Why Care about Writing?

• Writing is part of the grade
• You need to learn to communicate
  • Need it for many subjects
  • Need it for (almost) all jobs
• Writing is a discipline
  • Shows that you worked on the product
  • It helps to maintain and improve your language skills

➡ Appreciate feedback,
➡ Learn from each other.
Overview

• Common flaws
• Advice on key sections
• Useful Resources
COMMON FLAWS

You are not alone....
Example 1 - Paraphrasing:

“In the late 1980s the first electronic voting machines appeared in the Netherlands […] (Jacobs & Pieters, 2009). The interest in these machines originated because of several advantages of e-voting.
- Easier to vote and organize […]
- Automated tallying […]”

Where are these advantages taken from?
Possible solution: “several advantages of evoting, according to …”

Resources with example phrases used for paraphrasing:
- [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/sources.htm](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/sources.htm)
Source Unclear (2)

- Example 2 - Wikipedia:
  - “CRM is a model for managing a company’s interactions with current and future customers. (wikipedia, 2013)”
  - “Wikipedia” is not included in list of references
  - And Wikipedia is big…

- Citing Wikipedia – APA Style
  - In list of references:
  - In text:
    - “Plagiarism is stealing the works of others ("Plagiarism," 2004).”
Repetition

- Repetition often occurs with “also” and “and”
- Transition words/phrases and conjunctions
  - add information and relate it to what has been stated before
- Example:
  - “We have *also* determined the aspects that are not directly related to the functional behavior, but are part of the system.”
  - “The system *also* has constraints on different levels.”
- Alternatives:
  - In addition, likewise, similarly, furthermore, …
- Resources:
  - [http://www.smart-words.org/transition-words.html](http://www.smart-words.org/transition-words.html)
  - [http://www.virtualsalt.com/transits.htm](http://www.virtualsalt.com/transits.htm)
No Description (1/2)

- …of sections, lists, and figures
- Be explicit, never assume that the user knows the context

Example:
- “2.3. Scenarios
  Sign up for a course”
- What is the problem here?
No Description (2/2)

• Example:
  • “2.3. Scenarios  
    Sign up for a course”
  • Problem: Reader does not know what kind of scenarios follow
    • (e.g. visionary? as-is? How did you come up with it?)
  • Possible introductory sentence:
    • “In this section, we present the visionary scenarios that we developed based on the brainstorming sessions of our team.”

• For figures:
  • Add number and caption, and refer to them in the text
  • They do not speak for themselves, need to be described
Messy Tenses (1/3)

• Example:
  1. The goal of this project was to design and engineer a dynamic public transportation system […]
  2. The primary addition we made to achieve this goal was the use of real time data to make the public transportation dynamic […]
  3. To achieve our goal we have had brainstorming sessions […]
  4. This week’s report will describe the general idea […]
Messy Tenses (2/3)

• In general:
  • Try to use present tense wherever possible.
  • The report always “does” in present tense (describes, discusses, presents, etc.)

• More specific, according to APA / Beins (2012):
  • Use present tense of verbs that relate to your conclusions,
  • Past tense for describing what you did and what happened.
  • For instance
    • The research reveals [present tense] that, on a daily basis, people are likely to be affected by subtle cues in their environment.
    • The patient recalled [past tense] as many words as possible in a 5-minute period.

Messy Tenses (3/3)

• Example:
  1. The goal of this project was / is to design and engineer a dynamic public transportation system […]
  2. The primary addition we made to achieve this goal was the use of real time data to make the public transportation dynamic […]
  3. To achieve our goal we have had brainstorming sessions […]
  4. This week’s report will describe the general idea […]

• Try to keep it simple!
SECTIONS

Some general advice…
Sections of a Report

A report should generally include the following sections:

- Letter of transmittal
- Title page*
- Table of contents
- List of abbreviations and/or glossary
- Executive summary/abstract
- Introduction*
- Body*
- Conclusion*
- Recommendations
- Bibliography
- Appendices

(Sections marked with an asterisk (*) are essential: others are optional depending on the type, length and purpose of the report.)

Source: http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/reports#structure
Introduction

• Give enough background information to provide a context for the report.
• State the purpose of the report.
• Clarify key terms and indicate the scope of the report (i.e. what the report will cover).

• Note: In this course’s report, section 2 contains information that could also be in the introduction.

Source: http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/reports#structure
Conclusion (1/2)

• Expected content varies (e.g. sometimes “Discussion and Conclusions”)

• According to us / Korojelo (2012):
  ✓ Conclude your work by summarizing what you have done in the project (i.e. what is described in the report) (and what lessons you learned)
  ✓ Provide a short description of future work/improvements
Conclusion (2/2)

• Content of conclusions
  (based on Steehouder et al., 1999)

“In the chapter “Conclusions” you report what the contents of the report (e.g. the research results) exactly mean for the problem or the question which was the starting point of the report. The structure of this chapter usually is as follows.

1. **Short summary** of the most important data presented in the report
2. **The actual conclusion**: The answer to the main question (*or problem*) of the report
3. **Further conclusions**: often speculations, leading to suggestions for further research
4. Optional: nice final sentence (“uitsmijter”)

Abstract

• Different from an introduction!
• It is a summary of the report, in which you include one sentence (or so) for every main section of your report.
• For example, you can include:
  • the context of the research
  • the purpose of the report
  • the major findings (you may need several sentences here)
  • the conclusions
  • the main recommendations
• Write the abstract after you have written the report.

Source: http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/writing/reports#structure
Please Note

• Often, only abstract, introduction and conclusion are read!
• These sections determine whether the reader is interested in the details.
• Pay enough attention to these sections.
USEFUL RESOURCES

Learn more...
Useful Resources about Writing (1/2)

- University of Canberra – Academic Skills Center
  - Concise information about report writing, including examples

- University of Manchester – Phrasebank
  - [http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk)
  - Phrases for different purposes in academic writing

- Purdue Writing Lab
  - [http://owl.english.purdue.edu](http://owl.english.purdue.edu)
  - Extensive information about different forms of writing
  - E.g. “Writing Engineering Reports”
Useful Resources about Writing (2/2)

- E-Book “APA Style Simplified”
  - If you prefer a complete book

- The UvA about Plagiarism
THE END

Questions?