

# Assignment Descriptions

---

Following you will find descriptions of the assignments due this quarter. I have listed the directions and the values for each assignment:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| ☛ class participation (individual).....  | 1 |
| ☛ diagnostic exam (individual) .....   | 1 |
| ☛ quizzes (individual) .....   | 1 |
| ☛ communication improvement memo (and presentation) (individual).....                    | 1 |
| ☛ assembly instructions doc specs with memo of transmittal (group) .....                 | 2 |
| ☛ prototype with printout draft of assembly steps (group) .....                          | 2 |
| ☛ engineer interview memo (individual) .....   | 2 |
| ☛ résumé (individual).....   | 3 |
| ☛ assembly instructions polished draft (group).....                                      | 3 |
| ☛ engineering recommendation report doc specs (group).....                               | 3 |
| ☛ engineering recommendation report outline and summary table (group).....               | 3 |
| ☛ professional journal memo—(individual) .....   | 4 |
| ☛ engineering recommendation report polished drafts (paper and electronic) (group) ..... | 5 |
| ☛ memo rewrite (individual) .....  | 5 |
| ☛ conference (group).....  | 5 |
| ☛ assembly instructions final draft (group) .....  | 5 |
| ☛ essay exam (individual) .....  | 6 |
| ☛ group presentation: prototype assembly and PowerPoint® printouts (group).....          | 6 |
| ☛ engineering recommendation report final draft (group) .....                            | 6 |
| ☛ group evaluations (individual) .....   | 7 |

## ☛ 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, only 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. ✨

## ☛ diagnostic exam (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.) ✨

## ☛ 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. ✨

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

Each student will find an example of faulty technical communication, write a memo for it, and present it to the class. Faulty technical communication includes any type of business, education, or technological communication which confuses the reader, doesn't work, 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 \_\_\_\_\_ (name the problem):** introduce the example, tell us how you found it, name the source, and state the purpose of the memo

✨ indicates the end of a specific description. If you do not see this symbol, you need to look at the following page for further directions.

- **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
- Finally, paperclip a **transparency copy** of the example to the back of the memo. You can get a transparency made at any local or on-campus print shop, including the Pony Prints in the library and Poly Canyon.

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

- explain the problem
- offer a solution
- display the transparency for the class—some students choose to make transparencies of both the problem and the solution (Don't make a transparency of the memo.)

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

## ✎ **assembly instructions doc specs with memo of transmittal (group) (CR)**

So I can get an idea of your plans for the assembly instructions (see *assembly instructions* assignment below), your group will

- write a **memo of transmittal** with your team logo on it, as well as all of the team members' names and initials in the memo heading (the sample on line is the short version; this memo is longer). Your memo will
  - tell us the official name of the item you are writing the assembly instructions for
  - specify its purpose and how it achieves its purpose
  - name the fuel source it uses
  - state the purpose of the memo
  - specify an explicit action for your reader (me, for this assignment) to take
- fill out the **yellow document specifications** form that I give you in class (keep copies for each group member)
- **staple** the memo to the top of the yellow doc specs (and don't forget **initials**)

**Hint:** Google CSU Mentor for demographic information on Cal Poly.

**Note:** After I have processed them, you will keep the yellow doc specs until you turn them in with your final draft of the assembly instructions. ✨

## ✎ **prototype with printout draft of assembly steps (group) (CR)**

To test the usability of your assembly instructions, your group will bring the following to class:

- the parts list
- printed out list of assembly steps (at least 15 steps/substeps)
- the **unassembled** prototype with at least 5 separate components
- illustrations (rough sketches will work for now)
- any tools needed for assembly ✨

## ✎ **engineer interview memo (individual) (CR)**

For this assignment, you will interview an engineer. You may interview a friend or relative, or you may call an engineering company. You may not use an engineering professor from Cal Poly. After the interview write me a memo—maximum one page, single-spaced, using paragraph style and subheadings as indicated—answering at least the following questions (you may add questions if you like):

**Introduction to [Engineer's Name and Field]**

- Who is your engineer and what company does he or she work for?
- What type of product/service does the company provide?
- What is your engineer's specific job?
- How long has this person worked in engineering?

#### **Job Skills and Communication**

- What job skills does this engineer find most useful for him/herself? For other engineers? (Ask for specific examples.)
- What percentage of this engineer's workday is spent in written communication? Oral communication?
- In which situations does this engineer recommend using which communication strategies (email, paper memos, letters, face-to-face communication, phone calls, etc.)?
- What advice can this engineer give you about communication skills and strategies?

#### **Conclusion** (now focusing on you, the student)

- Did you hear anything that you did not expect from this interview?
- Did this engineer give you any other useful advice?
- How will you use the information that this engineer gave you? (What will it motivate you to do?)

**Note:** Remember to use the strategies for writing effective memos: explicit purpose statement, concrete details, action for reader (me), and so on. ✨

### ✎ **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.) ✨

### ✎ **assembly instructions polished draft (group) (CR)**

Your group will submit a paper polished draft of the complete assembly instructions (see description below). The term *polished* indicates that you will have

- memo of transmittal
- organized the information carefully
- observed mechanics and technical writing conventions
- used complete sentences and paragraphs
- included headings
- included page numbers
- paper clipped or stapled the pages ✨

### ✎ **engineering recommendation report doc specs (group) (CR)**

For this assignment your group will tell me its plan for the engineering recommendation report. Your group will

- read the engineering recommendation report description later in this document
- write a short **memo of transmittal** with your team logo on it
- fill out the **yellow document specifications** form that I give you in class (keep copies for each group member) ✨

### ✎ **engineering recommendation report outline and summary table (group) (CR)**

For this assignment your group will give me an idea of what your engineering recommendation report will look like. Your group will

- write a short **memo of transmittal** with your team logo on it (separate from the doc specs memo)
- write an **outline** of your engineering recommendation report (see the report description later in this document)

- include a skeleton **summary table** —you don't need the data filled in yet, just the column and row headers (see samples on line)

Include as much information as possible in your outline. 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".
- The sections have no single subpoints
- The criteria list in the introduction matches the subheadings in the body and in the summary table identically

**Note:** As soon as your group fills out and submits a complete and reasonable outline, you will receive full credit and appropriate efficiency points. I often return the outlines with further questions before I record the credit. If you get yours back with neither points nor a CR on it, remember to fix it and return it to me on the day indicated on the checklist. ✨

## ✎ professional journal memo—(individual) (CR)

This assignment looks at some of the literature that will help you keep current in your field as your career advances. For this memo you will examine articles from **professional journals in your field**. The journals must be peer reviewed.

To complete the assignment you will need to select articles from two journals:

- one of the main journals in your field from the past 12 months
- another of the journals in your field or a related field from the last 3 years

In a maximum one-page memo with subheadings, analyze the articles separately, including the following information:

- the names of the journals
- the field(s) they come(s) from (if it isn't obvious from the names)
- the names of the articles you selected
- a brief summary of the articles' contents. Be sure to include the topics, main points, and the final conclusions
- an explanation of how these articles are related to each other
- an explanation of how this information is relevant to your degree and the job you hope to have
- full citations of both articles as they would appear in an APA-style reference list (see Figure 1 below)

You will need to provide the following as well:

- A copy of each journals' table of contents
- A copy of the first page of each article
- A copy of the first page of each reference list at the end of the article.

**McGregor, Seamus. (2007). The Advantages of Copper over PVC. *Applied Engineering in Agriculture*, 23(1), 5-11.**

McGregor, agricultural engineering professor at the University of Aberdeen, discusses the superiority of copper for construction of rabbit traps. ✨

**Figure 1: Sample journal citation in APA format**

## ✎ engineering recommendation report polished drafts (paper and electronic) (group) (CR)

Your group will bring electronic copies of the engineering recommendation report draft to the computer lab (if we can get it), and a paper copy for each group member to the classroom as indicated in the class schedule. Please put the draft in at least **two different electronic forms—CD, USB drive, or ?**—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

- spaces for the front matter (transmittal, title page, abstract or summary, table of contents, table of figures)
- the introduction
- the body/discussion
- the conclusion and recommendations
- space for the back matter

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
- included page numbers
- paper clipped or stapled the pages ✎

## ✎ memo rewrite (individual) (50 points)

You will submit a rewrite of one of the following: the engineer interview memo, the communication improvement memo, or the technology improvement memo—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) (CR)

Your group will have a 25 minute conference with me toward the end of the quarter. Make a note of the time you sign up for and arrive on time. This time belongs to your group: bring questions about your engineering recommendation report. ✎

## ✎ assembly instructions final draft (group) (100 points)

Your group will develop assembly instructions for one of the following:

- a **mind reading device**
- an **automatic homework submitter**

The audience for this assignment is all Cal Poly students and staff. You will need to build a prototype for this product and bring it to class; therefore, it needs to be portable and simple enough to design and construct in 15 minutes or less. The prototype will have **at least 5 components and 15 steps for assembly** (energy source, energy containment chamber, control set, on-off switch, and so on). In addition it must “operate” using a non-traditional energy source easily found on campus—no batteries or electrical outlets.

The prototype this quarter must use a **wire or plastic hanger** as one of the “components”. To this component you may add anything you choose: broken cell phones, outdated stereo equipment, dead printers, and so on. You should use items you would have normally just thrown out. You may also use leftover cardboard, wire, glue, foil, bottle tops, popsicle sticks, play dough, and so on. We will not enter your prototypes in a beauty contest.

The accompanying assembly instructions—limited to 5 pages, 8.5” x 11”, no fold, single spaced and stapled (no folders please)— will include the following:

- a brief **memo of transmittal** (not the same as the memo of transmittal for the doc specs)

- a **title page/cover** with key words/product name, organizational markers/type of document (the product name should indicate its purpose), the team logo, an illustration of the product, and the copyright date
- **warnings** in the proper places (you must think of at least two potential hazards to warn your audience about)
- a brief **introduction** with a statement of purpose (what the device does and how)
- an **equipment** and/or **parts** lists with visuals. Use terms that will make sense to your general audience.
- a numbered list of **steps** for assembly. Remember to respect short-term memory and use chunking. Be consistent; use parallel grammar
- effective document design

☛ **REMINDER:** use the **review checklist** from my website to make sure you do not leave out any items. I strongly recommend you drop by my office to see samples. ✨

## ☛ **essay exam (individual) (200 points)**

You will take an essay exam in this class on the date specified in the class schedule. The exam will last 50 minutes. I recommend that you concentrate your study on the following:

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

You may also bring and use

- your notes
- your textbook ✨

## ☛ **group presentation: prototype assembly and PowerPoint® printouts (group) (50 points – 10 point deduction per day late presentation or slide printout)**

You will present and build your prototype for 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. You may use notes, but don't just read them to us. Make your presentation interesting and informative, but please don't do anything that will disrupt other classes in the building.

The presentation must include enough slides to adequately illustrate the main points of the report. Remember, effective visuals for an oral presentation should be larger and more simplified than those you use in your written report.

☛ 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.)

Feel free to include fun activities: Ideas from past presentations include taste tests, debates, class votes, games.

**IMPORTANT:** I will check out a projector, but you must order any other equipment you want from Media Distribution Services (laptop?). Remember to place orders with Media Distribution a couple of weeks in advance so they can contact me in plenty of time to verify my signature. You can find them in 02-09 and 10-125.

Consider this a **formal occasion**; dress appropriately (no sagging, no navels, no flip-flops, no athletic shoes, and so on—dress as though you were going to a job interview at a conservative company). ✨

## ☛ **engineering recommendation report final draft (group) (200 points – 50 point deduction per day late)**

You and your group will write an analytical report recommending a technical product. For example you may choose a new surface for a slippery walkway on campus, replace a type of door or gate for Housing, recommend new copiers for the library—you decide. You will write this report for a real person on campus (but not in this class), and

I will send it to that person by school mail. Choose a reader you can easily contact for further information and a topic that will fit within the page limit.

Your report—body limited to 12, single-spaced pages, primary reader’s copy spiral bound—will employ the following:

- A letter of transmittal on the primary reader’s copy & a memo of transmittal on my copy
- A title page
- An abstract or executive summary
- A table of contents
- An introduction covering these elements:
  - Topic with significance and relevant background
  - Purpose of report
  - Decision making process—minimum specifications, options, criteria, research methods
- Body: discussion of options in terms of criteria
- Final summary and recommendations plus summary table
- Appropriate visuals and document design
- A list of references including empirical (minimum 4), print (2 minimum), and electronic (2 minimum) sources

**Off-limits topics:** bike racks, cell phone plans, party-oriented products, anything to do with food services on campus, anything illegal

**Off-limits criteria:** Avoid subjective criteria (appearance, taste, smell, feel, and so on) unless you clear them with me first. Also avoid general criteria (quality, workmanship, ease of use, and so on) unless you define them specifically and concretely. Your goal is to select measurable criteria.

☛ **REMINDER:** use the **review checklist** from my website to make sure you do not leave out any items. I strongly recommend you drop by my office to see samples. ✨

### ☛ **group evaluations (individual) (CR– 50 deduction for 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. ✨