

Technical Writing Assignment:

Problem Description and Research (10%)

Due Date for Draft: uploaded to Moodle before class on Oct. 30/Nov 1, depending on your course section for in-class Peer Review workshop.

Due Date for Final Draft: Nov. 6 for Section B/Nov. 8 for Section C

Overview:

The fourth assignment asks you to write a problem description and annotated list of references.

This technical writing assignment will provide the necessary background context and research for the next Technical Writing Assignment which will take the form of a Feasibility or Recommendation Report.

To come up with a good topic for your problem statement and annotated list of references, you may want to think ahead to your eventual feasibility or recommendation report.

We will be learning about recommendation reports and feasibility studies later in the course but if you wish to scan ahead you can refer to this reference:

<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/technicalwriting/chapter/longreports/>

For this first assignment, concentrate on the preliminary stages of the project: the problem statement and the annotated list of references.

Learning Objectives and Goals:

For this proposal assignment, you will also learn, practice and apply the following:

- Analytical thinking and reading
- Advanced research and writing skills
- Critical evaluation of research and information
- Write clear descriptions and explanations
- Thinking about how to design and present your material so that it is clear and easy for readers to understand
- Self-assessing your writing and using your assessment to guide improvements in your work.

PART 1: PROBLEM DESCRIPTION MEMO

Your problem description needs to be written in the Memo genre form. The Memo should be 2-3 pages and needs to follow the APA formatting style.

Please refer to your notes from class today for more on Memos.

You may also refer to this additional resource if you need more information on Memos:

<https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/technicalwriting/chapter/correspondence/>

Cover the following points in your problem description:

- 1. INTRODUCTION TO PROVIDE CONTEXT.** Identify the audience and situation for the initial problem statement and (long term) the final recommendation report. Where or for whom, specifically, does the problem exist? Who will pay for the research costs? Who will review the problem and (down the line) your recommended solutions? Who has the authority to act on your suggestions? What is your relationship to that person? What is your position as a writer? (E.g., are you a paid consultant? are you a member of the company?) What will your reader(s) need to know? How will you establish your authority and convince readers that you are the best person to research and solve the problem you identify?
- 2. DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM** that you have identified in detail. Be specific.
- 3. EXPLAIN HOW** the problem affects company operations or costs. Be specific.
- 4. EXPLAIN WHY** the problem requires a solution. Be specific.
- Give the **BACKGROUND** of the problem or situation. If a problem is an old one, point out when it began and mention any previous attempts to solve it.
- Indicate the **PURPOSE** of the recommendation report that you will eventually write.
- 7. INTRODUCE THE ANNOTATED LIST OF REFERENCES** by explaining what you have researched to date, how you chose your sources of data, and what else you plan to research for the final project.

PART 2: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Purdue OWL for information on the APA format for the list of references.

An annotated list of references describes or evaluates the subject and scope of several research sources (scholarly articles, magazine articles, newspaper reports, book chapters, etc.) that you think will be useful for your recommendation report.

Use APA format for the list of references. Cite at least five current articles (nothing older than three years) that reflect a *range* of sources. The annotations should include at least four

sentences. The content of the four sentences is described below. You'll find an example after the description.

THE 4-SENTENCE PATTERN OF ANNOTATION

- **SENTENCE 1:** An accurate, specific, and descriptive verb (e.g., "argues", "claims," "explains") and a clause that reports the author's thesis/main purpose. (See example below.)
- **SENTENCE 2:** A brief but accurate explanation of how the author develops or supports the thesis, usually in the same order as the main points in the source. (See example below.)
- **SENTENCE 3.** A statement of the author's purpose that answers the question "Why did the author bother to write this?" (See example below.)
- **SENTENCE 4.** A description of the intended audience for the source you are citing. (See example below.)

SAMPLE APA CITATION AND ANNOTATION

Trudeau, P. E. (1992, September). "Trudeau speaks out". *Maclean's*, 22-26.

[**SENTENCE 1**] Former Prime Minister of Canada, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, argues against Quebec's demands for the Charlottetown accord. [**SENTENCE 2**] He uses examples from past Québécois negotiations to illustrate his claims that Quebec uses guilt tactics and blackmail to get Canada to agree to its demands. [**SENTENCE 3**] Trudeau paints a less than favorable view of Quebec's history to create sympathy for the Canadian government's position on the Charlottetown accord. [**SENTENCE 4**] *Maclean's* is a moderate Canadian news magazine (like *Time* in the U.S.) whose readers are generally high school and/or college-educated and reasonably informed about national events; the readers will recognize Trudeau's authority as former prime minister of Canada, and many will automatically accept his view on the Charlottetown accord because of his past position.

Here is an additional resource for annotated bibliographies:

<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/annotatedbibliography>

REVISION CHECKLIST

At your in-class peer review session (Oct. 30 Section B/Nov. 1 Section C), you and your partner will go over the following points. You want to be certain that you are clear on each of these points as you revise your problem statement and annotated list of references and then submit your final copy.

ABOUT YOUR TOPIC

1. Have you chosen an area you already know something about and one where you have **FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE**? (Choose something in ITEC, or something from your work or university experience).
2. Have you considered the **SCOPE** of your project? Choose a topic you can do justice to in a short (5+ pp) recommendation/feasibility proposal report.
3. Have you chosen a topic that can be made relevant to a **SPECIFIC KIND OF SITE**? For instance, if you choose a topic like improving employee morale via work incentives, the program would work differently with employees at a fast-food chain than it would with professors at a university.

ABOUT YOUR RESEARCH

- Have you gathered a **RANGE OF CURRENT SOURCES**? Are all sources from the last three years?
 - one article should come from professional, academic journals--those specific to a field (like an article from IEEE).
 - one article should be from current magazines for generally-educated audiences such as Time, Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report, or from topic-specific magazines for a generally-educated reader such as Scientific American, Technology Review, Psychology Today, Discover, Omni, Wired.
 - **Only one article may come from the web**, but make sure that it passes the CRAAP test. If you do choose a web-based article, please make sure you have the web address (URL), the full title of the page, an author or organization, and the date it was written. If there is no author, then it probably doesn't pass the CRAAP test and should not be used.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The problem statement and annotated list of references builds on the skills you've already been developing in our course. As always be mindful of: topic, audience, purpose, organization, and document design skills

Evaluation will be based on the following three components:

1. **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**
 - **PROVIDES FULL CONTEXT STATEMENT.** (Audience, purpose, your position as a writer, specific strategies, etc.)
 - **DESCRIBES THE PROBLEM** in specific detail.
 - **EXPLAINS HOW** the problem affects company or organization operations or costs.
 - **EXPLAINS WHY** the problem requires a solution.
 - Gives the **BACKGROUND** of the problem or situation.
 - Indicates the **PURPOSE** of the future recommendation report.

- INTRODUCES THE ANNOTATED LIST OF REFERENCES.
- 2. ANNOTATED LIST OF REFERENCES:
 - Uses correct APA format for each reference.
 - Cites at least three current articles (nothing older than three years; only one web source).
 - Reflects a *range of sources*. Annotations include at least four sentences (about thesis, support, purpose, and audience).
- 3. ATTENTION TO FORMAT AND ORGANIZATION
 - Set up as a short memo report
 - Presents material in an organized manner
 - Uses headings, paragraphing, spacing, and typography well.