Studio 3.
Tips for Writing Reports

FEBRUARY 2016
What is a good report?

- Meets the audience’s needs
- Well organised
- Readable
- Answers the questions:
  - What is the purpose of the document?
  - What is to be achieved?
Final Report Layout

**Front Matter**
- Title Page
- Abstract
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables

**Body**
- Introduction
- Need Analysis: Problem statement, Objectives, Criteria, and Constraints
- Morphological Analysis
- Design Concept Generation
- Design Evaluation/Selection
- Detailed Design

**End**
- Conclusions/Recommendations
- References
- Appendices
Title

- The title is more important than most people think.
- Choose a title using as few words as possible (less than 10) to clearly describe the content.
- It is also a good idea to read through your title and think about how it might be interpreted.
- The title page should contain the following: Course name, project title, the authors' full names and ID numbers, the name of the instructor, the date of submission.
Abstract (Problem Definition)

- The abstract is the second level at which a potential reader can filter out reports that s/he is or is not interested in reading.
- The abstract is generally limited to 150 words (or so). It must be a self-contained description of the report.
- It includes a short summary of the design problem and the most important results and conclusions of the project.
Conclusions, Summary and Recommendations

- Summarize what has been done
- Highlight the features of the design
- Are there any limitations in your design?
- What are the implications of your findings?
- Recommend a follow-up study for any remaining problems
Referencing

- Always cite sources within the report
- Use a unified system of referencing*
- Be careful of web sources
- Plagiarism = cheating = penalty
- DO NOT cut-and-paste
- Give list of references according to a standard style
Some Citation Standards

Books

Handbooks

Reports

Journals

Standards

Patents
Appendices

- Things that are related to the project, but not contained in the main components
- Examples are:
  - Computer codes
  - Lengthy specifications
  - Supporting tables or other material
Figure/Table Captions

- All necessary figures/tables must be included within the main components
- ALWAYS include a figure/table caption and number
- If the figure (or table) is not yours, put the reference number at the end of the caption
- Give the source of data (e.g., data from [5])
- The caption of the figure is centered below the figure
- The caption of the table is centered above the table
Document Formatting

- Leave one-inch margins all around
- Use 1.5 spacing between lines
- Title of Report in Initial Capital Letters: (16 points, Boldface)
- Sections titles are 14 points, flush left, and boldfaced. Use initial capitals
- The text should all be with font size 12pt (Times New Roman is recommended)
Important Notes

- Use a predefined style when writing a report to allow for easy modification without the need of renumbering or reformatting.
- No title should be directly followed by “bullets” or independent sentences”; a paragraph must be used first.
- The writer should include all the information required for the reader to understand the details without the need to ask questions.
Important Notes (cont’d)

- A paragraph must contain at least three sentences.
- Every reference listed at the end of your report needs to be cited in your text.
- Every figure and table must be mentioned in the text. You should not have a figure that just appears out of nowhere.
- Numbers less than ten should be written in letters (use “three” not “3”).
Important Notes (cont’d)

- Always use complete sentences, except for a figure or table caption.
- Do not use contractions; use it is (not it’s) and cannot (not can’t); similarly, do not use haven’t, doesn’t, wouldn’t, etc.
- The semicolon is used to separate two sentences that are closely related. If you use a semicolon, look at the expressions on each side.
Checklist (Before Submission)
Check the following points before submitting your report:

- The cover page has all the required information
- The report has all the necessary components
- The entire document is proofread
- The document is checked for spelling errors
- The document is checked for grammar and there are no sentence fragments or run-on sentences in the text.
Checklist (cont’d)

✓ There are no contractions (do a global search for the apostrophe and make sure it occurs only in possessives).*

✓ You used paragraphs with more than three sentences

✓ All of the references that are given at the end of the report are explicitly cited within the report

✓ All of the figures and tables are mentioned within the text.