Tips for Successful Reports

<u>Homonym Review</u>

Homonyms are tricky, because they don't matter when you're just talking. These are some of the more common mistakes.

- Then/Than - "than" is for comparing two things (I like ice cream more *than* beets) and "then" is for listing items in a sequence (I will eat ice cream, *then* beets)
- It's/Its - "It's" is a contraction of "it is", "its" is the possessive form of it (like his is the possessive form of he)
- Effect/Affect - "**E**ffect" is a noun, "**A**ffect" is a verb. You can study the **e**ffects of rain on sand, or you can see the way that rain **a**ffects sand.
- Your/You're - "Your" is the possessive form of you, "You're" is a contraction of "you are". So if you forget citations in *your* paper, *you're* going to have a bad time.
- There/Their/They're - "There" is a relative direction (I saw the dog over *there*), "Their" is the possessive form of they (I found *their* dog's leash) and "They're" is a contraction of "they are" (They're chasing after the dog).

<u>Contractions</u>

Could've = could have, **NOT** could of. It sounds like that when you say it, but the long form of could've/would've/should've does not involve the word "of" at any point. These are technical papers, mind you, so you should be using as few contractions as possible.

<u>The Semicolon</u> **;**

This piece of punctuation is meant to indicate a three-quarters stop. It is used for partitioning ideas; it has more stopping power than a comma, but less than a period. You use it when you have something more to add to a thought, but not so much that it would be better served starting a new sentence. If you are not 100% sure you should be using it, **DON'T USE IT**.

<u>Acceptable Fonts</u>

Technical reports need to be legible, above all else. The following fonts in size 11 or 12 (or 10 and 11 for Verdana) are recommended for their ease of reading:

Arial   Calibri   Times New Roman   Cambria   Trebuchet   Verdana

The following fonts (and lookalikes) are unacceptable and will not be graded until they are resubmitted in a proper font. The exception is Comic Sans, which will be put through a shredder, stuffed in a bag, and returned to you with a grade of **ZERO**:

Bevan   Comic Sans   Impact   Corsiva   Lobster   SYNCOPATE   Indie Flower

<u>Spacing and Margins</u>

For ease of grading, please **DOUBLESPACE** your reports. It is hard to provide feedback without adequate room to write. We would appreciate it if your reports were not double-sided, but recognize that it is not within everyone's budget to do so.

Please be sure to use the default margin size as well - we can tell when they have been altered. Ensure that your tables and figures fit inside the margins before you print the report by using the Print Preview option in your word processor. Most table/figure formatting errors occur when switching from one file type to another, so do take a moment to double-check before you print.

Report Length and Content

Reports are graded on completeness of content, not length/page number. A short, concise, and well-written report will receive a much higher grade than a 15-page monstrosity that fails to effectively communicate the core concepts of the lab. Here is a brief overview of what we are looking for when grading a paper:

Introduction - introduce the purpose of the lab and report, explain the core concepts
Methods - explain the lab process and how any calculations were carried out (we **don't** want a shopping list of materials, we **do** want the formula used to derive results. Google it.)
Results - show the results of the lab, in the form of tables and graphs.
Discussion - explain the results, suggest what trends emerged as a result. Explain sources of error in the experiments. Do some research - have other studies supported your findings? What are the applications of these experiments? Why are the answers we found important?
Conclusion - briefly summarize the lab and results. What did you learn? What would you like to do differently next time?

Citations and Plagiarism

Be sure to cite any sources you used when writing this paper. We expect a **minimum of 5 academic sources** (a peer-reviewed journal is an academic source). The UNB Online Library resource is a great tool for this, as is Google Scholar. Please use APA citation format.

Do not fail to give credit for other people's ideas. Do not copy other people's work (including your peers). These are both considered plagiarism, and for your first offence, the section with the infraction will receive a 0. Your second offence will result in a report grade of 0, and possibly further academic penalties.

DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. It is obvious to us, and we *will* notice it. If you aren't sure where you should be using citations, or how to properly cite something, please email us and we will be happy to teach you how to cite.