the firm. (In doing so, let me know what is the business of your company, but in a way that will not bore your boss, who knows about the business, but not why you need a new machine for your own job.) Describe the key features of the new computer and why they are critical. Tell what brand, model, cost, and vendor precisely. (List websites with these details in a References section at the end.)

Convince your boss to spend a little money.

(Cover page, salutation, and final References list do not count in the 2 to 2.5 pages. Just memo paragraphs count as text; feature lists, quoted material, and images do not.)
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Talks on 13-30 March Based on 2-Page Memo2
Why I Need a New Work Computer

Plan to give a 6- to 8-minute talk based on your Memo2 paper. Prepare 4 to 8 powerpoint slides.

If you would like to give your talk on a specific date or dates, send email to lw@ic.sunysb.edu with the Subject: 300 talk day.

The dates are:

Tuesday
day 1 13March
day 3 20March
day 5 27March

Thursday
day 2 15March
day 4 22March
day 6 29March