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GE105: Introduction to Engineering Design

# Notes on Report Writing

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# Notes on Writing

1. Every reference listed at the end of your proposal or article needs to be referenced in your text.
2. Every figure and table must be referenced in the text. You should not have a figure that just appears out of nowhere.
3. When referencing figures you have two options.
  - a. Figure 1 is a sketch of the proposed device
  - b. The proposed device has 5 main components (Figure 1)

Do not say

- a. (Figure 1) is a sketch of the proposed device
- b. The proposed device has 5 main components Figure 1.

# Notes on Writing

4. The first time you introduce an abbreviation you must spell it out completely.

The style is:

“Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) affects 30,000 Americans.”

Do not say:

“ALS is Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, and it affects 30,000 Americans.”

5. Pay attention to the difference between “affect” and “effect”  
In general, you will use “affect” as a verb and “effect” as a noun.

For example

“temperature affects viscosity” affects is a verb.

“temperature has an effect on viscosity” effect is a noun.

# Notes on Writing

6. Keep quotes to a minimum. Remember that quotes should generally be used when presenting something that is an opinion. When expressing fact, it is better to paraphrase.

## Compare:

According to Johnson et al. (1999), meningitis is the most painful of all neural disorders.

## to:

Johnson et al. (1999) have said, “meningitis is the most painful of all neural disorders.”

In this case, the quote is effective.

# Notes on Writing

7. Some terms should not be used in professional writing. A few are listed in Table 1:

Instead of	Use
a lot	many
kids	children
kinds	types, varieties, models
big	large
kind of	somewhat (use sparingly)
due to the fact that	because
utilize	use
actually	nothing
obviously	Nothing
rather (as in “It is rather surprising”)	nothing (as in “It is surprising”)
very	nothing
essentially	nothing

# Notes on Writing

8. Always use complete sentences, except, possibly, for a figure or table caption. You can say, “Figure 1: Sketch of the final design.” Everywhere else you must use complete sentences.
9. The word “It’s” is a contraction of “it is.” It is not the possessive of “it.” Correct: “It’s 5 pm.” Incorrect, “It’s watch says 5 pm.”
10. You should not use contractions. You should not say, “The device can’t be used in cold weather.” Instead you should say, “The device cannot be used in cold weather.” Similarly, do not use haven’t, doesn’t, wouldn’t, etc.

# Notes on Writing

11. In citing references, remember that “et al.” is the correct abbreviation, not “et al” or et. al” or et. al.”
12. Pay attention to the format for citing references, and be consistent. You should use either: “Johnson et al. (2002) developed the first viable artificial brain.” or “An artificial brain will require 5 billion electrical connections (Johnson et al., 2002). In the second form, separate the author name from the date with a comma. You can separate multiple citations with a semicolon, as in (Johnson et al., 2002; Friedrich et al., 2002). Never list more than one name in the author list. In other words, do not say, (Johnson, Robertson et al., 2002). Also, do not say (Stan Johnson et al., 2002).

# Notes on Writing

13. It is also not appropriate to spell out an author's complete name. You should not say, “**Dr. Stan Johnson developed the first artificial brain (Johnson et al., 2002).**” It's much better to just say, “**Johnson et al., (2002) developed the first artificial brain.**”
14. Make sure that your grammatical constructions are parallel. For example, instead of “**The proposed device is practical, inexpensive, and it provides comfort to the patient**” you should say, “**The proposed device is practical, inexpensive, and comfortable to the patient.**”



# Notes on Writing

15. The semicolon is used to separate two sentences that are closely related. If you use a semicolon, look at the expressions on each side. If they are not both complete sentences, then the semicolon is not the correct punctuation.
16. Avoid the use of “etc.” It makes you sound like you’re too lazy to list all of the other important items on the list.