

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PAPERS

by

Raymond P. Fisk

and

Jerry R. Goolsby

Edited by
Professor Lisa A. Palumbo
for use in
All Marketing Classes

June 17, 2008

University of New Orleans

Note: Where possible these guidelines were prepared following the instructions on these pages. However, these instructions are single-spaced to save pages and money. Your papers must be *double-spaced*. Some of these paragraphs are shorter than three sentences for emphasis. Your paragraphs will have three or more sentences.

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PAPERS

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Presentation of the Written Narrative | 1 |
| Sequence | 1 |
| The Cover Page | 1 |
| Table of Contents | 2 |
| The Executive Summary | 2 |
| Structure of the Main Text | 2 |
| Footnotes and Endnotes | 3 |
| Referencing Sources in the Body of the Paper | 3 |
| Citations in the Text | 3 |
| Multiple Authors | 3 |
| Specific Quotes | 3 |
| Plagiarism vs. Paraphrasing | 4 |
| The References Page | 4 |
| Books | 4 |
| Journals | 5 |
| Magazines or Newspapers | 5 |
| Conference Proceedings | 5 |
| Personal Interview | 5 |
| Government Documents | 6 |
| Electronic Sources | 6 |
| Miscellaneous Works | 6 |
| Multiple Citations | 6 |
| Reprints | 7 |
| Secondary Citations | 7 |
| Appendices | 7 |
| Tables, Charts, and Graphs | 7 |
| Mechanical Issues | 7 |
| Sentences and Paragraphs | 8 |
| Binding | 8 |
| Fonts | 8 |
| Spacing | 8 |
| Hyphenation | 8 |
| Margins | 8 |
| Pagination | 9 |
| Style and Grammatical Errors | 9 |
| Conclusion | 10 |
| Appendix A | 11 |
| Point-Saver Checklist | 11 |

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING PAPERS

Introduction

Guidelines for preparing papers are established in this manuscript. There is no universally accepted method for preparing papers for submission to professors. Students often find this to be a major source of frustration. Unfortunately, many students have never been taught any method for preparing papers. We created these guidelines to avoid having to assign bad grades to students who don't know how to prepare papers. Nothing is magical about these guidelines and students should not use these guidelines in another class without first asking the professor in that class.

College professors require college students to demonstrate an acceptable level of writing skills. Nonetheless, many professors and business people point to the lack of written communication skills as a major shortcoming of college students. These guidelines will help you enhance your writing ability by giving you a methodology for preparing professional reports.

The guidelines are developed around the following general structure. First, the presentation of the written narrative is discussed. Second, general mechanical issues are addressed. Third, some common style and grammatical errors are listed.

Presentation of the Written Narrative

This section highlights ways that students should structure their presentation of the narrative. Topics covered include: sequence, cover page, executive summary, structure of the main text, footnotes and endnotes, referencing sources in the body of the paper, the references page, and appendices.

Sequence

Following a logical sequence is critical. The paper should follow this general outline:

1. The Front Matter
 - a. Cover Page
 - b. Table of Contents (p. i)
 - c. List of Tables (p. ii, if used)
 - d. List of Figures (p. iii, if used)
 - e. Executive Summary (p. ii (or iv))
2. The Main Text
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Body of Paper (Don't use this label as a heading)
 - c. Conclusion
3. The Back Matter
 - a. Footnotes and Endnotes (if used)
 - b. References
 - c. Appendix or Appendices (if used)

Your paper may not contain all parts of these three sections but it must follow the sequence explicitly. *Sections 1.a, 1.b, 1.e, 2.a, 2.b, 2.c, and 3.b are required in all papers.*

The Cover Page

Every paper should have a cover page. It should present the title of the paper, the author's name(s), the professor's name, the course title, the date, and the name of the institution.

All information should be centered on the cover page. The title should be placed **3 inches** from the top of the page. You may use a larger font and/or a fancy font on the title. The name of the university should be placed **2.5 inches** from the bottom of the page. The author's name(s) should be evenly spaced beneath the title. The course information should be grouped together and double-spaced. The date and university name should be grouped together and double-spaced. See the cover page of these guidelines for an example of these instructions.

Table of Contents

The table of contents should list every heading and subheading contained in the paper. Each heading and subheading should be followed by a line of periods that end with the page number for that heading. The page number should be positioned “flush right” to avoid a jagged right margin. Most word processors can accommodate these instructions and many have procedures that significantly simplify the creation of a table of contents. See the table of contents of these guidelines (p. i) for an example of these instructions.

The Executive Summary

“Out there in the real world” managers will seldom be willing to read a lengthy manuscript or report. Most business managers only want very specific information. Executive summaries are included so a busy executive can, in a short time, determine the essence of the document. If the summary triggers an interest, then the executive can continue to read and determine where in the document to look for the information desired. The executive summary should succinctly describe the purpose of the report and all major topics addressed.

The executive summary is normally no more than one page in length. It is not a one paragraph abstract. Where there are page constraints placed on the report, the executive summary does not count as a page. The executive summary is numbered as page “ii,” “iii,” or “iv” depending on whether lists of tables and figures are included.

Structure of the Main Text

A common weakness in students’ presentation of the narrative is the lack of structure. The narrative should be presented in a fashion such that an individual looking for a specific item of information can locate it rapidly. In addition, the writer must presume that the reader approaches the narrative with less interest than the reader of a Stephen King novel. Furthermore, structure enhances the clarity and comprehension of the text. There is an old and very simple description of the desired structure for expository writing or speaking that is easy to remember: “Tell them what you are going to tell them,” “Tell them,” and “Tell them what you told them.”

The *introduction* of the paper should identify and explain the paper’s topic, and explain exactly what is to be presented, why it is being presented, and in what sequence it is to be presented. The sequence is best explained in a plan of procedure paragraph at the end of the introduction.

In the *body of the paper*, the writer should remind the reader where the narrative is in the sequence of the paper. The narrative should be developed in a logical, systematic fashion as a person would develop a persuasive argument. Be careful to *follow any special instructions from your professor* about the content or structure of the body of the paper. Also, the body of the paper must properly reflect the subject of the class and the subject of the paper. It is amazing to a professor when a student turns in a paper for a marketing class and the paper contains no marketing content.

The presentation of the narrative should use liberally (but not overuse) headings and subheadings. Table 1 displays the commonly accepted levels of headings in descending order. Examples of the first three levels are used in these Paper Guidelines.

It is not necessary to use all four types of headings; however, the order must be followed. For example, you may only need headings 1, 2 and 3. All topics having the same level should be of similar importance in the narrative. If this is not the case, more heading levels are needed.

Table 1: Levels of Headings

| Heading Level | Appearance |
|---|--|
| 1. Centered heading | Upper and lower case letters (may be bolded) |
| 2. Major side heading (flush with left margin) | Not underlined (may be bolded) |
| 3. Minor side heading (flush with left margin) | Underlined |
| 4. Paragraph heading (beginning of paragraph, followed by a period) | Underlined |

The *conclusion* should remind the reader what the purpose of the paper was, summarize the main points of the paper, and note how the written narrative has accomplished its objectives.

Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes and endnotes should be avoided. Only when a clarification of information in the text is explicitly needed should a footnote or endnote be used. In business publications, endnotes are preferred to footnotes. A raised number should be placed in the text at the point where the endnote is referenced. A separate page entitled “Endnotes” follows the last page of text with the notes appropriately numbered.

Referencing Sources in the Body of the Paper

In most cases, a properly prepared paper must use outside sources. *Proper referencing requires that you identify your sources both in the text of your paper and at the end of your paper.* The following are general guidelines to follow for citations in the body of the paper:

Citations in the Text

Citations in the text of the paper should be listed by the author’s last name (or names if there is more than one author) and the year of publication enclosed in parentheses. Normally, the citation will go at the end of the sentence (or in a logical sentence break). If practical, the citation should stand by a punctuation mark (usually a period). Example:

The expanding interest in services marketing is partially related to economic trends such as the deregulation of various service industries and the growth of franchising (Lovelock 1984).

If you use the author’s name within the sentence, there is no need to repeat the name in the citation; just use the year of publication in parentheses:

Grönroos (1985) has suggested that services are performances that are evaluated for the technical and functional excellence of the service worker and his/her support.

If there is no author identified in the citation, then you should list the publisher’s name instead:

One retailer that has successfully used extensive sales training is Nordstrom (Advertising Age 1987).

Multiple Authors

For multiple authors, use the last names for up to three authors; but, if you have four or more authors, use the first author’s name and indicate the other authors with “et al.” Examples:

Other contemporary issues facing services include efforts to personalize services (Surprenant and Solomon 1985).

Pricing services is a formidable task because calculating the underlying costs of services is difficult (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry 1985).

The often subtle, yet pervasive influence of a service’s physical setting cannot be overlooked (Lovelock et al. 1981).

Specific Quotes

If a particular paragraph, sentence, or equation is quoted, the page number(s) should be placed within the parentheses:

“The quality of services, and their ability to satisfy the consumer, depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs.” (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

In some situations, you may prefer to skip part of a quote. This is done with the use of three periods (...) marking the position of the text that is skipped:

“The quality of services ... depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs.” (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

Long quotes should be kept to a minimum and should not exceed one paragraph from the original source. Any long quote requiring more than four lines of text should be *indented on both sides* (instead of placing quotation marks on both sides) and single spaced as follows:

Although segmentation is applied in both goods and service companies, the consequences of reaching an inappropriate segment with part of the advertising are less serious for goods than for services. If the wrong group of consumers buys our detergent, for example, then we don't really care; we still generate sales. (Bateson 1989, p. 399).

Plagiarism vs. Paraphrasing

The words and thoughts of others must always be properly referenced by the writer. To do otherwise is plagiarism. *Plagiarism* occurs when students try to pass off someone's exact words as their own. Plagiarism is a very serious breach of academic integrity and may result in expulsion from the university.

Paraphrasing is the proper way to restate the work of another person without plagiarizing that work. When you paraphrase you are stating the essential ideas from a passage of text. You must still cite the original source because the paraphrased version is derived from that source. As an example, the previous quote from Bateson is paraphrased below:

Reaching an inappropriate segment with an advertising message is less troublesome for goods companies than services companies. Goods companies still make sales even if the wrong consumers buy their product (Bateson 1989).

Note that after paraphrasing the quote from Bateson the basic meaning of the sentences was the same, but the new sentences are different from the original sentences. Note also that the paraphrased version was shorter and simpler. When paraphrasing, only an occasional short phrase may be repeated without risk of plagiarism. The phrase "reaching an inappropriate segment" was repeated. Had any more than one or two phrases been repeated it would have been far better to do the sentences as a partial quote with the appropriate quotation marks. As an example, the previous Zeithaml (1981) quote may be done as a partial quote:

Service quality will "depend not only on how well the service provider performs, but also on how well the consumer performs." (Zeithaml 1981, p. 187).

As a rule of thumb, when you find it hard to paraphrase an author's words then you should quote all or part of the words. Do not take the risk of getting caught plagiarizing!

The References Page

All sources referenced in the body of your paper should be listed on the references page. The complete reference list should be typed on a separate page(s) following the written text of your paper. The reference page should be titled "References." The page number is placed at the bottom center of the first reference page, and the remainder of the page numbers are in the upper right hand corner. The page number follows the sequence from the text.

The body of each reference should be double-spaced with a hanging indentation of a 2 inch or 5 spaces. A hanging indentation means that the last name is placed against the left margin and all later lines of the citation are indented.

All references are to be listed alphabetically, with the author's last name first, followed by their first names and middle initial. If the reference has no author, the work should be alphabetized by the publication's name. The name is followed by the publication date in parentheses. Next, the title of the work appears, the source of the work, and the page number(s).

Several methods of citing the work of others are available. These instructions are adapted from the referencing instructions of the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Further examples of good referencing style may be found by examining recent issues of these journals or by consulting the style sheet periodically published in these journals.

See the following examples for additional details:

Books

Single author reference for books (include author's name, publication date, book title (*in italics*), location of publisher and name of publisher):

Pirsig, Robert M. (1974), *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values*, New York: Bantam Books.

Multiple author reference:

Tapscott, Don and Art Caston (1993), *Paradigm Shift: The New Promise of Information Technology*, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Single and multiple author references for an article or case in a book edited by another author(s):

Bitner, Mary Jo and Stephen W. Brown (1992), "Services Marketing," in *AMA Management Handbook*, Rod Willis, ed., Chicago: American Management Association.

Books with no author:

Standard Rate and Data Service (1987), *Business Publication Rates and Data: Direct-Response International*, 69 (5), May 24, 1612.

Edited books:

Brown, Stephen W., Evert Gummesson, Bo Edvardsson, and Bengtove Gustavsson, eds. (1991), *Service Quality: Multidisciplinary and Multinational Perspectives*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Journals

Single and multiple author references for journals (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of journal (in italics), volume number, month of publication, and the page numbers):

Bitner, Mary Jo (1992), "Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees," *Journal of Marketing*, 56 (April), 57-71.

Magazines or Newspapers

Single and multiple author references for magazines and newspapers (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of magazine or newspaper (in italics), month and day of publication, and the page numbers):

Engardio, Pete (1994), "Why Sweet Deals are Going Sour in China," *Business Week*, December 19, 50-51.

Fisk, Raymond P. (1995), "New Insights on the Peter Principle: My Years as an Interim Chair," *Wall Street Journal*, January 7, 1-2.

Magazine or Newspaper articles with no authors should be alphabetized by the name of the publication (include complete name of magazine or newspaper, publication date, article title, month and day of publication, and the page numbers):

Advertising Age (1987), "The 100 Leading National Advertisers," November 29, 130-132.

Conference Proceedings

Single and multiple author references for conference proceedings (include author's name, publication date, article title, complete name of conference publication (in italics), editors' names (all of them), location of publisher, name of publisher and the page numbers):

Dabholkar, Pratibha A. (1991), "Using Technology-Based Self-Service Options to Improve Perceived Service Quality," in *1991 AMA Educators' Proceedings: Enhancing Knowledge Development in Marketing*, Mary C. Gilly, F. Robert Dwyer, Thomas W. Leigh, Alan J. Dubinsky, Martha L. Richins, David Curry, Alladi Venkatesh, Masaaki Kotabe, Ruby Roy Dholakia and Gerald E. Hills, eds., Chicago, IL: American Marketing Association, 534-535.

Personal Interview

When listing a personal interview (whether in person or by telephone), the format should include the words "Personal Interview" or "Personal Telephone Interview" followed by the person's title, the organization they represent, and the exact date and location of the interview:

Garcia, Manny (1998), Personal Interview, President, Davgar Restaurants, Inc., February 1, Orlando, FL.

Dunlap, Dennis D. (2000), Personal Telephone Interview, Chief Executive Officer, American Marketing Association, January 9, Chicago, IL.

Government Documents

Government documents should be listed by the name of the government agency that produced the report:

U.S. Bureau of the Census (1983), *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1984*, 104th edition, Washington, DC.

Electronic Sources

The citing of electronic sources is rather new and widely accepted formats have not been adopted, yet. In the meantime, we will use the following format: author or source, (year), title, (type of medium), electronic address or access, date accessed (or date posted). This format should be used for any electronic source (audiotape, CD Rom database, e-mail list serve, videotape, web site, etc.):

MarketingPower.com (2002), American Marketing Association, (Internet), <http://www.marketingpower.com>, April 5.

Elmar (2002), "Discussion: What is Brand After All," (E-Mail), elmar@columbia.org, March 29.

New Orleans CityBusiness (2002), Book of Lists, (CD Rom), Disk 1, August 12.

Miscellaneous Works

References to Ph.D. dissertations, class notes, working papers, brochures, corporate seminars, company documents, annual reports, etc., should be included in the reference list without underlining:

Lewis, John Robert (1992), "A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis of Prospect Theory in a Services Marketing Setting," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Fisk, Raymond P. (1997), "Marketing Research Class Notes," January 28, University of New Orleans.

Goolsby, Jerry R. (1990), "Nonsurgical Alternatives to Lobotomy: A Report From the Wasteland," Oklahoma State University, Working Paper.

Greater New Orleans Chamber of Commerce (1999), "Welcome to New Orleans," Brochure.

Hibernia Bank (1999), "Our Financial Services for Small Businesses," Corporate Seminar.

Walt Disney Corporation (1995), "Traditions 101," Company Document.

Xerox Corporation (1998), Annual Report.

As a rule, miscellaneous works should not be major reference sources for your paper. Any exceptions to this rule must be approved by your professor.

Multiple Citations

If an author appears more than once, substitute a one-inch line for the author's name. If a team of authors appears more than once, substitute the line for each name that repeats:

Green, Paul E. and Vithala R. Rao (1971), "Conjoint Measurement for Quantifying Judgmental Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8 (August), 355-363.

_____, and Yoram Wind (1973), *Multiattribute Decisions in Marketing: A Measurement Approach*, Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.

_____, _____, and Arun K. Jain (1972), "Benefit Bundle Analysis," *Journal of Advertising Research*, 12 (April), 31-36.

If two works published in the same year by the same author are cited, they must be differentiated. The convention is to alphabetize the works by title and then to place an "a" beside the year on the one article and a "b" by the year on the other, e.g., (1977a, 1977b). The references in the text of the paper are made in the same fashion.

Wind, Yoram (1977a), "Brand Loyalty and Vulnerability," in *Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior*, Arch Woodside, Jagdish N. Sheth, and Peter D. Bennett, eds., New York: American Elsevier.

_____ (1977b), "The Perception of the Firm's Competitive Position," in *Behavioral Models of Market Analysis: Foundations for Marketing Action*, Francesco M. Nicosia and Yoram Wind, eds., Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.

Reprints

If the source you are citing is a reprint, the original citation is listed and then the source of the reprint is listed:

Grönroos, Christian (1983), "Innovative Marketing Strategies in Organization Structures for Service Firms," in *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, Berry, Leonard L., Shostack, G. Lynn, and Upah, Gregory D., eds., Chicago: American Marketing Association, 9-21. Reprinted in Bateson, John E. G. (1989), *Managing Services Marketing: Text and Readings*. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 506-521.

Surprenant, Carol F. and Michael R. Solomon (1987), "Predictability and Personalization in the Service Encounter," *Journal of Marketing*, 51 (April), 86-96. Reprinted in Bateson, John E. G. (1989), *Managing Services Marketing: Text and Readings*. Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 184-197.

Secondary Citations

A secondary citation occurs when the writer is quoting or paraphrasing a source that was cited in a publication by someone else. *Secondary citations should be avoided*, if possible. The writer should always find and cite the original sources rather than secondary sources. However, if a secondary citation is unavoidable, the following format would be used:

Green, Paul E. and Vithala R. Rao (1971), "Conjoint Measurement for Quantifying Judgmental Data," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 8 (August), 355-363. As cited in Lovelock, Christopher H. and Charles B. Weinberg (1989), *Marketing Challenges: Cases and Exercises*, Second Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc.

Appendices

Some items that you create for your paper may be too lengthy to place them in the body of the text. These items can include copies of important documents, technical notes, tables, charts and graphs. Such items are placed in the Appendix. All appendices should be titled in sequence beginning with Appendix A. Each page of the Appendix is numbered in sequence continuing from the reference page(s). Only appendices that are referenced and discussed in the text should be included.

Tables, Charts, and Graphs

Where appropriate, tables, charts, and graphs should be used to summarize or clarify the text. Often visual representations can greatly clarify many pages of text. Many business executives strongly recommend students become familiar with the process of developing these visual support mechanisms.

Tables, charts, and graphs should be clearly labeled with a centered title containing the number of the exhibit in a sequence and its subject. For example, the second table might be labeled, "Table 2: A Statistical Summary of the Population of Orlando." It should be placed on a separate page in the appendix and should be centered on the page from top to bottom. Refer to visual supports in the text by their title (e.g., Table 2). If possible, the visual supports should be presented in the same physical direction as regular text, so the reader does not have to turn the page.

If the visual support takes less than one-fourth of a page, place it in the body of the paper as close as possible to where it is discussed in the text.

Mechanical Issues

This section discusses instructions that you should follow in your paper for several mechanical issues: sentences and paragraphs, binding, fonts, spacing, hyphenation, margins, and pagination.

Sentences and Paragraphs

There are two essential units of thought in written communication: the sentence and the paragraph. Effective and persuasive communication requires well-structured sentences and paragraphs. It is very hard to be a success in business if you can't express your thoughts in clear, written English.

Be careful to ensure that you have created complete sentences. You should carefully edit each and every sentence after you write it. Few things signal sloppy work more quickly than incomplete sentences or poorly written sentences.

Even greater care must be taken to ensure that each of your paragraphs is a cohesive unit of thought. For expository writing (as opposed to paper guidelines), a good paragraph has a beginning, middle, and end. *This translates into a minimum of three sentences in each of your paragraphs.*

Binding

The preferred method of binding your paper is with a carefully placed *staple* in the upper left hand corner. If your paper is too thick to staple, then you may bind it with a large paper clip or other metal clasp. Fancy packaging will not improve your grade.

Fonts

Select a font that is either in *11 or 12 point*. Larger or smaller point sizes will not be acceptable. The easiest font to read is Times Roman. [These guidelines are printed in Times Roman, 10 point.] The hardest fonts to read are typewriter fonts like Courier or Prestige or novelty fonts like Flintstones or Shotgun.

Spacing

The lines of text of all papers should be *double-spaced*. This includes the Executive Summary, the body of the paper, and the References. It does not include the Table of Contents. Double-spacing your paper leaves the reader space to make comments.

All headings should be separated by one double space (two single spaces) before and after. All headings or titles containing more than one line should be single-spaced. A double space should precede and follow a visual support (table, graph, chart, etc.) placed within the text.

All paragraphs should be indented a ½ inch. Spacing between paragraphs should also be double-spaced (two single spaces).

One space should follow every period at the end of a sentence. Also, one space should follow every colon. Prior tradition in typing was to use two spaces, but one space is becoming preferred with the use of proportional fonts.

All sections of the paper should follow each other with a minimum of wasted space. Don't leave half of a page empty in the middle of the paper.

Don't leave *orphans* or *widows*! At least two lines of text must remain together when going to the following page. That is, do not leave one line of a paragraph's text at the bottom (orphans) or top (widows) of a page. The only exception is a situation that is unavoidable (e.g., a paragraph containing three lines). Most word processing programs can automatically manage orphans and widows. Turn this feature on!

Hyphenation

In general, hyphenation of whole words between lines should be avoided or at least minimized. This does not apply to words like "one-third," "twenty-five," etc.

Margins

Papers should have *one-inch margins* surrounding the text, i.e. one inch at the top, bottom, left and right sides. All text should be printed inside this one-inch border. The page number should be outside the one inch margin. The text should begin two lines below the page number. These guidelines are prepared in this manner.

Margins at the bottom of a page may occasionally need to be **more** than one inch to avoid leaving an orphan at the bottom of the page.

Margins should be left justified or fully justified (like these guidelines). Paper should be 8.5" x 11," except for large visual aids that are folded to the proper size.

Pagination

With only a few exceptions, all pages in the paper should be numbered. The cover page is not numbered. The Table of Contents is given page "i" (Roman numeral I) centered at the bottom of the page. Each following page before the first page of the text is given the next Roman numeral in sequence.

Using the header feature of your word processing software, set the pagination on your first page of text so that *an Arabic number 1 is placed in the upper right hand corner of the page (outside the one inch margins)*. The text on each page should begin two lines below the page number. All of the following pages should be numbered in the same way.

Style and Grammatical Errors

Errors made in style and grammar seriously damage the credibility of the writer(s) and the entire research project. No substitute exists for careful and thoughtful proofreading of any document before submission. This requires that the document be prepared far enough in advance that corrections can be made in time to meet deadlines. The lack of adequate proofreading is the most common source of student's writing problems (i.e., the writer hurriedly prepares the document and does a sloppy job.) An effective tip on proofing is to read the paper backward. Whenever possible, other individuals should be asked to proofread the document as they may spot errors not detected by the writer.

Students are urged to purchase a copy of *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White (small paperback) for consultation about grammar, punctuation and style. Another very valuable reference is the *Handbook of Technical Writing* by Charles T. Brusaw, Gerald J. Alred and Walter E. Oliu (large paperback).

The following is a list of *common and inexcusable errors* often committed by students in their writing:

1. Misspelled words are hard to forgive in this day of word processors and spell checkers.
2. Normally, possessive nouns should contain an apostrophe, e.g., "Bitner's."
3. The term "a lot" is two words and is very ambiguous, almost meaningless.
4. Verb and subject tense do not match, e.g., the data is analyzed.
5. Absence or misuse of commas.
6. No use of semicolons or misuse of semicolons.
7. Use of the indefinite "you," e.g., "When you hire folks like him, you could get burned."
8. Use of they, them, this and other pronouns that could reference more than one noun. Beginning sentences with such pronouns is weak, because the pronoun must modify the entire preceding sentence.
9. Lack of specificity and use of ambiguous terms and expressions, e.g., the foreseeable future.
10. Failure to be specific or "say what you mean and mean what you say."
11. Constructing two very short sentences that could easily be combined into one sentence.
12. Beginning several sentences in a row with the same word or phrase. Such structure is only acceptable when done deliberately and sparingly for emphasis.
13. Starting almost every sentence with "there."
14. Do not start sentences with numbers unless they are written out, e.g., "Twenty-five people..."
15. Using double negatives, e.g., "We didn't do nothing to deserve this."
16. Writing in passive rather than active voice.
17. Use of the past tense exclusively; avoidance of the present tense.

18. Paragraphs that contain only one or two sentences. You are not writing for a newspaper. Your paragraphs need more content and structure than is possible in one or two sentences.
19. Paragraphs that contain several non-related thoughts. In business writing style, paragraph breaks should be used frequently, especially when thoughts change.
20. Using a conversational tone, e.g., “Oh, you know what I mean.”
21. Sentences that contain a string of several pronouns, e.g., “They did it to them so they would know that he could do business with them.”
22. Splitting an infinitive, e.g., to vigorously investigate. The correct form is to investigate vigorously.
23. Using the words “firstly,” “secondly,” and “thirdly” instead of “first,” “second,” and “third.”
24. Avoid writing in the first person, singular (I) and plural (we).
25. Avoid the use of colloquial expressions, e.g., “fit as a fiddle.” If a colloquial expression is unavoidable, then show it in quotation marks.
26. Using colloquial two-word verbs, e.g., talk over (discuss), look into (investigate), and throw out (discard).
27. Ending sentences with prepositions, e.g., “...seeing where he is at.”
28. Using “which” when “that” is more appropriate. “Which” should be used with nonrestrictive clauses that do not change the meaning of the basic sentence. “That” should be used with restrictive clauses. “That” is often overused. One per sentence.
29. Ending sentences with abbreviations or using abbreviations as if they were regular words. Example: “Reps” is not a word. The word is “representatives.”
30. Using the word “feel” when the correct term is “think.” Learn to distinguish between emotions and thoughts.
31. General sloppiness! Too many papers are submitted with penciled in corrections, pages not numbered, no references, improper margins, etc.

Conclusion

Detailed instructions for presenting the written narrative were given in these guidelines. In addition, numerous mechanical issues were reviewed. Finally, common style and grammatical errors were identified.

Students usually have the ability to write well, but fail to use it. No substitute can be made for careful diligence, thoughtfulness, and adequate time allotment. We strongly urge you to acquire, develop, and polish your written and verbal communication skills before entering your professional careers. We sincerely hope that this brief document will aid in that process.

Appendix A

Point-Saver Checklist

- _____ Have you correctly bound your paper?
- _____ Have you done the cover page and table of contents correctly?
- _____ Have you correctly sequenced your paper?
- _____ Have you written an executive summary, introduction and conclusion?
- _____ Have you double-spaced your paper (except where instructed otherwise)?
- _____ Have you correctly spaced headings, subheadings, visual supports, and long quotations?
- _____ Have you used the correct indentations for paragraphs and long quotes?
- _____ Have you been careful not to leave widows or orphans?
- _____ Have you used the correct one inch margins?
- _____ Have you used paper that is 8 1/2" x 11" in size (except where allowed)?
- _____ Has your paper been printed in the correct point size (10 or 12, 12 is preferred)?
- _____ Is the print quality of your paper legible and acceptable by the specified standards?
- _____ Have you avoided (or minimized) the use of hyphenation?
- _____ Are all pages in your paper properly paginated?
- _____ Have you carefully edited your sentences and paragraphs?
- _____ Have you been careful to paraphrase rather than plagiarize?
- _____ Have you referenced all sources that you used within the text (and only those sources) of your paper?
- _____ Have you used the proper form for citations used in the text of your paper?
- _____ Have you created a separate references page in your paper and titled it "References"?
- _____ Are your references listed in alphabetical order beginning with the author's last name (when applicable)?
- _____ Have you used the proper form for referencing the books, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc. that you have used as sources for your paper?
- _____ Have you carefully reviewed the list of style and grammatical errors?