Guidelines for Academic Writing by Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students

Department of Land Information
RMIT

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This document is modelled on the *Style Manual for the Department of Geodesy and Geomatics Engineering*, 3rd edition, 1993, University of New Brunswick, Canada.

The contribution of the author, Wendy Wells, in advising and influencing this author in matters of written style is gratefully acknowledged.
PREFACE

The correctness of many of the parameters of ‘style’ in a written document is largely a matter of personal taste. The style of documents prepared in the Department of Land Information have therefore previously been left to the individual to determine. However, it has been observed that many students spend an inordinate amount of time labouring over a choice of style, are unsure whether there is a particular style they should be adopting, are inconsistent in the style they adopt, or adopt a style which is not appropriate for academic writing.

In keeping with RMIT policy for written publications, the general authority adopted by the Department of Land Information for matters of written style is the *Style Manual for Authors, Editors and Printers*, published by the Australian Government Publishing Service (AGPS Style Guide).

The Department also adopts the *Manual on Scientific Writing* published by RMIT TAFE, which is intended to be consistent with the AGPS Style Manual and provides further information in the context of students enrolled in an Applied Science course.

This document is intended to be consistent with both of these publications but goes further to provide a definitive specification for the mechanics of setting out a written report, dissertation or thesis at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The purpose of Chapter 1 is to assist students to produce written submissions of a consistent format which is known to be acceptable to the Department. **It is not intended to be prescriptive and inhibit individual expression and creativity. It is highly recommended that, in the absence of specific instructions to the contrary, students adopt these specifications for all reports, dissertations and theses submitted as part of their academic program.**

The purpose of Chapter 2 is to assist students to produce high quality academic style writing. The material is intended to provide a concise guide to the essence of academic writing. However, it should be recognised that it is intentionally brief and limited in extent, and that there is no absolute standard. Postgraduate students in particular are well advised to refer to the range of publications providing advice on academic writing and also to take note of the style used by authors of ‘good’ papers published in their particular research domain.

To conclude, it must be stated that the secret to good professional and academic writing is inevitably experience and practice. Students are encouraged to treat each and every written work, regardless of how small, as a means of building their overall writing experience and improving their ability in this crucial form of communication.

Dr. Ron Grenfell
April, 1997
CHAPTER 1  
MECHANICS OF WRITTEN ACADEMIC WORK

1.1 Components of a report, dissertation or thesis

These notes relate to a work which consists predominantly of written communication.

The style of these notes are intended as an example of the guidelines they contain.

In the absence of an official RMIT policy on terminology, these notes apply the term *report* to a written submission of relatively minor extent. This term applies to submissions in undergraduate and graduate coursework programs. *Dissertation* applies to a submission relating to a substantial project at Graduate Diploma or Masters level in which there is usually a significant research component. *Thesis* refers to the document produced to convey the findings of a Doctoral program. It should be noted that apart from this usage, *thesis* and *dissertation* are often used interchangeably and *thesis* may also be used to refer to a proposition to be proved, or the subject of a *dissertation*.

The general format of a report, dissertation or thesis is the same. The purpose, nature, and extent of reports can vary considerably, requiring a common sense approach in deciding which components should be included. For example, it would be inappropriate for a two page report answering specific questions relating to material presented in lectures to contain an abstract, table of contents or acknowledgments.

The general arrangement of a report, dissertation or thesis is as follows:
Front Cover
Preliminary Pages
  Title page
  Abstract
  Table of Contents
  List of Figures
  List of Tables
  Acknowledgments
  Preface
Body of the work
References
Bibliography
Appendices
Back cover

It should be noted that any of these components may be excluded if not relevant to a particular written work. The title, author, and date are the only items required on a cover, although other information may be added as appropriate.
It is preferred that minor reports (less than five sheets) should not have covers or be submitted in plastic envelopes or folders unless they include non-textual materials or various size sheets (eg. computer disks, CD’s, large format maps). All sheets should be securely fastened (usually stapled in the top, left corner). Paper clips should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

All reports submitted for assessment should be accompanied by a duly completed Department Submission Sheet, either preceding or replacing the cover.

Theses, dissertations and major reports are presented as bound volumes.

1.1.1 Preliminary Pages

1.1.1.1 Title Page

The title should accurately reflect the contents of the work without being overly verbose.

1.1.1.2 Abstract

The abstract is a brief synopsis. It tells the reader quickly what the work is about in as few words as possible. The abstract is often the most difficult component of a work to write. It should be written after the highlights, main conclusions, and recommendations are known.

The abstract should contain:

- the problem or purpose (what you are trying to do, and, if not obvious, why you did it);
- the scope of your work - how you did it, and any methods used;
- the significant findings or results - how it turned out;
- any major conclusions;
- any major recommendations.

The abstract should not contain any references, abbreviations, figures, tables, or formulae. Such details are to appear only in the main body of the text.

The abstract must be:

- informative but brief (rarely is more than one double-spaced page needed);
- able to attract the reader’s attention, but be written in as simple and non-technical terms as possible;

Graduate students should note that it is the abstract, or a precis of it, which is most likely to be included in commercial bibliographic databases which will be used by later researchers to find your work. The abstract should therefore embody the key words you would expect somebody to use to find your work. It is good practice to complete the abstract with a brief list of key words.
1.1.1.3 Table of Contents

The table of contents lists everything in your report, dissertation or thesis except the covers and Submission Sheet. All the preliminary pages (abstract, table of contents, list of figures, list of tables, acknowledgments) are itemised. All the chapter, section and major sub-section headings, list of references, bibliography, and appendices are also listed, following the example of the table of contents of these notes. The headings appearing in the table of contents must match exactly those used in the main body of the report. The automated creation and maintenance of a table of contents, available in most word processing software, is strongly recommended.

1.1.1.4 List of Figures and List of Tables

If you have used both figures and tables in your report you will need two separate lists. Figures and tables that appear in appendices must be included in these lists. The figure or table number, title, and page number are given, following the example of these notes. The figure or table captions appearing in these lists must match exactly the figure or table caption used in the main body of the report. The only exception would be when a caption in the text is more than two sentences long; in this case include only the first sentence in the list. As with the Table of Contents, most word processors provide the facility to prepare these lists automatically.

1.1.1.5 Acknowledgments

Any substantial financial support, advice, or help you received should be mentioned with appropriate thanks. Insincere or flippant acknowledgments are not acceptable.

1.1.2 Body of the Work

The main body of the document has three parts. Quite simply, these are a beginning, a middle and an ending.

1.1.2.1 The Beginning

The beginning is usually a separate chapter entitled “Introduction.” Its purpose is to introduce your topic and to orient your reader. To do this, enough background information must be supplied to the reader to make the rest of the material understandable. Explain why the work was done, why the subject matter is important to you, what you did, and how it fits into a broader, overall picture.

If appropriate, you can also discuss the significant results and conclusions that were reached. A summary chapter may then be dispensed with. This approach has the advantage of fully preparing the reader ‘up front’; they are in a better position to appreciate the detail of the middle portion, and may only need to refer to it if they need more information.
1.1.2.2  The Middle

The middle portion of the main body is the largest portion and can be organised in a number of ways. It should normally embody the following:

- the procedures and methods used;
- the results;
- a discussion, analysis, and interpretation of the results. Include any qualifications or limitations, sources of error, and try to account for any unexpected results.

This middle part should progress logically through to a conclusion or to a number of conclusions. If no conclusions can be drawn, there should be major points clearly evident in the discussion which can be gathered together for a summary at the end.

The middle is broken down into as many sections as are necessary for your particular audience to understand your report, dissertation or thesis. Sections should start with a broad outline (introduction) of what you are going to discuss in that section, followed by the details.

Be sure that this middle portion contains all the information needed to draw your conclusions, make any recommendation, or provide a summary for the reader because no new material is permitted in the ending.

1.1.2.3  The Ending

The ending is usually a separate chapter entitled "Conclusions and Recommendations", or simply "Conclusions" if you have no recommendations to make. Conclusions restate the major inferences (findings through reasoning) that you have made in the main body. They must be based entirely on information that you have previously discussed, and should not include new material or evidence to support your reasoning. Most theses and dissertations will have conclusions because original research is usually involved, which calls for conclusions to be drawn; reports frequently do not have conclusions.

If no conclusions were reached, the chapter should be called a "Summary" and the major points you discussed in the main body of the text should be reviewed or summarised.

Recommendations are included in the ending when your findings indicate that further work needs to be done or when you are suggesting certain actions should be taken based on your investigations. These situations arise most frequently in graduate reports, thesis, and dissertations, although some undergraduate reports do produce recommendations. They should be written a tone which matches the certainty of your convictions (hopefully strong and definite).

In the case of both conclusions and a summary, the points you make must be based on facts you presented in the middle of the main body; they cannot be formulated from new material. You can also include forecasts of trends or innovations you foresee.

The purpose of an ending is to bring together the various points you have made or the subjects you have discussed and show their relationship with each other and with the broad overall picture. The ending brings the work to a logical and obvious termination.
1.1.3 Citations, References and/or Bibliography

A reference must be given in the text of your report, dissertation, or thesis when any fact, opinion, or idea that is not common knowledge or your own opinion, analysis, or interpretation is used. All these references are gathered together at the end of the piece of writing into a list of references that is arranged in alphabetical order, by date. **The reference list only includes sources which are explicitly cited in the body of the text.**

Occasionally in the case of an undergraduate report, or frequently in the case of a graduate report, dissertation, or thesis, a bibliography is also provided by the author. A **bibliography lists in alphabetical order all the sources consulted but not used in the text.** This provides readers with an additional source of information if they wish to pursue your argument further. Strictly speaking a bibliography is an exhaustive list of **all** sources related to the topic, although this is not common practice. As it is almost impossible to gather all sources on any topic, the term ‘Selected Bibliography’ is often used.

The most important thing to remember in referencing is that the source of an idea must be obvious to the reader. If there is no citation, it will be assumed that the idea expressed is common knowledge or originated from the author. The source of your information must be supplied by a citation at the time you provide that information in the text. It must appear immediately after any borrowed remark, quotation, fact, idea, figure, table, graph, and so on. Simply listing your reading material at the end of the paper in a reference list or bibliography is not acceptable.

The authority adopted by the Department for the style of references and in-text citations is the **Style Guide for Authors, Editors and Printers** published by the Australian Government Publishing Service (5th edition, 1994). The following sections discuss the formatting and nature of references and citations. Appendix I of this document also provides referencing examples for a broad range of literature sources. For greater detail and the authoritative source, the reader is referred to the above style guide.

1.1.3.1 Personal Communications

The one variation from practice set out in the AGPS Style Guide is that personal communications should be cited and included in the reference list in a similar fashion to other sources.

Where possible, provide the exact date of the communication and the title of the person providing the information.
### 1.1.3.2 In-text Citations

The form of citation and referencing preferred by the Department and described in this document is referred to as the ‘Author-Date’ or ‘Harvard’ system. Footnotes are generally discouraged.

**format**

The format of (**author, year**) at the end of a sentence indicates the origin of the sentiments expressed. If the author is mentioned in the sentence, it is sufficient to follow the name with the year of publication in parenthesis. It is not necessary to use bold characters for the citation, but many authors prefer to do so. Note that the period to end the sentence appears after the citation.

**Examples:**

The Dene nation has had its land claims mapped (Asch, 1984).

Asch (1984) proved that the Dene nation’s land claims could be mapped.

Many authors have stated that the Dene Mapping Project is indispensable (e.g. Asch (1984); Wonders (1985)).

**2 authors**

The in-text citation for two authors is:

**(Adam and Smith, 1979) or Adam and Smith (1979)**

A citation of the first form should normally be followed by a punctuation mark (comma or period).

**> 2 authors**

For more than two authors, the in-text citation is:

**(Adam et al., 1988) or Adam et al. (1988)**

Note that the "al." in *et al.* takes a period.

**author string**

If you want to emphasise that an idea has been supported or expressed by many other authors, list them in a string separated by a semi-colon and arranged by **year** from the oldest to the most recent.

**Example:**

(Adam, 1978a; Adam, 1979b; Adam and Smith, 1979; Adam et al., 1988).

**quotation, table, figure, equation**

If you are referencing a specific quotation, table, figure or equation, it is helpful to the reader to indicate this. Rather than leaving your reader to scour a 987 page volume to find one table, provide a clue by adding the **page number**, or in the case of an equation, the **equation number**.

**Example:**

This table was obtained from Adam (1983, p. 37).

A modified version of the basic equation (Smith, 1966, eqn. (3.21)) was used to compute our results.
Sometimes the same author will provide you with more than one source written in the same year and you end up with a number of Smith (1988) citations in your text. In addition, if an individual has co-authored a number of papers in the same year, you can end up with a bunch of Adams et al. (1980) citations in your text. You have to provide further identification to help the reader identify the correct reference in your list of references.

In this case, you assign an "a," a "b," a "c," and so on, to the references. Be sure you assign the "a," "b," "c," to the correct reference in the text AFTER you have completed your list of references. The "a," "b," "c," is NOT given to the references in the order in which they appear in the text but in the (alphabetical) order in which they appear in the list of references. If possible, try to put these references in date order in your list of references.

For instance, if Smith published a paper in April 1978, proving the world was round, and then presented a paper in September 1978, proving the grass was green, your citations in the text would be as follows.

Example:

Smith (1978a) for the roundness of the world.
Smith (1978b) for the colour of the grass.

In the case of multiple authors which give you a number of Adam et al. (1988) citations in the text, the solution is again the same. Once you have compiled your list of references, add the appropriate "a," "b," or "c," in the list, then transfer this to your in-text citation. There will be cases where Adam is the primary author but the secondary and tertiary authors change. In this case, the list of references is still put in alphabetical order first, then the "a," "b," or "c," is applied, first to the list and then to the in-text citation.

1.1.3.3 Italics

Certain elements of certain references should appear in italics.

Example:

italic items

Only the following are italicised:

- titles of copyrighted books, theses, or dissertations (the copyright mark must appear on the title page);
- the source (journal name) of articles in recognised journals;
- the name of proceedings that have been edited or refereed; and
- legal decisions, statutes, and regulations.

non-copyrighted work

If the papers of a conference are simply gathered together and bound, these are not "proceedings" but are "collected papers" and the title of the conference is not italicised. Technical papers of organizations, lecture notes, technical reports, and some older theses of universities are usually not copyrighted books, so nothing in the reference is italicised. If they are copyrighted, then treat them as you would a book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

presented

Nothing in a reference to a paper presented at a conference and not published in proceedings is italicised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 1.1.3.4 Capitals in a reference

There are a variety of styles for the use of capitals in lists of references. The Department follows the style of mathematics and physics.

**book**

The first letter of all words in the title of a book, the title of a journal, the name of a conference, or the name of a proceedings are capitalized, except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions.

**Example:**


**paper article**

For a paper or an article, capitals are used for the first letter of words in the title only for those words ordinarily capitalized (e.g. proper names).

**Example:**


### 1.1.3.5 Composite works

Most encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, etc., are composite works made up of separate contributions from numerous different sources. In these cases, the entry should begin with the title unless there are only one or two authors or editors.

**Example:**


### 1.1.3.6 Coping with errors

Occasionally, errors creep into published material. There are methods to cope with this problem.

**reproduce exactly**

Titles used in a reference should be reproduced exactly. For instance, if meter (distance) has been used in an American publication, do not change it to metre (distance) simply because that is the Australian spelling. Even if the title contains a spelling error, that error must be reproduced exactly as well.

**sic**

If the spelling error causes confusion, add "(sic)" after the word (the "sic" is to be italicised. This alerts the reader that you are aware of the error and did not originate it. *(sic)* means so; thus. It is used to emphasize the fact that something has been copied just as it is in the original.

**Example:**


In the first case in the above example, "Systems" should be possessive not plural (i.e., System’s), and in the second case, "technologie" should
be technology. Brackets indicate that you have added the interpolation; it was not in the original. The word "sic" is to be italicised.

1.1.3.7 RULES for figure reference

idea If you use a figure in your text, the IDEA of which came from one of your readings, this figure must be referenced as . . . (after Donnan (1965, p. 12)).

Example: Figure 2.1. An approximate representation of the coast (after Donnan (1965, p. 12)).

photocopy If the figure you use in your text is a PHOTOCOPY of a figure found in a source, this figure must be referenced as: . . . (from Donnam (1965, p. 12)).

Example: The coastline of Nova Scotia (from Donnam (1965, p. 12)).

1.1.3.8 Electronic Citations

A citation of an electronic source should serve the same purpose as any other citation. To give credit to a deserving individual, and to allow the reader to confirm your argument directly from the source.

Avoid relying on and citing sources which are likely to be removed or changed over time. Good practice for Internet references is to include the exact path used to access the material, the protocol used (WWW, FTP, etc.), and the date of access.

1.1.3.9 Quotations

Quotations must be enclosed in Quotation marks. The in-text citation for the quotation must include the number of the page in the source on which the quote appeared (see §1.5.1).

1.1.4 Appendices

The appendix (or appendices), if any, is the final element of the report. The appendix is where you place computer printout or any extra material to support your work which is not necessary to the argument of your report. For instance, if you submit large plans to supplement your discussion, these should be folded and put into an appendix.

Each appendix should be numbered using large roman numerals (Appendix I, Appendix II, etc.) and each should have its own title page. It is the number of this title page that appears in the table of contents. The page numbering from the main body of the text is continued throughout the appendices.

Any appendix you use must conform to the standard margins and must be mentioned in numerical order somewhere in the main body of your report. This means that the first
appendix mentioned in the text will be Appendix I; the second mentioned in the text will be Appendix II, and so on.

Figures and tables that appear in the appendices must be numbered consecutively throughout each appendix (eg., Table I.1; Figure II.3) and must be mentioned in the text of the appendix. These tables and figures should be listed in the List of Figures and List of Tables in the preliminary pages of the report.

1.2 Page Numbering

Preliminary pages must carry Roman numerals and all subsequent pages must have an Arabic page number. These numbers must be in consecutive order from the first page of the first chapter to the last page of any appendices.

Page numbers are located in the centre of the bottom margin. The title page carries no number but is assumed to be page ‘i’, thus the abstract will be page ‘ii’. The first page of each chapter of the text starts on a new page.

1.3 Margins and Spacing

Unless otherwise stated, all margins are 2 cm. If the document is bound, the left margin is 4 cm. It is not usual to have double sided sheets but if this is the case, margins on odd and even pages should be set accordingly.

If the document is being submitted for assessment, the line spacing should be double, to allow room for comments to be inserted. If the document is being prepared for wider distribution outside the Department, single spacing may be more appropriate.

Quotations of more than three lines which are indented (see §1.5.1) should be single spaced.

1.4 Font Style and Size

Twelve point Times New Roman or a similar proportional font is preferred for body text. A point size less than 10 is not usually acceptable. Unless required for particular emphasis, text font and size should be consistent throughout the document.

Computer program code is an obvious example where a non-proportional font (all characters occupy the same space) might be preferable. Every effort should be made to ensure that computer printout is of a quality equal to that of the main text.

1.5 Paragraph Indentation and Justification

The modern practice of not indenting the first line of a paragraph is preferred. Paragraphs should be left and right justified.
1.5.1 Long Quotations

Quotations of more than three lines are not enclosed in quotation marks, but are distinguished from your text by separating with a blank line before and after, using single line spacing, and indenting from both the left and right margins by 2 cm.

The end of the quote is followed immediately by the citation.

1.6 Headings

Headings help both the reader and the writer.

For the reader, headings define the structure of the work, and when extracted to the Table of Contents should provide a thorough outline of the work. Headings are a convenient and effective means of indicating a change of topic or subject. They provide specific identification of information. For example, in your text it is far easier to state “see section 2.3 for additional details" than it is to try to explain in words where to find more information.

For the writer, headings act as an outline to keep the work following a logical progression.

Figure 1.1 explains by example the recommended method of changing font size and style in headings which is used in this document to make it more readable.

- The ¶ symbol indicates the number of blank double spaced lines.
- Read the content of the figure for an explanation of the system being used.

It is extremely easy to produce consistent headings using the ‘style’ functionality provided in most word processor software. This practice also facilitates the automated creation and maintenance of a table of contents, list of figures and index.
CHAPTER 1
TITLE OF THE CHAPTER

Provide the usual introduction to the chapter. The lettering size of the chapter number and title can be 14 point, boldface type. Use a ‘soft-return’ between the two lines of the heading.

1.1 In the Beginning

The first section title is 14 point, bold type, with the first letter of all words except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions capitalised.

1.1.1 Form of a Subsection Heading

A subsection title is 13 point, bold, with the first letter of all words except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions capitalised.

1.1.1.1 Form of a Sub-subsection Heading

A sub-subsection title is 12 point, bold, with the first letter of all words except articles, prepositions, and conjunctions capitalised.

1.1.1.1.1 The fifth level of heading

A sub-sub-subsection title is 12 point, not bold, with only the first word and proper nouns capitalised.

(a) The lowest level. This sub-sub-sub-subsection heading is left justified, 12 point, and bold. The first word and proper nouns are capitalised, and the text starts on the same line as the title. It is the only heading concluded with a period.

Figure 1.1
A six level heading system using varying font size and style
CHAPTER 2
ACADEMIC WRITING STYLE

This Chapter provides very brief comments on some aspects of grammar typically used in academic writing. It is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive.

The content of sections 2.1 to 2.10 have been extracted from the document referred to in the Acknowledgments with only minor modification.

2.1 Sentence Structure

The single most important element of any piece of writing is the paragraph.

Paragraph: a group of sentences relating to the same idea or topic and forming a distinct part of a chapter.

There should be only one topic or central idea in each paragraph, and that idea is made up of a topic sentence which is developed using supporting sentences.

Topic Sentence: sets the scene for the paragraph and, hopefully, creates interest in the reader to continue reading. It states the controlling idea of a paragraph and informs the reader of the subject matter of the paragraph.

Until you are a proficient writer, the topic sentence should remain the first sentence in the paragraph. Once you have experience, the topic sentence does not always have to come first; there are even occasions when it never appears and its presence is only implied.

As the definition of a paragraph states "a group of sentences..." and as few ideas or topics can be expressed in one sentence, avoid one-sentence paragraphs in your piece of writing. The length of a paragraph is determined by how much space you need to cover a particular topic for a particular reader. Varying the length of paragraphs produces a lively visual effect, but generally, a paragraph should be no longer than 10 lines. Paragraphs that are clearly shorter or longer than their neighbours attract the reader’s attention and imply that the information contained in them might be more important.

2.2 Transitional Words and Sentences

Two aids to interesting writing are transitional words and sentences. These are used to provide a smooth transition between sentences and paragraphs and to maintain an even flow in the logical progression of your argument.
2.2.1 Transitional Words

These are a means of achieving a smooth flow of ideas from one sentence to the next. For example, words such as

- for example
- moreover
- meanwhile
- first
- second
- therefore
- thus
- as a result
- on the other hand
- nevertheless

2.2.2 Transitional Sentences

One technique is to use an opening sentence that summarises the preceding paragraph and then moves ahead to the business of the new paragraph. Another technique is to ask a question at the end of one paragraph and answer it at the beginning of the next.

2.3 Short, Concise Sentences

A short, concise sentence leaves a much greater impact on a reader than something that rambles on for half a page. There should be variety in their length, just as there should be in the length of a paragraph. There should be variety in their construction as well. Sentences of the same construction and length tend to make for boring reading. Short or very long sentences can convey to the reader a sense of importance. Generally, though, a sentence of more than 25 words is probably too long.

2.4 Important Sentences

In constructing your most important sentences, the emphasis should be at the end.

Example:

- The Space Shuttle crashed after 10 days orbiting Earth. (wrong)

The emphasis should be on the crash.

- After 10 days orbiting the Earth, the Space Shuttle crashed. (right)

This is much more effective. The main point you are trying to communicate is the last thing read and thus it will be retained better by the reader.

2.5 Active Voice

Try to construct your sentences in the active (rather than the passive) voice for main points in your argument. The active voice means the subject of the verb is the doer of the action; the passive voice means the subject of the verb is acted upon.
Example:

Frank wrote the report. (active)
The report was written by Frank. (passive)

This is not always possible, but when feasible, the active voice makes for more forceful writing.

2.6 I vs. We

Using the active voice sometimes means employing the words “I” and "we" when expressing the actions. The use of these personal pronouns should be treated with caution. To have every sentence in your report contain a personal pronoun will make that report sound pompous, arrogant, and boring. Judicious use of both the active and passive voice is advisable.

One final comment about the personal pronouns "I" and "we". It is preferable to write a report that reflects an impersonal, factual, view which means that personal pronouns are seldom used. In some cases, however, you may not be able to eliminate them entirely. Before writing your report you will have to decide who did the action. If you were the only person involved in what you are writing about, use "I" and stick to it throughout. A few "we’s" may be used when a group action took place. If you were a member of a group doing the actions, use "we” throughout your report, with a few "I’s" thrown in when you were the lone doer. The main point is to be as consistent as possible in the use of one personal pronoun, yet use that personal pronoun sparingly!

2.7 Positive Statements

Make positive (rather than negative) statements. Try to avoid tame, colourless, hesitating, non-committal, wishy-washy language.

Example:

He did not think that studying history was a sensible way to use his time. (negative)
He thought the study of history was a waste of time. (positive)
He did not have much confidence in the results. (negative)
He distrusted the results. (positive)

2.8 Definite Language

Use definite, specific, and concrete language. Use specific rather than general, definite rather than vague, and concrete rather than abstract constructions.

Example:

A period of unfavourable atmospheric conditions set in during the second week of the experiment. (vague)
Unfavourable atmospheric conditions occurred during the second week of the experiment. (definite)
As well as growing rapidly hot and humid, the day was overcast and gloomy. (vague)
The day was overcast, hot, and humid. (positive)

2.9 Needless Words

Omit needless words. Be concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words; a paragraph no unnecessary sentences. Let every word count. A word can frequently replace a phrase.

Example:
the question as to whether (whether)
there is no doubt that (no doubt/doubtless)
used for computing purposes (used for computing)
he is a person who (he)
in the near future (soon)
this is a topic that (this topic)
call your attention to the fact that (remind/notify you)
unaware of the fact that (unaware that)
at this point in time (now)

2.10 Tense

The tense of your report should, in most cases, be the past tense. You are reporting what has already taken place. There may be occasions where the future tense is needed to let the reader know that something may take place after the report has been written. The only time the present tense should be used is in something like a user’s manual when you are leading the user through the steps of a procedure. Generally though, anything that has already occurred should be reported in the past tense.

2.11 Jargon

Every discipline has its particular terminology and jargon. It is difficult to write a technical paper which does not include these terms. However, a good writer will seek to minimise the use of jargon and when used should provide an explanation of its meaning accompanying its first appearance in the text. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to provide a glossary of terms in the preliminary pages to assist readers who may not be familiar with aspects of the discipline being discussed.
2.12 Proof Reading

The value of obtaining an independent and objective assessment of the work can not be overstated. For substantial works this should occur in the formative stages and throughout the preparation of the work, but particularly before the document is submitted for assessment.

The application of a spell-checker to the final draft should be considered mandatory, however it should be remembered that spell-checkers will not detect a wide range of faults which could exist in the document. There is no substitute for a careful reading and correction of the final draft.

If time permits, it is suggested that the ‘near final’ draft be locked away in a drawer for a week or month. The intervening period allows the author to mull over the content and layout, and when revisited, a substantially better product will often result.

Alternatively, begin writing chapters as early as possible and revisit them periodically as the work progresses. Continual refinement will usually pay dividends in the quality of the finished product.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX I

Referencing Examples
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</table>
In the first case, the first date (1963) was when the book was originally copyrighted, and the second date (1968) was when the translation was printed.  
In the second case, the first date (1969) was when the translation was copyrighted (as no original copyright date was available). The second date (1968) was the year in which the translation was done. |
| DRAWINGS | See FIGURES |
The following are references for a specific term defined in a dictionary, encyclopedia, or atlas.  
In the first example, there was a copyright mark © beside the date, thus it is treated as a book. In the second example, there was no copyright mark and so it is formatted as an article. |
| FIGURE, MODIFIED | Figure 2.1. An approximate representation of the layout of the camp (after Donnan (1965, p.12)).  
ie. At the end of the figure caption, add the word ‘after’ and the normal in-text citation. |
| **FIGURE, COPY** | Figure 2.3. The camp (from Donnan (1965, p. 12)).
> ie. At the end of the figure caption, add the word `from` and the normal in-text citation. |
| **FOREIGN PUBLICATIONS** | Böhm, J. 1973, *Vyšší Geodesie* 1, CVUT, Prague, Czechoslovakia.
> The proper diacritical marks for any foreign word or name should be used. |
| **LECTURE NOTES AND TECHNICAL REPORTS** | Deakin, R.E., Fraser, D.D., Grenfell, R.I. & Rollings, N.M. 1992, ‘Raster GIS Analysis’, Department of Land Information Lecture Notes, RMIT University, Melbourne.
| **PAPER IN PRESS** | Georgiadou, Y. & Kleusberg, A. (in press), ‘On carrier signal multipath effects in relative GPS positioning’, Accepted for publication 23 May 1989 in *Manuscripta Geodetica*.
> The above is used if the publication process has commenced. If the paper is accepted but publication has not commenced, use (forthcoming). |
<table>
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<tr>
<td>PLANS</td>
<td>Jones, J.E. 1987, ‘Plan of Parcel A, Skyridge Subdivision, City of Fredericton, County of York, Province of New Brunswick’, York County Registry Plan No. 86.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPORT UNPUBLISHED</td>
<td><em>See</em> Paper or Report, Unpublished.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first example is of a copyrighted theses; the second of a non-copyrighted dissertation.
Use the title in the absence of an author name as shown. Use of ‘Anon.’ as the author is discouraged. |
If the date is known approximately, precede it with ‘c.’ representing circa, eg. Harris, J.G. c.1751,  
If the date is in any way dubious, precede it with ‘?’, eg. Quirk, M.C. ?1751, |