

Memorandum

To: ENL 266 students

From:

Date:

Re: Technical communication skills report assignment

Your first class assignment is to research and analyze the skills you will need as a professional in your field. Below I have outlined the requirements, strategies, and evaluation criteria for this assignment.

Overview and Requirements

This assignment is an opportunity to analyze the communication skills you will need as a professional. For this assignment, you will interview a professional in your field, analyze job openings as well as the websites of potential employers to find out the skills your field values.

In the textbook, Johnson-Sheehan outlines a definition of technical communication: “Technical communication is a process of managing technical information in ways that allow people to take action” (p. 10). In your report, analyze what this definition means in relation to the skills you will need in your profession. Support your analysis with examples from your interview and from the job announcements of potential employers. In this report, your goal is to focus on the written communication skills in your field, not simply narrate what your interviewee said or what you found on the job announcements. Instead, use key concepts and quotes from the textbook to analyze the writing practices and expectations in your field. Organize the information into a brief (600–800 words, single-spaced) written memo report.

The Interview

For the interview, ask questions based on the readings:

- Tell me about your job. What is your job title? Briefly describe your job responsibilities.
- How much of your time on the job do you spend writing?
- What kinds of documents do you write?
- Who reads your documents? Are your readers primarily inside or outside the company? What are their needs? Do you communicate with people from other cultures?
- Do you follow a writing process?
- What writing skills do you think are key to doing your job well?

As you prepare for the interview, consider the following strategies:

- Interview someone you know in a current or past workplace.
- Accommodate your interviewees. They are doing you a favor. Schedule the interview at their convenience, arranging to meet in their offices or a place convenient to them.

- Anticipate how you will record their answers. Will you take notes during the interview? If so, have paper and pen ready. Will you write down their responses after the interview? If so, do it immediately following the interview while your memory is fresh. Or will you record your interview? If so, you must get permission from your interviewee before the interview starts.
- As you conduct the interview, ask for examples
- Make sure you use their time well. Time is valuable to people. Be on time and don't go over the allotted time set aside for the interview. Practice the interview beforehand so that you are well prepared.

Remember, you are doing the interview, so let your interviewee do the talking. In addition, at the close of the interview, remember to thank your interviewee as you leave. Soon after the interview, you should write or email a formal thank you.

Evaluation

In addition to the general grade criteria listed in our syllabus, I will evaluate your memos as follows:

Content

- Key concepts from the text are used to develop an insightful analysis
- Quotes and examples support your analysis and are well-chosen. They work to further your ideas in compelling ways, prompting readers to think.
- Your purpose is consistently clear and voiced throughout the text

Coherence

- A logical pattern of organization is used, “chunking” information for the reader
- Transitions between paragraphs and sentences guide readers through the material and aid comprehension
- Page design is deliberate, helping readers to find and use the information in your document, including appropriate use of headings and lists
- Introduction and conclusion frame the document and its contents for your audience

Style and Mechanics

- Language and tone adapted to the subject, purpose, and audience
- A variety of sentence constructions are used to engage the reader
- Document has no mechanical errors and requires no revision; sources are properly cited
- Document follows memo conventions, and its length is appropriate

If you have any questions, please ask.