Technical Writing for Technicians
Technical Writing for Technicians

FLEMINGWILL

LINN-BENTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ALBANY, OR
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Welcome to Technical Writing for CTE, an open source e-textbook designed specifically for use in LBCC’s WD4 (Technical Writing for Welders) and all versions of IN4 (Technical Writing for CTE).

In this easy-to-navigate textbook, you’ll find all the necessary lessons and handouts for the course. The textbook is organized chronologically to accompany the course’s weekly TO DO list on Moodle.

You may view the book’s content by navigating from the CONTENTS pull-down menu at the top left of the screen or by simply clicking the Next-> link at the lower right of the screen.

**IN4/WD4** covers the processes and fundamentals of writing field-specific technical documents, including organization and development, audience analysis, diction and style, writing mechanics and standard usage, and the editing, proofing, and revising process required for successful workplace writing. The course
focuses on writing workplace documents commonly written by technicians: emails, descriptions, customer intake documents, project closeout documentation, bad news messages, instructions, summaries, accident reports, and employment docs (resumes and cover letters), etc.
PART II

WEEK 1
What is Technical Writing/Technical Communication?

Technical communication is a field that provides information to users who need assistance to accomplish a defined goal or task. The focus of technical communication is to assist users who need specific information on using products, completing tasks, operating equipment, and completing other types of activities.

Technical communicators work with other professionals to maintain the quality of product documentation. Technical communicators work collaboratively with sales personnel, engineers, programmers, graphic designers, quality control personnel, and client support personnel to ensure that product documentation meets the needs of users.

The field of technical communication encompasses a number of related disciplines that include:

- Information design
- Technical writing
- Technical editing
- Instructional design
- User experience design
- Document design
- Training design
- Marketing
- Web design
Technical writers interpret the thoughts and ideas of engineers, programmers, and marketing managers by translating complex concepts and procedures into plain English. As a technical writer, you are a technical “interpreter” who must: know and understand complex language and industry-specific jargon, be objective and accurate, and, perhaps most importantly, understand your audience. If you don't understand your readers' needs, you will not be able to produce the document they need or want.

Additionally, as a technical writer, you are expected to be able to:

- Write information that meets the needs of the audience
- Write so that users can easily find and understand information
- Organize the structure of technical documents
- Use page elements such as tables, lists, headings, and white space appropriately
- Edit and proofread to produce documents without grammatical or typographical errors.

Technical writers also interpret the thoughts and ideas of engineers, programmers, and marketing managers by translating complex concepts and procedures into plain English. As a technical writer, you are a technical “interpreter” who must: know and understand complex language and industry-specific jargon, be objective and accurate, and, perhaps most importantly, understand your audience. If you don't understand your readers' needs, you will never produce the document they need or want.

Not just manuals

Technical writing does involve a fair amount of instructional-type writing (think of all the products that come with instruction
manuals and guides), but technical writers are called upon to produce different types of technical documents. These technical documents have many similar features and requirements, but some technical writing, such as website content, have more specific requirements.

Technical writers, in addition to user manuals, produce the following types of documents:

- Quick reference guides
- Proposals
- Annual or quarterly reports
- Newsletters
- Marketing documents
- Product analysis and/or review
- Website content
- Training materials
- Simulations
- Online help
- User assistance guides (FAQs)

Computer skills

In addition to writing skills, technical writers/communicators should have at least basic knowledge of using applications typically used in a technical writing environment, such as Microsoft Office, Google Docs, and Adobe Photoshop, as well as some knowledge of HTML and XML editors. You don’t need to be an expert in all of these applications, but you should be able to use software designed to write technical content.
PART III

WEEK 2
Audience/Reader Types

READER TYPES

Generally speaking, there are **two reader types** to which your writing should be tailored: **Skimmers** and **Skeptics**.

**Skimmers** (the majority of readers) are typically very busy, so they often skim documents quickly. With this in mind, the documents you prepare for this particular reader should:

- State the main point clearly and up front
- Place the most important information at the beginning or ending of paragraphs
- Use subject-verb constructed sentences: “**The report** is complete and ready for your review.”
- Highlight key dates or figures when applicable and appropriate

Both of the following examples represent the same experiences, but note the difference in both layout and language:

**Example 1**

For the last several years, in my most recent position as Purchasing Manager, I have been responsible for the oversight of $100,000 in project accounts. Additionally, I manage a team of four other buyers. I provide regular training seminars, including an in-office bi-monthly team-building session. To ensure excellence in the department, I also compile and publish reports to the president and board of directors.

**Example 2**

As Purchasing Manager from 2010 to the present, I am responsible for:

- overseeing $100,000 in project accounts;
- managing a five-buyer purchasing department;
- providing training to other buyers, including team-building sessions; and
• compiling and publishing reports to the president and board of directors.

Note that Example 2 has the same information, but simply using bullet points makes it clearer and easier for readers to locate important information compared to Example 1 where the information gets lost.

Skeptics, on the other hand, are careful readers. Skeptical readers tend to read a document thoroughly to question the writer's claims and evaluate the work's validity. In order to meet the needs of the skeptical reader, it is necessary to support/illustrate your statements with sufficient details and specific evidence, such as examples, statistical data, dollar amounts, specific dates, case studies, etc. Some skeptical readers (like myself) also assess the writing itself, including its structure, grammar/mechanics, word choice, and layout.

Note the difference between the examples below with regard to specificity:

NOT: The company has excellent customer support.
BUT: The company has customer service representatives available around the clock to provide user support by telephone, email, or in-person consultations.

In addition to following general guidelines for writing to both busy and skeptical readers, it is a good idea to determine who your actual readers are (or are likely to be) and to write specifically for them.

AUDIENCE TYPES

When preparing technical documents, it is important to remember potential audiences for your work. Awareness of the differences between Intended and Unintended audiences may affect what information you present and how you present it. Awareness of a complex audience ensures that an author's writing does not exclude any potential readers.

Intended & Unintended Audiences
Your intended audience is the audience for which your document is intended (your instructor, co-worker/colleague, supervisor, etc.).

Your unintended audiences consist of anyone who could come across your writing at any point in time. In professional and technical writing, it's important to be mindful of the unintended audience, including any emails, memos, or reports you produced.

**Primary, Secondary, & Tertiary Audiences**

A primary audience consists of people to whom the communication is directed.

A secondary audience consists of people who will not directly act on or respond to the document but who may need to be aware of it.

A tertiary audience consists of people who might take an interest in the document, such as interest groups, government officials, and the general public.

**Complex Audience**

Writing for a complex audience is different from academic writing. In academia, there is a specific audience for most pieces of writing, generally an instructor or a fairly small group of peers. In a professional setting, you will often write for a complex audience of people with different backgrounds, specialties, and expectations. With that in mind, avoid using terminology (or jargon) that is too technical so you don't unintentionally exclude portions of your audience.
E-mail is familiar to most students and workers. In business, email has largely replaced print hard copy letters for external (outside the company) correspondence, and in many cases, it has taken the place of memos for internal (within the company) communication.\(^1\)

E-mail can be very useful for messages that have slightly more content than a text message, but it is still best used for fairly brief messages. Many businesses use automated e-mails to acknowledge communications from the public, or to remind associates that periodic reports or payments are due. You may also be assigned to “populate” a form e-mail in which standard paragraphs are used, but you choose from a menu of sentences to make the wording suitable for a particular transaction.

E-mails may be informal in personal contexts, but business communication requires attention to detail, awareness that your e-mail reflects you and your company, and a professional tone so that it may be forwarded to any third party if needed. E-mail often serves to exchange information within organizations. Although e-mail may have an informal feel, remember that when used for business, it needs to convey professionalism and respect. Never write or send anything that you wouldn't want read in public or in front of your company president.

**TIPS FOR WRITING EFFECTIVE WORKPLACE EMAILS**

As with all writing, professional communications require attention to the specific writing context, and it may surprise you that even elements of form can indicate a writer's strong understanding of audience and purpose. The principles explained

\(^1\)  
\(^2\)  
\(\text{[1]}\)
here apply to the educational context as well; use them when communicating with your instructors and classroom peers.

- **Open with a proper salutation.** Proper salutations demonstrate respect and avoid mix-ups in case a message is accidentally sent to the wrong recipient. For example, use a salutation like “Dear Ms. X” (external) or “Hi Barry” (internal). Never use the title Mrs. as you cannot assume a woman is married. If the gender of a person is not evident, use their entire name, like this: “Dear Sam Jones”

- **Include a clear, brief, and specific subject line.** This helps the recipient understand the essence of the message. For example, “Proposal attached” or “Your question of 10/25.”

- **Close with a signature.** Identify yourself by creating a signature block that automatically contains your name and business contact information.

- **Avoid abbreviations.** An e-mail is not a text message, and the audience may not find your wit cause to ROTFLOL (roll on the floor laughing out loud).

- **Be brief.** Omit unnecessary words.

- **Use a good format.** Divide your message into brief paragraphs for ease of reading. A good e-mail should get to the point and conclude in three small paragraphs or less.

- **Reread, revise, and review.** Catch and correct spelling and grammar mistakes before you press “send.” It will take more time and effort to undo the problems caused by a hasty, poorly written e-mail than to get it right the first time.

- **Reply promptly.** Watch out for an emotional response—never reply in anger—but make a habit of replying to all e-mails within twenty-four hours, even if only to say that you will provide the requested information in forty-eight or seventy-two hours.

- **Use “Reply All” sparingly.** Do not send your reply to everyone who received the initial e-mail unless your message absolutely needs to be read by the entire group.
• **Avoid using all caps.** Capital letters are used on the Internet to communicate emphatic emotion or yelling and are considered rude.

• **Test links.** If you include a link, test it to make sure it is working.

• **E-mail ahead of time if you are going to attach large files** (audio and visual files are often quite large) to prevent exceeding the recipient's mailbox limit or triggering the spam filter.

• **Give feedback or follow up.** If you don't get a response in twenty-four hours, e-mail or call. Spam filters may have intercepted your message, so your recipient may never have received it.

See [Sample Student Email Example](#) For more info watch “Writing Effective Emails” (Prezi slideshow)

Figure 1 shows a sample email that demonstrates the principles listed above.

**Figure 1. Sample email**

```
From: Steve Jobs <sjobs@apple.com>
To: Human Resources Division <hr@apple.com>
Date: September 12, 2015
Subject: Safe Zone Training

Dear Colleagues:

Please consider signing up for the next available Safe Zone workshop offered by the College. As you know, our department is working toward increasing the number of Safe Zone volunteers in our area, and I hope several of you may be available for the next workshop scheduled for Friday, October 9.

For more information on the Safe Zone program, please visit [http://www.cocc.edu/multicultural/safe-zone-training/](http://www.cocc.edu/multicultural/safe-zone-training/)

Please let me know if you will attend.

Steve Jobs
CEO Apple Computing
sjobs@apple.com
```
CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION
INFORMATION

This chapter was derived by Annemarie Hamlin, Chris Rubio, and Michele DeSilva, Central Oregon Community College, from the following sources:

- Online Technical Writing by David McMurrey – CC: BY 4.0
- Professional Writing by Saylor Academy – CC: BY 3.0
Sample Student Email

Below is a sample of a successful email. Note the complete sentences, paragraph breaks, and friendly, professional tone. Feel free to use this as a model for writing your email.

March 1, 2019
RE: IN4 Email Assignment
Dear Mr. Fleming,

My name is First Last Name, and I am a student in your Technical Writing for CTE class. I am a new student in the Water, Environment and Technology program here at LBCC. Though it is only a two year degree program, it will certainly take me longer to complete because I also work construction to pay the bills. I took last term off to work and build up some savings, so I’m eager to get started.

I plan on also taking multiple business classes as I pursue my degree. Once I have completed my degree, I hope to start my own business.

As a student and a future business owner, technical writing is a skill I use (and will continue using) often, so I’m placing a high value on the content of this course. To say it simply, I want to be a better writer.

I look forward to working with you and learning this term.

Sincerely,

First Last name
Optional Reading: How to Communicate with Your Instructors and Advisors

Here is a handout from the Destination Graduation student course book offering some additional advice for communicating with your instructors and advisors.
Grammar Lesson 1 -
Capitalization

BASIC Rules of Capitalization

Using proper capitalization is one of the easiest ways to show that you are a professional writer. Here are a few simple rules to help you use capitals correctly.

Rule 1: I
Always capitalize the word “I.” Always!

Rule 2:
Capitalize the first word of a sentence. Always!

Rule 3: Proper Nouns
Capitalize proper nouns. Those are the names of specific people, places or things.
Example of proper nouns: Google, George Washington, America, Microsoft
Common nouns do NOT get capitalized. Example of common nouns: the president, a country, a business

Rule 4 : Don’t use capitals for emphasis
Do not use capital letters simply for emphasis. Do not write in all capital letters. It is hard to read, and it makes you sound like you are screaming.
This is wrong: I am sending you an Important Message about our Meeting.
This is even more wrong: I AM SEND ING YOU AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE.
These are the basic rules. If you are interested there are more capitalization rules and an ungraded practice quiz here.
PART IV

WEEK 3
Intake Documents

What are intake documents? Intake documents are documents prepared at the beginning of a job, usually based on the requests of a customer.

You might write an intake document if:

• A customer is placing an order for something to be manufactured
• A customer is placing an order for repairs to be completed
• A customer is ordering parts or products
• Another department has asked you to complete work, and you must convey this to your employees/colleagues

Why are they important? No matter how good someone is at their job (fixing, building, designing, repairing, troubleshooting, etc.) they cannot work effectively if they do not know or fully understand what the task is. Imagine how hard it would be to fix someone’s car if the customer did not identify the problems they’re experiencing. Imagine how hard it would be to design a piece of equipment for a factory if you did not know what the factory produced. Poorly written intake documents may result in lost time and poor customer relations.

What goes in an intake document? This varies a lot based on the industry, the customer, and the job. However, by answering the following questions you can ensure that all the correct information goes into the document:

• Is this a request for manufacturing, repairs, or and order parts/products?
• Who is going to use this document, and what do they need to know to get the job done/order filled?
• How well does the customer understand the job/order?
• Does my company have a standard form they use for this kind
of document?
• Are there specific measurements or quantities that need to be included in this document?
• Are there unusual circumstances that should be mentioned in this document (these might include an unusual time frame, shipping instructions, or recent repairs)?

Final Step – Before you finish this document, restate everything you have written to the customer. Ask the customer if your document says what they want it to say. Have you left anything out? Have you made any mistakes? The customer is your best fact-checker. In some cases, it's customary to send the customer a copy of your intake document. Intake documents often serve as a contract between you and the customer, ensuring that you agree on the work to be completed or the order to be filled.
Intake Document Student Sample (Auto/Diesel)

Henry's Motors
Street Address
City, ST ZIP
(541) 655-4433

Intake Document
Year: 2003          Make: Ford          Model: F150
Engine: Diesel 7.3 L V8
Customer Name: John Johnson          Phone Number: (541) 321-6543
Last time serviced: 7/23/2017
Problem: Will not start in cold mornings (around 50 degrees) and has a hard time starting on warmer mornings (around 70 degrees). Runs great after it starts but owner wants the problem fixed as soon as possible.

Recommendations/Solution: Likely a faulty starter—will inspect to confirm. Customer would like us to call him before starting the job.

REPAIR ESTIMATE
Parts: 2003 Ford F150 7.3 V8 starter (2449292) $150.00
Labor: Approximately 1.5 hours $75.00
Total Estimate: $225.00

Mechanic Assigned: Henry Ford
Customer signature: John Johnson
Customer Info
Widget Industries, Inc.
123 Industrial Drive
Hometown, OR 98765

Job type
☐ Scheduled maintenance
☐ Emergency repair
☒ Design & construction
☐ Troubleshooting

Work to be performed
Customer has employed us to purchase, install, and program a single palletizing robot for one of their packaging lines. The robot must:

• Be able to stack cases measuring 6” x 12” x 4” at a rate of ten cases per minute onto a wood pallet.
• Have safety features built in, including:
  ◦ an automatic and immediate shut-off when anyone comes into contact with any part of the arm.
  ◦ a power lockout to prevent powerup while the equipment is being cleaned or serviced.
• Have a clear, user-friendly control panel that can be operated by new/inexperienced personnel.
• Have the option of using either standard electric power or pneumatic power to control the end effector (the tool mounted to the end of the robot that picks up the cases).
Specific tasks to be completed

- Purchase of a robot.
- Installation of robot, power supplies, and safety lockout controls.
- Creation and installation of end effector.
- Programming of robot.

Equipment requirements

- Power and hand tools used for drilling holes and mounting hardware
- Baseplate for robot to floor and robot to baseplate
- Electrical installation tools, including wire cutters, crimpers, and connectors.
- Hand tools for installing end effector to robot arm.
- CAD drawing of room layout, including locations of electrical and pneumatic lines that can be used for robot functions (provided by customer).

Time frame

- Must be fully operational for full-scale production in three months (late May).
  - Installation of power supplies (electrical and potentially pneumatic) complete within one month.
  - Purchase, delivery, and installation of robot complete within six weeks.
  - Design, build, and installation of end effector within six weeks.
  - Successful functionality test within two months.
  - Creation and completion of software program(s) within eleven weeks.
  - Release of robot to Widget Industries, Inc. within three months.
Grammar Lesson 2 - Apostrophes/Possessive S

Knowing the rules of possessive S and using them appropriately will make you look like a professional writer.

Here are the rules:

Rule 1: Plurals
To make something plural, you usually add an s to the end of the word.

cats = more than one cat (Three cats sleep in our woodshed.)

There are irregular nouns like fish (one fish, two fish) and goose (one goose, two geese), but we won’t worry about those right now.

Rule 2: Add apostrophe S to indicate ownership
Adding apostrophe S (’s) makes something possessive.

• cat’s = belonging to one cat (The cat’s dinner was waiting in the bowl.)

Rule 3: Add S apostrophe to indicate that two or more people/things own
Adding S apostrophe means two or more people/things own something.

• cats’ = belonging to multiple cats (All three cats’ bowls had food in them.)
• kids’ = belonging to more than one kid (We recently donated a lot of our kids’ old toys)

Here is a tricky exception to the general possession rule:
The word its is already possessive and doesn’t need an apostrophe (just like his/hers/their). Its means belonging to something. (The car had its tires rotated.)
The word *it's* is a contraction of “it is” or “it has.” *It's* is not a possessive pronoun. (It's been a long day.)

This is an easy one to get wrong; using it correctly shows you are a good writer.

For some additional help, take this ungraded practice quiz on possessive *S* to test your knowledge.
PART V

WEEK 4
Writing Instructions

One of the most common and important uses of technical writing is instructions, those step-by-step explanations of how to do things: assemble something, operate something, repair something, or explain a personal process (enrolling in college, for example) so that readers may better understand it and possibly complete it themselves.

Writers of instructions should:

• Use clear, simple writing whenever possible.
• Have a thorough understanding of the process in all its technical detail.
• Work toward putting yourself in the place of the reader who will be using your instructions.

Getting Started

Purpose: At the beginning of a project to write instructions, it’s important to determine the purpose of your instructions—in most cases, the purpose of instructions is to inform/explain how to do something.

Audience and situation: Early in the process, define the audience and situation of your instructions. Remember that defining an audience means defining its level of knowledge and familiarity with the topic. It is sometimes helpful to describe your audience to yourself first, and then use that to assess your message at the end to be certain it’s appropriate for your audience.

Layout and design: Ask yourself how your document should look. What should be at the top? How should the steps be labeled? What will be in bold? What should be written as bullet points and what should be written in paragraph form?

Number of tasks: An important consideration is how many steps (or tasks) there are in your set of instructions (or procedure).
The term procedure can be used to refer to the whole set of activities your instructions are intended to discuss, while a task refers to a semi-independent group of actions within the procedure: for example, setting the clock on a microwave oven is one task in the big overall procedure of operating a microwave oven.

A procedure like changing the oil in a car contains only one task; there are no semi-independent groupings of activities. A procedure like using a microwave oven, on the other hand, contains plenty of such semi-independent tasks: setting the clock, setting the power level, using the timer, cleaning and maintaining the microwave, among others.

Some instructions have only a single task, but have many steps within that single task.

Organizing the Instructions

Introduction: Plan the introduction to your instructions carefully. Be sure to:

- Indicate the specific tasks or procedure to be explained.
- Indicate what the audience needs in terms of knowledge and background to understand the instructions.
- Give a general idea of the procedure and what it accomplishes.
- Indicate the conditions when these instructions should (or should not) be used.
- Give an overview of the contents of the instructions.

General warning, caution, danger notices: Instructions must also alert readers to the possibility of ruining their equipment, screwing up the procedure, and/or hurting themselves. Also, instructions must often emphasize key points or exceptions. For these situations, you should use Note, Warning, Caution, and/or Danger to signal to your reader/user.

Technical background or theory: At the beginning of some instructions (after the introduction), writers will include a discussion of background related to the procedure. For certain
instructions, this background is critical—otherwise, the steps in the procedure make no sense.

**Equipment and supplies:** Most instructions include a list of the things you need to gather before you start the procedure. This includes *equipment*, the tools you use in the procedure (such as mixing bowls, spoons, bread pans, hammers, drills, and saws) and *supplies*, the things that are consumed in the procedure (such as wood, paint, oil, flour, and nails). In instructions, these typically are listed either in a simple vertical list or in a two-column list. Use the two-column list if you need to add some specifications to some or all of the items—for example, brand names, sizes, amounts, types, model numbers, and so on.

**Discussion of the steps:** When you get to the actual writing of the steps be certain to carefully consider the structure and format of those steps, any supplementary information that might be needed, and the point of view and general writing style of the instructions. One point of view used often in technical writing is the second person, which is addressing the audience as ‘you.’ Be sure to keep your sentences clear and brief, and try to keep your language consistent whenever possible.
Instructions Samples

The following are examples of successful sets of instructions; use these to give you some ideas of how you can approach the assignment:

- **Welding Instructions Sample 1 (professional sample)**
- **Welding Instructions Sample 2 (student sample)**
- **Mechatronics Instructions Sample – Testing Diodes & Transistors (student sample)**
- **Auto/Diesel Instructions – How to Replace A Rear Sway Bar on A Toyota Corolla (student sample)**
- **Bed Transfer Instructions (student sample)**
- **How to Change Guitar Strings (student sample)**
Sentence Clarity Handout from Purdue OWL

To make your writing clearer and more concise, this handout on sentence clarity from the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) can help. It discusses using parallel construction, paying attention to active vs passive voice, employing transitional words, avoiding noun strings, and other ways of improving your sentence-level writing.
Delivering Bad News/Written Apologies

When delivering bad news, include the following:

- A sincere greeting that does not relate to the bad news. If you open with the bad news, you may lose your reader immediately.
- Explanation of the circumstances that led to the bad news. Bad news is harder to accept when it does not make sense. Explain as much as possible/appropriate.
- Deliver the bad news with an apology if appropriate.
- Immediately after the bad news, include a statement that fosters goodwill. If possible, offer a compromise.

*NOTE: No amount of strong or fancy writing will make bad news sound good. However, a well-crafted message helps the reader understands and accept the message.

**Tone** – When writing bad news messages, use a tone that is clear but not accusatory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vague</th>
<th>Accusatory</th>
<th>Clear and polite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This assignment wasn’t quite what I was looking for.</td>
<td>You failed!</td>
<td>This assignment did not earn a passing score.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your instructions were unclear.</td>
<td>I have no idea what you want. These instructions don’t make any sense.</td>
<td>Looking at the instructions you sent, I wasn’t able to get a good sense of what you were looking for.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When writing apologies, you should:

Analyze your **audience** by asking:
• How serious is the issue?
• How much damage has been done?
• How valuable is the future relationship?

Pay close attention to your **tone:**

• Establish a serious, sincere, but not overly dramatic tone.
• Offer a sincere apology, but don’t overdo it.
• Use diction (word choice) carefully: often how you phrase your apology matters more than what is actually stated.

Pay attention to your **format:**

• Provide an explanation where appropriate, but don’t make excuses or blame others.
• Offer to make amends or rectify the situation when appropriate.
• Close by maintaining good will.
Grammar Lesson 3 - Possessive Pronouns & Other Commonly Confused Words

Possessive pronouns show ownership. Some are used alone; others are used to describe a noun:

- Used Alone: mine, yours, his, hers, ours, theirs, whose
  Example: That computer is hers.
- Used to Modify: my, your, his, her, its, our, their, whose
  Examples: That is her computer. The car needs its clutch replaced.

*Note that none of the possessive pronouns uses an apostrophe to show ownership.

Commonly Confused Possessive Pronouns (pp):

- Your (pp – Your home is lovely.) / You’re (contraction ‘you are’ – You’re going to do well.)
- Their (pp – Their dedication is strong.) / There (adverb – There are my gloves) / They’re (contraction ‘they are’ – They’re leaving soon.)
- Its (pp – Its tires are in need of changing.) / It’s (it is – It’s crucial to know the difference between it’s and its.)
- Whose (pp – Whose music is playing?) / Who’s (who is – Who’s going to the store?)
- Our (pp – Our friends have come over.) /
Are (verb – Are you coming? How many are there?)

Commonly Confused Words in General
The following are examples of words that writers sometimes confuse:

- **To** (prep – We’ll walk to the store.) / **Too** (adverb – Too many mistakes were made. OR We’re going there too. [synonymous with ‘also’]) / **Two** (number – Two of us have to leave).
- **Then** (adverb – He then decided he should study for the exam.) / **Than** (conjunction to show comparison – I have more than you do). Used together: There were fewer problems back then than there are now.
- **Every day** (time expression – It happens every day.) / **Everyday** (adjective – These are my everyday clothes.)
- **Witch** (noun – She was a witch for Halloween.) / **Which** (pronoun – Which class is your favorite?)
- **Led** (verb [past tense of ‘to lead’] – We led them along the coast.) / **Lead** ([pronounced the same] noun – Older homes sometimes have lead paint.)
- **Effect** (usually a noun – It had a great effect on the audience.) **Affect** (verb [action word that can be conjugated into affected, affects, affected, affecting, etc.] – That essay affected me greatly.)
• **Weather** (a noun OR a verb – *The weather is supposed to be cold today.* OR *They think they can weather the storm.*)

/ **Whether** (conjunction to express a doubt or choice—I can’t decide whether to go out in this weather.)

• **A lot** (noun phrase—I have a lot of good writers this term. **Allot** (verb [allotted, allots, allotting]–I intend to allot fifty dollars a week to my retirement plan).  

*NOTE: Alot is not a word–be sure to include the space!).*
Seven Goals for Delivering Bad News

The negative or bad news message delivers news that the audience does not want to hear, read, or receive. Delivering negative news is never easy. Whether you are informing someone they are being laid off or providing constructive criticism on their job performance, how you choose to deliver the message can influence its response. Some people prefer their bad news to be direct and concise. Others may prefer a less direct approach. Regardless whether you determine a direct or indirect approach is warranted, your job is to deliver news that you anticipate will be unwelcome, unwanted, and possibly dismissed.

There are **seven goals** to keep in mind when delivering negative news, in person or in written form:

1. Be clear and concise in order not to require additional clarification.
2. Help the receiver understand and accept the news.
3. Maintain trust and respect for the business or organization and for the receiver.
4. Avoid legal liability or erroneous admission of guilt or culpability.
5. Maintain the relationship, even if a formal association is being terminated.
6. Reduce the anxiety associated with the negative news to increase comprehension.
7. Achieve the designated business outcome.
CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION INFORMATION

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Optional Article: Seven Tips on How to Apologize in the Business World

Here is an article by Tom Searcy at CBS News with tips on apologizing in the business world.
Project Completion/Documenting Work Completed

What is it? Documentation is an important part of almost every workplace. Good documentation can do the following:

- Provide information for customers
- Provide information for upcoming shifts / other employees
- Avoid duplication of work
- Satisfy regulator bodies (warranties, state agencies etc.)
- Satisfy employers

Why is it important? A person who documents their work appropriately appears professional to customers, coworkers, and employers. Good documentation shows that you have done good work.

How long should it be? Provide enough information for both a technician and a customer to understand, but don’t include too much information or unnecessary ot too much information.

EXAMPLES:

Too short: I fixed the problem.

Too Long: First I turned the car on. Then I listened for sounds. I drove the car around the block approximately four time. I heard a knocking sound on the right side. I opened the hood…etc.

Good length: After a thorough road test, I heard a knocking sound coming from the right side of the front end. Following a thorough garage inspection, I identified the problem as a damaged CV joint.
**Audience**

- Provide enough information that future technicians will know what you did
- Provide enough information that customer service representatives or other technicians will be able to explain your work to customers
- Your write-up does not have to be crystal clear to a totally nontechnical audience (i.e., a customer who knows nothing about your profession), but it can’t hurt to make it understandable to any reader.
Oil Change Experts
1234 Oil Change Rd.
Oil Change, OR 12345

Invoice # 123456

Customer Information
NAME: John Doe
ADDRESS: 1234 John Doe Lane, Oil Change, OR 12345
PHONE: (541) 333-4455
ACCOUNT #: 234AQ57
DOS: 11/01/2018

Vehicle Information
YEAR, MAKE, MODEL: 2010 Nissan Frontier- Crew
ODOMETER: 57,210

Service Information
Standard Oil Change:

• 4-5 quarts of new motor oil
• new oil filter
• under hood inspection
• underbody leak inspection
• tire pressure check – (added air to both front tires)
• lights inspection
• wiper inspection
• air filter inspection
• Checked all fluid levels
  ◦ Power steering
  ◦ Radiator
• Transmission
• Washer
• Brake

Recommendations

• 50,000-mile transmission fluid flush
• New air filter- (current filter clogged with debris)
• New windshield wipers- (visible cracks in rubber)

Services Provided:

• Standard oil change $31.95
• New air filter $15.60
• New windshield wipers $11.25

TOTAL: $58.80

Thank you for choosing Oil Change Experts!
We are committed to providing quality care to ensure the safety and longevity of your vehicle.
Grammar Lesson 4 - Quotation Marks

Quotation marks serve a few different purposes in English grammar. Here are the three main rules:

**Rule One: To indicate speech** – Quotation marks indicate that someone is speaking.

Example: “Don’t walk in the street,” Julie said to her children.

**Rule Two: To quote or cite** – Quotation marks also indicate that some writing or information has been taken directly (word for word) from another source.

Example: The safety code at our workplace says that “the shelter in place drill is the most important safety drill we perform” and that it is important that every employee know how the drill works (the words “the shelter in place drill is the most important safety drill we perform” were taken word for word from the safety code).

**Rule Three: To indicate sarcasm or that something is approximate** – Placing a word in quotation marks indicates that the writer does not intend the word literally. They may even mean the opposite of the word.

Examples:

I “love” to go to the dentist. = I don’t really like going to the dentist.

We had a safety “drill.” = It wasn’t really a drill. It was more like a real emergency.

He was “polite.” = He was polite, but he was also a jerk.

**Why is this important?**

A lot of people mistakenly think that quotation marks can be used to emphasize words. They use quotation marks when they should use **bold** or underlining. This is particularly bad when used
in advertising. Think about the rule above, and think about what these sentences really mean:

• We have farm “fresh” eggs.
• Our repair men are the most “reliable”.
• Get a “bargain” at our shop.

Note the problems with the quotation marks in these signs:
In this instance, someone recognized and then remedied the quotation marks problem:
CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION
INFORMATION

Figs.1-3. “40 ‘Signs’ with Inappropriate use of Quotation Marks.”
Lifebuzz.com
At the end of a fabrication project, a client may need a variety of documents to certify that the job was built, inspected or tested and that it actually works. Most often it will be the responsibility of a project manager to put together all of these documents, but in a smaller company the work might be shared by foremen or company owners.

Clients need documentation for a few reasons. If the project is a new or remodeled building, they need welding inspection reports, among other things, before they can get a certification of occupancy.

A general contractor is highly motivated to get that certificate because some of their pay is being held back until they get it. Many of the products built by a fabricator are being resold by the client to someone else. The client must be able to show their customer that the product was actually tested and inspected. Again, they cannot get their money until they have the paperwork.

Some types of documentation are:

- Mill test reports. If a job needs to be made of a certain type of material, the fabricator needs to get these reports from the steel mill. MTR’s give the chemical analysis of a batch of steel that is identified by a heat number. The steel distributor needs to put the fabricator’s purchase order number on the MTR so all the paperwork is tied together. Some projects require the use of domestic steel only; the MTR will show that the material was made in the US.
Lab test reports. On a repair job, it might be necessary to identify the type of material that was used to build the product being repaired. A sample of metal can be sent to a lab for analysis and identification. A copy of the report should go in the closeout package. The client can compare the report to the MTR's and see that the repair job was done with the correct material.

Manuals. A fabrication project may have many parts on it that were not made by the fabricator. These “buy outs” will come with operators manuals and parts lists that the client will need to run and repair the product.

Warranties. Buy outs will have warranties that need to be passed on to the end user. If this is a large project, a long period of time may pass between when the part was bought and when it is put in service. If this is the case, the final user may be the one to start the warranty to get the maximum warranty coverage. The fabricator may be required to provide some kind of warranty for the product. If the work is part of a construction job, a one-year warranty is typically implied.

Testing documents. Many types of tests may be required depending on the type of product. Some of the tests are: Static or Dynamic Load; Hydro; Static Leak; Air or Gas Pressure; Vacuum; and a wide variety of tests for reliability, safety and proper function. Testing may be done by the fabricator or a third party. Results can be recorded in writing, video or photographic evidence.

Certified payroll. Prevailing wage jobs require certified payroll sheets to be submitted with invoicing or at regular intervals during the job. These documents show that everyone working on the job was paid union scale for the craft they performed.

Photographs of complete assembly. These can be included in a closeout package to show the client that all the parts actually fit together. A client may ask that the photos be on film rather than digital because things are so easy to alter on digital. Photos also help field crews with assembly and installation.
• As built drawings. Fabricated steel projects are very seldom built exactly like the print. Designs are altered during construction for many reasons. An “as built drawing” shows the product exactly like it was made.

The owners of the product will need to know how the project was put together if it needs to be modified or repurposed to perform a different function. Creating a package of as built drawing can be a time consuming and expensive process

• License and registration. If the job is a trailer or vehicle, it is useless without this documentation. The vehicle will have to be taken to the DMV to complete this process.

• Inspection reports. For the fabrication contractor this will be weld inspection reports. Generally the welding inspector will send these reports to the owner or client. It is very important that the fabricator save copies of these documents for their own records. The fabricator will also need to furnish welding procedures, procedure qualification reports and welders certifications.

• Copies of QC trailers or other in-house quality control documents. As parts move through the manufacturing process, a document called a trailer may be attached to it. Each worker or inspector that works on the part signs off on their particular task as the part moves down the line. Copies may be included in a closeout package.

• Calibration documents. Precision measuring instruments often come with documentation attesting to its accuracy. These documents give credibility to all the test results and should be included with the test results.

For some projects, mainly in construction, the contractor’s last payment (a 5% retainer is common) is held back by the client until the job is complete. Turning over the closeout package may be one of the conditions of receiving final payment. There is a tendency in
the trade to move on to the next job as soon as the last one goes out the door. But, just like going to the bathroom, the job is not finished until the paperwork gets done.
Project Completion Student Sample - Welding

Work Completion Form

Customer: In house safety improvement project.
Work order title: L Brackets
Work order number: LB-722701
Work order cost: $853.00 or $8.53 per part Cost includes materials only.

Start date: 02.13.27 Completion date: 02.20.17 Instruction:

Create 100 L Brackets following the specifications given on the part diagram provided below. Measurements given in mm. Each part must be tested once completed to ensure load capacity of 50lbs minimum is achievable as these will be installed in a cable guide system. Minimum requirements per OSHA guidelines.
Steps:

1. Cut $\frac{1}{4}$” flat stock and heat mold to create bracket shape with angle at a radius of 10mm.
2. Drill out cable hole at a diameter of 20mm and install insulating rubber seal.
3. Drill out mounting hole x2 at a diameter of 10mm.
4. Clean all cut or drilled edges to ensure no burrs or sharp edges remain.
5. Test part for minimum weight requirements.
6. Package in 20 piece units for maintenance crew and store in part building aisle B section LB-722701.
7. Enter into parts inventory.
8. Return this form to maintenance office.

Date of completion: 02.20.17
Inspected by: J. Jones
Work completed by: J. Jones
Work completion signed off by: Maintenance Manager
PART VIII
WEEK 7
What is it? An accident or incident report documents an injury, accident, work stoppage, equipment failure, worker illness, or personal problem.

You might write an accident/incident report if:

- Someone was injured at work
- Machinery broke
- Machinery malfunctioned
- Work stopped for a significant period of time
- An employee complained of harassment or bullying
- A fight occurred in the workplace
- An employee came to work intoxicated

Why is it important? Accident and incident reports can be used in insurance claims, workers’ compensation awards, and even lawsuits. Poorly written accident/incident reports may place blame where it does not belong or deflect blame from guilty parties. The stakes are high when writing these reports, so it is important to follow the instruction provided in this unit carefully.

What goes in an accident/incident report? Accident/incident reports should include at least the following:

- What happened
- Why it happened
- What the business did about it or is going to do about it

Checklist for Accident/Incident Reports – make sure your report contains as much of the following:
• Date of event
• Location
• Full names of people involved
• Names of witnesses
• Events leading up to the accident
• Environmental condition if applicable (slippery floors, poor lighting, hazardous materials etc.)
• Description of the job duty that was being performed at the time of the incident/accident
• Detailed description of the event
• Parts of body injured and/or parts of equipment damaged (in an injury occurred)
• Description of employee's response immediately after the event (grabbing injured arm, running from room etc.)
• Extent of damage
• Treatment of injury or course of action taken

Some employers may also ask for an analysis of why the event took place and a recommendation for future prevention.

**Audience:** Since these reports have legal ramifications, the writer should consider the audience to be anyone from the people involved in the incident to investigators and/or law enforcement to judges.

**Other Considerations:**

• **Witnesses:** Unless you are working alone, you should always seek as many perspectives as is reasonable and possible when writing an accident/incident report. Different people may see different things or remember the situation differently.

• **Neutral Language:** Because these documents may be used in court or in other legal proceedings, it is important to use specific facts and neutral statements instead of impressions or emotional statements

**Examples:**

**Poor Example** (too biased/emotional): John was just doing his
job, working hard like he always does, and being a great team player when Mark rammed into him with the forklift like he was some hit man from an action movie.

**Good Example** (neutral and specific): John Smith was loading boxes on shelf B2 when Mark Peterson backed into him with the forklift, causing John to fall backwards and hit a stack of boxes on the floor.

**Poor Example** (based on impressions): It just seemed like Gus was always kind of sweet on Tanya, but he was kind of creepy at the same time. He just made everyone feel uncomfortable. He was too touchy-feely.

**Good Example** (neutral and specific): On March 13, 2014, three employees (Margo Swinton, Barb Gell, and Tom Haven) heard Gus Brown say he had a crush on Tanya Vincent (another employee) and that he would do anything to “get in her pants.” On March 14, 23, and 29, Tanya reported to her supervisor that Gus Brown made her feel uncomfortable because he continued to give her a back rub after she said she did not want him to touch her.
Sample Student Accident Report

Accident Report

United Water
103 Wilson Avenue
Manalapan Township NJ 07726
(732)-446-5102

From: Jim Mastrokalos
To: All employees of United Water
Date: January 18, 2018

On January 17, 2018 at 7:05 a.m., the morning crew was doing their rounds when they heard a noise coming out of the water treatment plant’s decommissioned outflow pipe. When they arrived at the site, they discovered there was someone in the pipe and called 911. The county police dispatcher notified the fire department, paramedics, and confined space rescue units.

Ken Genieczko, assistant fire chief and incident commander and his crew, along with the confined space rescue unit used cameras to find the victim. They began by disassembling the 20-inch overflow pipe one piece at a time until they found the victim 10-feet down at the bottom of the pipe.

The victim, employee John Andrews, was alert and talking with the rescue crew. Genieczko explained to Andrews how to put on the harness so they could pull him from the pipe.

He was extracted at 10:58 am and the paramedics took over and transported Andrews to Johnson Medical Center in New Brunswick. At this time Andrews is stable but has suffered a head injury.

Rich Henning will be reviewing the security cameras to get the facts on this incident.

My concerns and recommendations for the staff here at United Water are:
1. Why was there not a lock on holding tank lid?
2. Why was Andrews in the pipe in the first place?
3. All staff will participate in a mandatory safety training session.
4. Evaluations of this incident will be discussed at a staff meeting after all surveillance videos have been reviewed.

Thank you all for your continued hard work. Please put your and your co-workers’ safety first.

Sincerely,

Jim
Employment Documents: Inquiry Letters

Job inquiry letters describe your strengths and explain your employment interest to potential employers. Sending these letters (sometimes called “broadcast” or “cold” letters) to the companies or employers you have targeted can help uncover unlisted or upcoming employment opportunities.

Tips for writing letters of inquiry:

- Begin your letter by stating who you are and giving your status or position (such as student, researcher, interested consumer, etc.), and tell how you found out about the individual or entity you are writing to.
- Be courteous and quick. This is an unsolicited inquiry, and you could be imposing on the reader’s time and/or resources.
- Demonstrate your enthusiasm and energy with language and style appropriate to your field.
- Use simple and direct wording whenever possible.
- Appeal to the employer’s self-interest by demonstrating that you have researched the organization.
- State how you (and perhaps only you) can fulfill their needs, needs of which they may not yet be aware.
- Give positive, truthful accounts of accomplishments and skills that relate directly to the position.
- Request to have a talk, discussion, or meeting, rather than an interview.
- Inquiry letters can be fairly short but should be long enough to thoroughly explain what it is you are inquiring about and what you want the recipient to do in response.
- Make it as easy as possible for the person to respond to your request. Consider reminding the recipient that he/she may
reply to your request via email.

*NOTE: When the person responds to your inquiry, it is a good idea to send a quick note of thanks expressing your appreciation, especially if the letter is sent via email.
Annotated Job Inquiry Sample

The following is an example of a successful job inquiry letter. Provided are some brief explanations of the letter's content and format, which are in parentheses and highlighted in yellow (like this). Note the letter's format, its paragraphing, its sentence structures, and its diction (word choice). Use this example to help format and compose your own inquiry letter.

John Johnson
1492 Ocean Blue Way
Albany, OR 97321
(541) 541-5411 jjjj@jjjmail.com

December 1, 2018 (include the date)
Susan Trout, Recruiter
ATI Human Services
P.O. Box 460
Albany, OR 97321

RE or Subject: Supply Chain Management Opportunities (this briefly states the letter's purpose, which is something readers appreciate)

Dear Ms. Trout: (this is a formal greeting/salutation; you can also use the person's full name instead of Mr., Mrs., or Ms.–“Dear Susan Trout”) I am interested in any supply chain management positions ATI might have available now or in the near future. I have over 16 years' experience in the specialty metals industry, and I just completed a degree in Business Management at Linn-Benton Community College with a specific focus on supply chain management. (the purpose is clear and two important and relevant points are stated right away in a single sentence)
I have considerable hands-on experience as a welder and shop foreman at T&G Fabrications, and I am well versed in the CAD/CAM systems that ATI uses. *(using one or two specific things makes it more likely that the reader will remember them)*

My attached resume highlights my other qualifications. *(however, don't assume that they'll look at it; if there's something important and relevant, like the experience and the degree in paragraph 1, it should go in)*

I would greatly appreciate a chance to discuss how I might be able to contribute to ATI. *(state what you can do for them, not why you want the job)*

If you need further information about my credentials, I can be reached anytime at (541) 541-5411 or via email at techwriting@linnbenton.edu. *(make it easy for them to contact you)*

Thank you for your time and consideration. *(it never hurts to thank readers for their time)*

Sincerely, *(this is a standard closing)*

John Johnson *(your name goes here)*

Enclosure: Resume *(include this if you attach or enclose your resume or other documentation)*
Employment Documents -
Cover Letters

A few guidelines for writing cover letters:

• Explain how/where you learned of the position;
• Specify what it is you want (to apply for the position, inquire about a summer internship, etc.);
• Highlight key areas of your education and professional experience (volunteer work counts!);
• Be as specific as possible, using examples when appropriate;
• Use language that is professional and polite;
• Demonstrate your enthusiasm and energy with an appropriate tone;
• Use simple and direct language whenever possible, using clear subject-verb-structured sentences;
• Appeal to the employer’s self-interest by showing that you have researched the company or organization;
• State how you (and perhaps only you) can fulfill their needs, telling them why you’re the best candidate;
• Give positive, truthful accounts of accomplishments and skills that relate directly to the field or company;

Length:
A cover letter can be fairly short (usually a single page, but this is not a rule), but it should be long enough to provide a detailed overview of who you are and what you bring to the company.

Accentuate the Positive:
Your cover letters will be more successful if you focus on positive wording rather than negative, simply because most people respond more favorably to positive ideas than to negative ones. Words that affect your reader positively are more likely to produce the
response you want. A positive emphasis helps persuade readers and create goodwill.

In contrast, negative words may generate resistance and other unfavorable reactions. You should therefore be careful to avoid words with negative connotations. These words either deny—for example, **no**, **do not**, **refuse**, and **stop**—or convey unhappy or unpleasant associations—for example, **unfortunately**, **unable to**, **cannot**, **mistake**, **problem**, **error**, **damage**, **loss**, and **failure**. Be careful in your cover and/or inquiry letters of saying things like, “I know I do not have the experience or credentials you are looking for in this position...” These kinds of statements focus too much on what you don’t have rather than what you do. Also, don’t call attention to **gaps in employment**—let that come up in the interview.

**Keep these points in mind when writing your cover letters:**

1. Stress what you **have done** rather than what you haven’t and what you **do have** rather than what you don’t (in other words, don’t apologize for your lack of experience, expertise, or education).
2. Emphasize **what you can and will do** rather than what you cannot or will not.
3. Highlight **what you can do specifically** for the company/organization rather than why you want the job.

**NOTE:** Just because your resume will be attached, don’t make the mistake of thinking that your resume should or will do all the work; **if something is important, be sure to discuss it in your cover letter because there’s no guarantee that your reader will even look at your resume.** Part of your task in crafting your cover letter is to keep your reader interested and engaged.
April 1, 2019

Mr. Bruce Campbell
Manager Works
Kinder Morgan
2 Some Ave
Odessa, TX 52442

RE: Welder Position

Dear Mr. Campbell:

I am writing to apply for the position of welder at Kinder Morgan, as advertised in the Daily Tribune. I have a technical certificate in welding, AWS credentials as a Certified Welder Fabricator, and five years of experience in welding. I always keep safety guidelines at the forefront while completing welding work, and I ensure my coworkers do as well.

As indicated in the enclosed resume, I am adept at welding metal components to repair or fabricating products using brazing, electric arc, and gas welding equipment. Additionally, I have a demonstrated ability to read and interpret layouts and blueprints. Moreover, I am proficient in different measuring tools, such as tape measure, dial caliper, micrometer, and protractor. Above all, I am able to follow health and safety guidelines while performing the welding and fabrication tasks.

As a worker, I am a strong team player and work well with
coworkers and supervisors. I am also flexible and able to work long hours when needed for a project and to come in for additional shifts.

I am confident that my experiences, expertise and strong interest in exceeding the goals of Kinder Morgan make me an exceptional candidate for your welder position. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you further in a meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Albert Flynn

Enc. Resume
Matt Holmes  
22 North Street  
Alexandria, VA 79301  
(444) 555-6778  
email@email.com

April 1, 2019  
Mr. Christopher Dunst  
Human Resources Manager  
ABC Car Company  
829 S Columbus Ave  
Alexandria, VA 73910

RE: Automotive Technician Position
Dear Mr. Dunst:

I wish to apply for the Automotive Technician position advertised on your website. I possess the vehicle repairing expertise, the manual dexterity, and the problem-solving skills that are so essential for completing automotive technician work effectively. As a technical-minded and experienced automobile repairing professional, I believe I would make a valuable contribution to ABC Car Company.

As indicated on my resume, I am extremely proficient in overhauling engines, managing tune-ups, and relining and adjusting brakes. I possess a clear understanding of tire balancing and steering gears, and I am able to diagnose basic and complex problems in all types of engines and resolve the problem correctly and effectively. I am also knowledgeable of advanced automotive diagnosis technologies.

As a worker, I am a strong team player and work well with
coworkers and supervisors. I am also flexible and able to work long hours when needed for a project and to come in for additional shifts.

I am confident that my experiences, expertise and strong interest in exceeding the goals of ABC Car Company make me an exceptional candidate for your technician position. I look forward to discussing my qualifications with you further in a meeting.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Matt Holmes
(Enc. Resume)
PART XI

WEEK 10
Final Quiz Grammar Review

This is a brief refresher of our grammar/mechanics lessons this term to help you prepare for the final quiz

Capitalization

• Always capitalize the following: the letter I; the start of a new sentence; and proper nouns (names, places, brands, etc.)

Possessive S/Apostrophes

• Use apostrophe S to show possession: “The car’s engine overheated.” (a single car) OR “The cars’ engines all overheated.” (multiple cars).

Quotation Marks

• Direct speech: “I’m doing very well,” he said. OR Direct quotes: According to the study, “Fifty percent of applicants scored higher than last year” (citation).

Misspelled Words

• Review the commonly misspelled words list: definitely/defiantly, to/two/too, weather/whether, through/threw, etc.
PART XII
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR WRITING/TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION
General Design Concepts

Designing Reader-Centered Pages and Documents

You build your communications out of visual elements: the dark marks of your words, sentences, and paragraphs against the light background of the page, as well as your drawings and graphs and tables. Your readers see the visual design of these elements before they read and understand your message. And what they see has a powerful effect on the success of your communications, on its usability and persuasiveness.

Here are ways that good design enhances usability.

- Good design helps readers understand your information.
- Good page design helps readers locate information quickly.
- Good design helps readers notice highly important content.

Here are some ways good design affects readers' attitudes, thereby increasing a communication's persuasiveness.

- Good design encourages readers to feel good about the communication itself.
- Good design encourages readers to feel good about the communication's subject matter.

A READER-CENTERED APPROACH TO DESIGN

Because page design can have such a significant impact on your communication's usability and persuasiveness, you should approach design in the same reader-centered manner that you use when
drafting text and graphics. Think continuously about your readers, including who they are, what they want from your communication, and the context in which they will be reading.

DESIGN ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNICATION

It is helpful to think about the building blocks of a page design in the way that professional graphic designers do. When they look at a page, they see six basic elements.

- **Text.** Paragraphs and sentences.
- **Headings and titles.** Labels for sections of your communication.
- **Graphics.** Drawings, tables, photographs, and so on – including their captions.
- **White space.** Blank areas.
- **Headers and footers.** The items, such as page numbers, that occur at the top or bottom of each page in a multipage document.
- **Physical features.** These include paper, which may take many shapes and sizes, and bindings, which come in many forms.

CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION

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INFORMATION

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Basic Design and Readability in Publications

The way a text looks matters to a reader, so it should matter to a writer. Letters, reports, and blogs are more than just words on a page or a screen. How ideas are arranged and delivered in physical form, whether electronically or on paper, can make reading seem intimidating, confusing, or downright unfriendly, even if the content itself is perfect. Your text is like a room for your ideas. Sometimes you want readers to get in and get out quickly, but often, you want them to sit down and make themselves comfortable, to put their feet up and stay awhile. Whatever the case, you should be in control of the reader’s experience.

And most readers are a lot like TV viewers with remote controls. In a moment, their attention is diverted to another channel if something about your content puts them off. It’s important to get their attention and hold it. Good content is a key part of this, of course, but the visual presentation of your content matters too. Reading is a difficult, cognitively demanding task, so if your design helps make your readers’ journey through the text easier, you will hold their attention longer. Give readers reasons to linger, and they will.
Good document design is both science and art. The particular design of a document—what it contains, what color scheme it follows, what alignment strategy it reflects, and so on—is the result of a series of choices made by the designer. It takes a long time to master the finer points of design, and this chapter won’t turn you into a designer, but it will offer some simple ways of thinking that will help you strategize about how to make your document intuitive and reader friendly—easy to scan, search, and read.

This is not a chapter on design per se; rather, it will familiarize you with a few basic truths and a way of thinking that all designers know well. Whether you’re typing up a memo on new safety policies at work, producing a newsletter for your community group, or putting together a booklet describing the new app you just finished and wish to market, you need to think about a few basic elements of document design.
ACTIVITY: Discuss texts that you have found intimidating or hard to read because of their layout or
appearance. What exactly made the text difficult to read?

You already engage in some basic document design practices. For instance, when you format an academic essay, you center your title and regularly break to a new paragraph, which signals to the reader that it’s time for a breather, the content is shifting slightly, or you are moving on to a completely new topic. You illustrate blogs, Web pages, and PowerPoint slides with photos and graphics, animations, or videos. Even small elements of your writing help guide readers: indentation, changes in type style (bold, italics, underline), or the punctuation at the end of a sentence.

Professional writers, especially those who work for well-funded web sites and mass-market print publications (like newspapers and magazines) are lucky enough to have the services of artists, graphic designers, skilled photographers, and layout experts. But most of us just want to have a cooler-looking blog, a more professional-looking report, or an eBay listing that doesn’t make buyers suspect our credibility.

This chapter briefly summarizes some fundamental concepts that you should consider as you revise and shape your text, whether it is in print or electronic form. Then, you will read about and see examples of some basic principles of document design that allow writers to combine graphic elements and text to convey a message to an audience.
CHAPTER ATTRIBUTION INFORMATION

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