

Assignment Descriptions

Following you will find descriptions of the assignments due this quarter. I have listed the directions and the values for each assignment. You will find detailed information on grading procedures and sample assignments on my website: cla.calpoly.edu/~mforte

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☛ class participation (individual) (25 points)

Part of your grade will come from class participation, including attendance. Participation counts for 25 points. I will excuse one absence during the quarter. After that, a note from the doctor will prevent the loss of 5 points per absence. IF YOU ARRIVE LATE, check at the end of class to make sure I marked you present. I will excuse occasional lateness, but frequent lateness will affect your participation grade. Your group needs your participation; arrive on time and ready to work. ☞

☛ quizzes (individual) (20 points each)

I give five quizzes during the quarter. They will primarily cover lecture notes and readings for the previous week or two (up to and including that day’s reading), but expect to see items from any previous lecture or reading on technical style. ☞

☛ diagnostic essay (individual) (credit (CR))

I will assess the writing capabilities of the class through this exam. I don’t assign a grade to it, but it is my first impression of you—so do your best. (Note: You get a comment sheet for this essay; I keep the essays for a year.) ☞

☛ communication improvement memo and presentation (individual) (CR)

Each student will find an example of faulty technical communication and present it to the class. Faulty technical communication includes any type of business, education, or technological communication that confuses the reader,

doesn't work or doesn't make sense, could harm the reader, and so on. You will sign up for a category in class; however, if you find a better example, come ask me if you can use that instead.

written requirement: In a one-page, single-spaced memo (no more), directed to the writer or owner of the faulty example (imagine you are an employee), you will include the following sections and headings after the memo headings:

- **Introduction to Example:** introduce the example, tell us how you found it, name the source, and state the purpose of the memo
- **Problem:** describe **3 specific faults** and explain how they are hurting communication (bullets make this section easier to read)
- **Solution:** explain specifically how you would fix each problem (often involves rewriting portions of the example) (bullets make this section easier to read)
- **Conclusion:** reiterate the importance of your suggested changes and ask for a specific action from the reader
- attach a copy of the example to the back of the memo
- include an overhead for the class. You can get overheads made at the library or a copy shop.

oral requirement: In a three minute oral presentation (practice for time), you will

- explain the problem
- offer a solution
- show the overhead

IMPORTANT: Avoid on-line examples from faulty tech writing contests, joke sites, and so on. You need to recognize the problem on your own. ☞

👉 project proposal and brief oral description (individual) (CR)

Following the sample proposal on my website, propose a product recommendation report topic that will benefit a **real reader outside of the class**—this reader must be someone you can talk to, not, for example, Chuck Norris. Topics from the past have included fly fishing equipment for the Poly Escapes manager, milking parlors for a farmer in the San Joaquin Valley, database software for a physical therapist, and so on. You must select a **product marketed by several manufacturers** for your topic.

The six best proposals will get permission to proceed, so select an interesting and manageable topic. For the proposal,

- use memo format and address your proposal to me
- use no more than 1.5 pages; staple as needed
- single space and **use the following 5 sections and headings:**

Statement of Problem and Solution Idea(s)

- What product will you investigate for your reader?
- What background information will help me understand the significance of this topic?
- What is the purpose of this memo?

Primary Reader (select one person only)

- Who is your anticipated primary reader? Include name and title (The class may not serve as your primary reader, and remember you are selecting a real reader outside of the class.)
- What background information on your reader will affect your writing choices? You must answer at least the following questions:
 - What level of education has your reader completed?

Do not use any of these topics:

- Stenner Glen, Creek, etc.
- Cal Poly parking
- Cal Poly food services
- Any topic that the primary reader will not be happy to talk to you about
- Telephone rates
- Local restaurants and other night life (remember, you might want to share this paper with a future employer)
- Anything you know you will be bored with by Week 6
- Anything illegal

- How long has this person worked at his or her present employment?
- What kind of experience does your reader have with the topic?

Scope

- What are the minimum specifications you will look for? (reader's minimum requirements)
- What aspects of this topic do you plan to cover? (options, often brands/models)
- What criteria will you use to examine the effectiveness of your solution? (Determine criteria by establishing your reader's needs, and use superlative phrasing: least expensive, longest battery life, and so on)

Methods

- What types of empirical research (first hand: interviews, surveys, experiments, and so on) do you plan to use to determine your solution?
- What types of electronic sources (internet, databases, and so on) will you use?
- What types of print research (magazines, scholarly journals, and so on) do you plan to use to determine your solution?

Conclusion

Reemphasize the importance of your project and include a request for approval (from me) to proceed with the project. ☞

☞ résumé (individual) (CR)

Write a résumé including your contact information, education, and experience. Remember, the more information you include, the more feedback I can give you. Check my résumé tips handout on line for further help. The Career Services website also has some useful examples. (**Note:** I will keep the résumés until the day we go to Career Services. However, if you need it back for a job fair, interview, etc. let me know and I will get it to you sooner.) ☞

☞ doc specs (includes style sheet) (group) (CR)

You will fill out the yellow document specifications form provided in class. Each member will keep a personal copy, and one copy will go to me (find forms on my website). Please write legibly. Also, remember to **attach a typed memo of transmittal**. (The memo of transmittal must include the team name and logo, along with the names and initials of each group member in the memo heading.)

You will complete all but the final page (style sheet) for the first turn-in date. Then after we've done document formatting in the computer lab, you will turn in the final page (style sheet). See class schedule for dates.

Note: Scope and schedule often change as the course progresses. ☞

☞ outline and skeleton summary table (group) (CR)

Please submit a detailed outline of your recommendation report. The detailed outline should include as much information as possible. It must include

- a brief memo of transmittal
- a list of your selected options
- a list of your minimum specifications
- a list of your evaluative criteria and a description of the ideal for each
- a skeleton outline of your summary table

You may use a traditional outline format or devise your own. Do not use complete sentences. Check these items carefully:

- All headings on the same hierarchical level match in importance, specificity, and grammatical construction (parallelism)
- Key words appear in all headings. Avoid general headings like "Introduction" and "Conclusion"
- You do not have any single subpoints. ☞

✎ status report (individual) (CR)

Write a status report—maximum 2 pages—detailing

- what you and your group have done up to the due date
- what you and your group are planning to do
- how much time you have spent on each activity

Do not include individual work of fellow group members.

Follow the format on my website, including a **record of the time you have spent** on each activity. Use complete sentences. Do not use the telegraphic style or the passive voice; you want to sound like you are working hard. Also, remember to construct each of your points in a parallel manner.

Tip: use your class schedule and doc specs as references. They will help your memory, but they will not cover everything I expect to see. Don't forget research details and group work.

Each student must turn in an individually written status report. ☞

✎ drafts, electronic and paper—polished (group) (CR)

Your group will bring electronic copies of the recommendation report draft to the computer lab, and one paper copy per group member to the classroom on the days indicated in the class schedule. Please put the electronic draft in at least **two different electronic forms—CD, USB drive, etc.** —so that we will be able to read them in the computer lab. (Posting to Blackboard may not work, so bring the disks.) The draft will include

- a title page
- a space for the executive summary or informational abstract
- the table of contents
- the introduction, including a detailed description of your minimum specifications and evaluative criteria
- all of your findings
- your conclusion/recommendation
- roughed out graphics (or at least spaces for them)
- a virtually completed summary table

You may leave out the rest of the front and back matter unless you have questions about them.

The term *polished* indicates that you will have

- organized the information carefully
- observed mechanics and technical writing conventions
- used complete sentences and paragraphs
- included headings
- double spaced
- included page numbers ☞

✎ memo rewrite (individual) (50 points – 10 point deduction per day late)

You will submit a rewrite of one of the following: the communication improvement memo, the project proposal, or the status report—your choice. Make the changes I asked for on the original draft using the assignment corrections sheet for help in deciphering the grading codes. (Feel free to ask me for help as well.) Staple the rewrite on top of the original assignment plus the checklist and any earlier rewrites. **Note:** Redoing an incomplete or incorrect assignment does not take the place of this rewrite. ☞

✎ conference (group) (attendance credit)

Your group will have a 25-minute conference with me toward the end of the quarter. Check the sign up sheet for your date and time. This time belongs to your group: bring questions about your recommendation report. ☞

👉 in-class essay (individual) (200 points)

The in-class essay will last 50 minutes. I recommend that you concentrate your study on the following:

- Style and grammar notes from the lectures and text
- The Paramedic Method
- Formats and strategies of effective business letters and memos

You may also bring and use

- your notes
- your textbook ☞

👉 product recommendation presentation (group) (50 points—10 point deduction per day for late presentation or slide printout)

Each group must present their project to the class using Microsoft *PowerPoint* or an equivalent software program. Your presentation should last about fifteen minutes. Practice beforehand so you don't go over or under. Feel free to use notes, but don't just read them to us. Make your presentation interesting and informative.

IMPORTANT: I will check out a projector, but you must order any other equipment you want from Media Services (laptop?). Remember to place orders with Media Services a couple of weeks in advance so they can contact me in plenty of time to verify my signature.

The presentation must include enough slides to adequately illustrate the main points of the report. Groups have also used videos, skits, posters, charts, graphs, overheads, slides, and so on. Remember, effective visuals for an oral presentation should be larger and more simplified than those you use in your written report. Other ideas from past presentations include taste tests, debates, class votes, games.

👉 I will need a **printout** of your slides. Use the 6-slide per page handout (Try this: choose print—under type, select PowerPoint—under print what, select handouts: **6 per page**.) Grayscale is fine.

Consider this a formal occasion; dress appropriately (no sagging, no navels showing, and so on—dress as though you were going to a job interview at a conservative—ties and skirts—company). ☞

👉 product recommendation report (group) (200 points—40 point deduction for each day late)

You and your group will write an analytical report, based on the selected project proposal, that will benefit a primary reader outside the class (a real person). The report will evaluate and recommend a specific product for your reader.

Your report, limited to 20 single-spaced pages, bound in a spiral folder will employ the following:

- Appropriate front matter
- An introduction, body, and conclusion with visuals
- Appropriate back matter
- Empirical, print, and electronic sources

👉 REMINDER: use the **review checklist** from my website to make sure you do not leave out any items. ☞

👉 group evaluations (individual) (CR – 50 points from overall grade if late or missing)

You will fill out one group member evaluation form for each member of your group (excluding yourself). You can find the forms on my website. Bring the completed evaluations to my office before the end of your final exam period. ☞