



**Agricultural Economics
Undergraduate Writing Handbook - 2009**

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important skills a student can improve while in college is his or her writing. The ability to convey facts and opinions in an intelligible and readable manner is crucial in the business world. Since primary school, students have been taught the importance of written and verbal communication, but not until they enter the workforce do they realize how often they need to use written communication within industry positions. Students at Texas A&M University are required to take one Communications elective. This course can be English Literature, Technical Writing, and, for some departments, even Speech. However, none of these classes provides writing instruction focused on the real world and the jobs students may have.

In 2003, Texas A&M established the requirement for all students to complete one writing-intensive course. This course was specified to be offered within a student's major and designed to improve the student's writing as it applied to his or her degree. In the fall of 2007, this requirement increased to two writing-intensive courses. Writing-intensive courses in the Department of Agricultural Economics are geared toward providing students opportunities to write memorandums, policy briefs, and research papers that are examples of the work required of professionals in career tracks pursued by Agricultural Economics (AGEC) and Agribusiness (AGBU) majors.

Currently, the Department of Agricultural Economics offers two writing-intensive courses to all students, AGECE 217, "Fundamentals in Agricultural Economic Analysis," and AGECE 429, "Agricultural Policy." Also offered to Agribusiness students only is AGECE 431, "Cases in Agribusiness Finance."

The writing-intensive courses are not the only courses in the Department of Agricultural Economics that have a writing component. Most upper-level courses require students to complete at least one substantial paper on a significant topic. The focus on developing writing skills starts at the beginning of a student's time in the Department and continues through graduation. The goal of the faculty in the Department is to graduate students that can both understand the economic theories at work in agriculture and related industries and be able to convey that understanding to any type of audience.

This writing guide has been created to improve written communication for Department of Agricultural Economics students in planning, drafting, and revising such materials as memorandums, résumés, cover letters, and executive summaries. This document will serve as a useful tool for identifying simple common mistakes in writing and writing processes to improve the professionalism and quality of writing presented by Department of Agricultural Economics students. Students are encouraged to use it as a reference throughout their time in the Department.

This document follows the American Psychological Association (APA) style of citations. Students should use the citation style required by their professor. If the professor prefers no style, the student should choose an appropriate style. *Appendix E* covers various citation methods.

WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSES

Writing-intensive courses arrived at Texas A&M in the 21st century and now at least two are required for all graduates (Texas A&M University, 2007). The rationale for these courses is that students who learn to write about issues in their chosen major field will become experts more quickly and will be better able to convince employers and others about their expertise. The W-courses are opportunities for “writing-to-learn” as well as a place for students to learn (or refresh their memory about) how to write. The university rule-making process behind W-courses was:

“The Core Curriculum Review Committee report entitled "Educational Leadership at the Beginning of the 21st Century" (March 28, 2000, as amended and approved by the Faculty Senate, May 8, 2000), establishes the writing-intensive (W) course graduation requirement at Texas A&M University. The first writing-intensive course graduation requirement went into effect for Catalog 127 (Fall 2004). The requirement for a second course is scheduled to be in place by Catalog 130 (Fall 2007). Faculty Senate Resolution 20.108 established the guidelines for implementation of writing-intensive courses at Texas A&M University. Resolution 20.18, submitted by the Academic Affairs Committee, was approved at the regular meeting of the Faculty Senate on March 17, 2003. President Gates approved the resolution on April 1, 2003,” (Texas A&M University Writing Center, 2007).

What can students in W-courses expect? Generally, W-courses should include approximately one semester-hour of writing instruction, and the course must be graded on students’ demonstrated writing skills. These general content and grading requirements have been elaborated in more specific detail by the Core Curriculum Review Committee and the University W Committee. Highlights of interest to students include:

1. Class size is not mandated, but a 20-to-1 ratio of students to faculty is recommended.
2. The instructor of record for a "W" course should be a faculty member who is in control of the curriculum and who is available to students as well as to any assistants (such as peer tutors or teaching assistants). Faculty should have approval over grades given by any teaching assistant and should have set up a workable method to ensure consistent and fair grading.
3. Finished, edited writing for grading should total at least 3,000 words (8 pages) in a 3 hour (credit) course.
4. The course should provide opportunities for revision by the student and feedback to the student from the instructor, as well as encourage students to use writing as an opportunity to think more substantively (or more clearly) and to communicate more effectively. Such feedback does not have to be graded.

5. Writing assignments are preferably distributed throughout the course to allow students to benefit optimally from feedback. While feedback does not have to take the form of a grade, it can be useful for students to have at least a mid-term grade so that they are clear on course standards and expectations. The proportion of the grade from writing work should be equivalent to one credit hour—that is, 33% or more of the course grade in a 3-hour (credit) course.
6. Assignments that encourage creative, critical thinking and that invite students to take ownership of their ideas are preferred over assignments that require a stock or uniform response. Students should be learning the acceptable forms of proof or types of evidence and the standard methods of documentation in their majors. In order to allow students to succeed in these higher-order thinking skills, it is preferred that W-courses be at the junior and senior level.
7. Ungraded, informal writing or other low stakes assignments such as journals are encouraged, particularly to help students develop fluency and provide them with ideas to explore in more formal papers.

The Department of Agricultural Economics is committed, on behalf of its students, to achieve the standards set forth by Texas A&M University for writing-intensive courses. A combination of faculty and graduate students are used to fulfill the spirit of the requirements. In addition to encouraging the use of the University Writing Center, the Department provides a “Writing Lab,” staffed by graduate assistants and undergraduates, to assist students in improving their writing skills.

UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER

Texas A&M University maintains a University Writing Center (UWC) in Sterling Evans Library. The UWC is located on the second floor of Evans or can be found on the web at <http://writingcenter.tamu.edu>. The UWC has a large number of staff and students that are tasked with improving Texas A&M students’ writing. Any writing assignment, big or small, can be taken to the UWC for help. Walk-ins are welcome, but the best way to see a UWC advisor is to make an appointment. Appointments are made by going to the website and following the directions at the top of the page.

The UWC website also contains an exceptional set of resources including pdf files, handouts, and web links to improve student writing. The UWC also puts on seminars throughout the year over such important concepts as grammar skills, proper citation, and plagiarism. Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness students are encouraged to utilize the UWC and its valuable resources.

AGEC WRITING LAB

The Department of Agricultural Economics maintains a Writing Lab to assist its students in completing assignments for all AGECE courses. The Writing Lab is located in room 305 of the Blocker building. Both graduate students and undergraduates work in the lab and thus the hours of operation change from semester to semester in association with changes in their schedules. To ensure ease of communication, the hours are listed on the door to the room. Students that work in the lab will provide guidance and assistance to any AGECE or AGBU student on their writing assignments. They will not edit a paper or write a paper, but they will provide suggestions and support.

GENERAL WRITING GUIDELINES

The first rule of writing is to write for the reader rather than for the writer. E.L. Doctorow, an American author and editor, once said, “Writing is an exploration. You start from nothing and learn as you go” (Hacker, 1998). This quotation sums the process of writing very well. Good writers approach the process of writing in several steps. Many different authors have attempted to identify these steps with varying results, but the consensus boils down to these three main stages:

1. Planning,
2. Drafting, and
3. Revising.

These three stages are reviewed in depth on the following pages, followed by some miscellaneous hints on writing at the end of this section.

Planning

Planning may be the most important step in writing a good paper. Thorough planning can save several hours of rework during the drafting and planning stages. One way to approach planning is to take some time constructing ideas about how to complete the assignment. Appropriate steps in planning include (Hacker, 2004):

1. Assess the scope and objectives of the writing assignment.
 - Subject
 - Is the subject given (i.e., assigned) or to be decided?
 - Is the subject worth writing about?
 - Is there any restriction on the coverage of the subject (narrow or broad)? How detailed should the coverage be?
 - Sources of information
 - Where does the information come from (personal experience, direct observation, interviews, questionnaires, books, internet, etc.)?
 - Are the sources credible? Do they have credentials?
For example, do not use Wikipedia as a primary source of information. Volunteers write Wikipedia collaboratively. The vast majority of its articles can be edited by anyone with access to the Internet. Most of the Department of Agricultural Economics faculty do not allow use of Wikipedia as a source of information for papers written for and submitted in their classes. Sources that are more credible would include the USDA, Economic Research Services, referred journal articles, or published textbooks.
 - Purpose
 - What is the purpose of the writing (to inform, persuade, analyze, recommend, etc.)?

- Audience
 - Are the readers well informed about the subject? What does the writer want to communicate to them? What do the readers want to know?
 - What is the decision-maker level of the audience? Is the reader the primary decision-maker or will they be reporting to that person?
 - Will the reader be interested and attentive?
 - What is the relationship of the writer to the reader (employee to supervisor, scholar to scholar, peer to peer)?
 - How much time are the readers willing to spend reading?
 - How sophisticated are the readers?

- Length and document design
 - Is there any length specification?

- Reviewer and deadlines
 - Who will review the writing?
 - When is the deadline?

2. Explore the subject

- Collect and record ideas about the subject.
- Clustering: Highlights relationship among ideas. Clustering is similar to brainstorming or free association.
- Create questions about the subject (who, what, when, where, why, how).

3. Settle on a tentative “thesis statement” and plan or outline. Settle on a tentative central idea and elaborate from that central point. The central idea is stated in one sentence, which is called a “thesis statement.”

- Effective thesis statements should be generalizations. They prepare readers for facts and details that will come later in the paper. Thesis statements are focused, not vague.

Too vague: Many of the songs played on station WXQP are *disgusting*, (Hacker, 1998).

Revised: Of the songs played on station WXQP, *too many depict anger and violence and sanction drug use*, (Hacker, 1998).

- Pick an interesting, attention-grabbing sentence to lead to the thesis statement.

Write a tentative outline to help organize, visualize, and review the writing. Refer to **Appendix A** for an example of a tentative outline.

Drafting

Focus on ideas and organization when making the first draft. This is the stage where writers fine-tune their topics and main issues. After thorough planning, which results in a collection of facts and notes, the drafting session should proceed efficiently. Steps in drafting include (Hacker 2004):

1. Write the first draft quickly.
2. Make an outline of the writing (**A-B-C** rules) (Hacker, 2004):
 - The **A**bstract/Introduction states the main point of the paper. An introductory paragraph or abstract provides introductory and summary information. It contains information such as:
 - *Purpose* of writing: Why is the writer writing?
 - *Scope*: What work did the writer do?
 - *Results*: What main point do the decision-makers or readers want to know?
 - *Contents*: What main sections follow?
 - The **B**ody develops the paper. The body gives details on the work of the writer to support his/her conclusions or recommendations. The body usually consists of:
 - *Background*: What led up to the project?
 - *Methods*: How was the information collected?
 - *Data*: What information resulted from the field, lab, or office work conducted during the study?
 - The **C**onclusion provides closure. Conclusions vary for different types of documents, but generally answer questions such as:
 - *Results*: What are the conclusions and recommendations?
 - *Actions*: What happens next?
 - *Emphasis*: What single point would the author like to leave with the readers?
 - *Personal Note*: What can the author add that will enhance their relationship with the readers?
3. When developing initial drafts of a paper, do not stop to edit for grammar or spelling, since this could derail the drafting process. However, do not submit drafts for review by others (professors, teaching assistants, peers, etc.) without editing for grammar and spelling. Editing is an important and necessary step toward achieving quality writing that is communicative to your readers.
4. Begin with the easiest section of the outline and work through to the most difficult.
5. Write the summary section last. The best summary is usually achieved after the writer has the chance to view a completed draft of the rest of the document.

Revising

1. Adjust and reorganize.
 - Expand sections that need more development.
 - Shorten sections that are too wordy.
 - Modify the locations of sentences and paragraphs that are out of order.

2. Edit for style.
 - Improve clarity and logical flow of ideas by using transitional words and rewording passages. Refer to *Appendix B* for tips on several ways to improve clarity in writing.
 - Change passive-voice sentences to active, unless there is a good reason to use passive-voice.
 - Passive: *The Cleveland Cavaliers were beaten by San Antonio Spurs.*
 - Active: *The San Antonio Spurs beat the Cleveland Cavaliers.*
 - Define technical terms.
 - Add headings, lists, and graphics.
 - Replace longer words with synonyms that are shorter and easier to understand. Refer to *Appendix C* on list of empty or inflated phrases that can be cut or replaced without losing their meanings.

3. Edit for grammar:
 - Use knowledge or grammar editorial advice to determine common mistakes.
 - Go to the UWC or AGECE departmental writing labs for editing help. Have your friends and peers look over your paper for grammar and spelling mistakes.
 - Refer to *Appendix D* for AGECE 217 Tips on Repeated Mistakes.

4. Edit for citations.

Use the right citations. Parenthetical references should immediately follow any borrowed information. Any material taken from another source **must be cited appropriately and included in the reference section.**

Example: *The author indicates that writers are required to include parenthetical reference to all borrowed information unless the information is understood to be “common knowledge” (Pfeiffer, 2007).*

A documentation system or reference section should be included at the end of the document. Students should use the most appropriate system that is suited to the audience required for the writing. For most assignments in AGECE, using some of the most common styles such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), American Psychological Association (APA), or Chicago Manual of Style would be acceptable. As indicated earlier, this manual follows the APA style for citations. Some instructors specify one or another of these as their choice for use in their class. For example, some assignments, such as a major project, thesis, or other higher-level work, require a more formal documentation style geared toward AGECE, such as one used in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics. Refer to *Appendix E* for internet links to several of the most common citation styles.

5. Edit for mechanics.

- Omitted words or phrases.
- Misspelled words.
- Inconsistent margins.
- Wrong page numbering.
- In consistent in the use of headings and subheadings.
- Spacing between words, sentences, paragraphs, sections, etc.
- Eliminate sections of headings and/or one line of text occurring at the bottom of a page.

All of the previous general guidelines of writing should help writers to organize their thoughts and compose them into a coherent writing. Use these guidelines to compose any of the types of the writings that explored in the following sections.

Other Writing Hints

One subject that thoroughly confuses students in AGECE is how to title figures and tables. Many papers and projects in our department require the use of figures and/or tables to make the project more readable and understandable. There is a distinct protocol for labeling each.

Always place the titles for figures below the figure. “Figure” is capitalized and the figure is numbered. If you have chapters, the figure is given a chapter number and an individual number. For example, the third figure in the fourth chapter of a book is titled, “Figure 4-3.” After the period, list the title of the figure with all words capitalized like the title of a paper. End the entire title with a period. Figure 1 shows an example. If a figure is in a paper, it must be mentioned as part of the text in the paper.

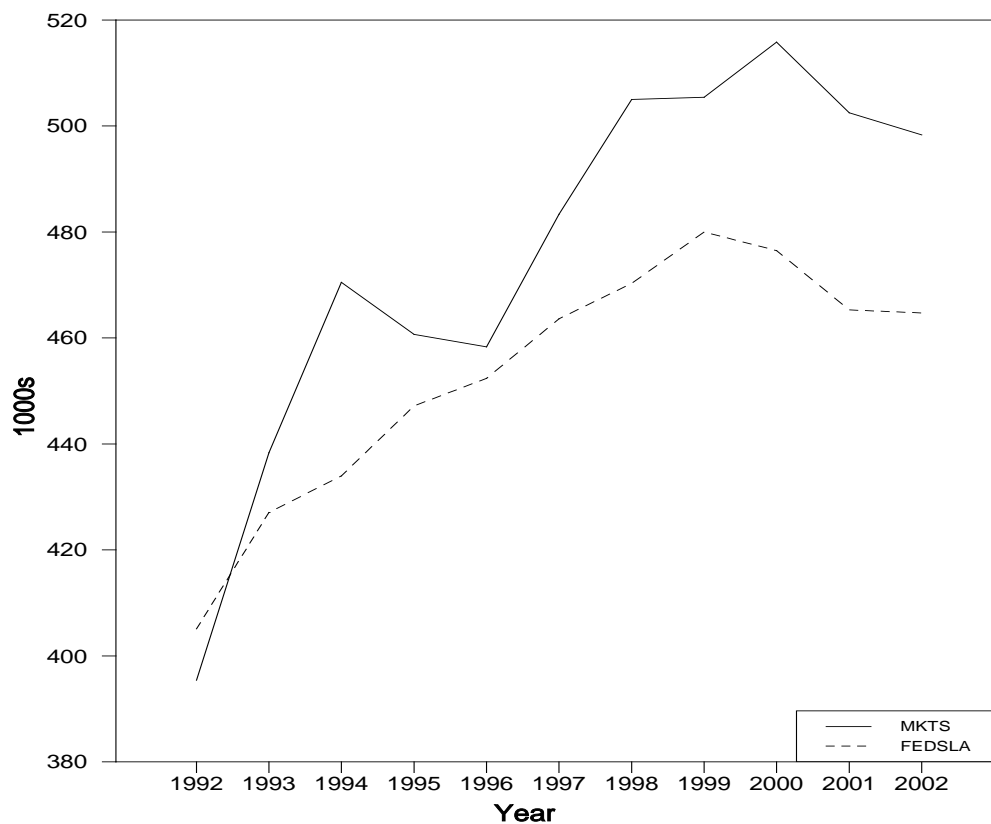


Figure 1. Yearly Means of Monthly MKTS and FEDSLA (Menzies, 2004).

Tables are treated differently than figures. List titles of tables above the table. The parts of the title are the same as a figure; capitalize all words and end with a period. Table 1 is an example.

Table 1. Mike Piazza Statistics 1993-2005 (Menzies & Butt, 2008).

Year	RBI	HR
1993	112	35
1994	92	24
1995	93	32
1996	105	36
1997	124	40
1998	111	32
1999	124	40
2000	113	38
2001	94	36
2002	98	33
2003	34	11
2004	54	20
2005	62	19

TYPE OF WRITING

There are several types of writings that are widely used in business or academia. The four specific types used by students in AGECE and AGBU are memorandum, résumé, cover letter, and executive summary. Additionally, graduates of the Agricultural Economics Department often use these four formats throughout their professional life.

A memorandum is a brief form of writing used in an office to communicate any type of information. Regardless of the type of office or information, the memorandum is required to be concise, clear, and easy to read. Readers should be able to immediately understand the content of the memorandum.

To begin a professional career, knowledge of good résumé and cover letter mechanics is imperative. Résumés and cover letters are tools used to communicate applicants' skills to prospective employers. Cover letters serve as an introduction of the applicants to the employers. A cover letter should explain the objective of the applicants and highlight the skills that demonstrate why they are the best candidate for the position. A résumé further explains the complete background of the applicant. The goal of a résumé is to illustrate achievement, attributes, and expertise to the best possible advantage and minimize any possible weaknesses.

Another form of a résumé is the curriculum vitae (CV). A CV used in the United States when applying for academic, education, scientific, or research positions. In other parts of the world, employers routinely ask for a CV instead of a résumé, so they can access personal information (e.g., date of birth, nationality, place of birth) that cannot legally be required on a résumé inside the United States. A CV is longer than a résumé (more than one page) and provides a more detailed synopsis of a person's background and skills. A summary of education and academic backgrounds as well as any teaching awards, research, publications, and honors are also included.

The executive summary is one type of writing used by many individuals in the "real world." Professionals who complete projects and research are often required to write a report detailing the process, results, and implications of a specific topic or issue. An executive summary completes a report by providing a brief, but conclusive, insight into the entire report. An executive summary is an initial interaction between the writers of the report and their target readers: decision makers, potential customers, and/or peers. A business leader's decision to continue reading a certain report often depends upon the impression provided by the executive summary.

The following section includes further explanation, formats, tips, and examples of the four above-mentioned types of writing. Additional information is presented in the appendices, which follow this section.

MEMORANDUM

The memorandum is a form of communication used within a company or organization. Its purpose is to give a busy executive, decision maker, or reader a brief summary of information considered important. Readers of memos are busy people; therefore, lay out the structure of the writing as clearly and concisely as possible. The characteristics of good memorandums are (Hacker, 2004):

1. They are concise and to the point.
2. They aim to report information, to make a request, or to recommend an action.
3. Only essential information is given.
4. The format is designed for easy distribution, quick reading, and easy filing.
5. They use straightforward language and short sentences.

The writer of a memo should keep in mind the method laid out in the 'General Writing Guidelines' section of this Handbook. This method is useful for memos, letters, and research papers. The ABC (Abstract-Body-Conclusion) format, demonstrated earlier in the section on Use drafting, which applies to all technical documents, including memorandums, as a basis for all writing. While memorandums do not usually contain abstracts, the idea of having a clear purpose and outlining the contents of the memo is still important and makes the ABC format appropriate.

A typical memorandum will be a single page in length. Readers of a memorandum do not want to look through an entire research paper to find the information they desire. A memorandum that is one page can contain appendices presenting additional information that the reader can read at a more opportune time, but the memorandum itself should usually be a single page unless another dimension is specified.

ABC FORMAT: MEMORANDUM (Pfeiffer, 2007)

Abstract

- Clear statement of purpose.
- Outline of main parts of memo.

Body

- Absolute clarity about what the memo has to do with the reader.
- Tactful presentation of any negative news.
- Supporting points, with strong points at the beginning or end.
- Frequent use of short paragraphs or lists.
- Reference to attachment, when extra detail is required.

Conclusion

- Clear statement of what steps should occur next.
- An effort to retain goodwill and cooperation of readers.

Tips on how to write a brief memorandum so that it can be understood immediately:

1. The subject line should describe the subject clearly and concisely.
2. The abstract or introductory paragraph should quickly make the author's main point and provide a "roadmap" to the organization of the memorandum.
3. The body should be well organized and easy to understand.
4. Bullet points can be used to focus on special issues headings used to categorize issues.
5. The conclusion should present a concise review of the memorandum's purpose and findings. It does not contain new information.

Refer to *Appendix F* for an example of a well-written memorandum. Additional examples may be found in William Sanborn Pfeiffer's book, "Pocket Guide to Technical Communication" (Pfeiffer, 2007).

RÉSUMÉ

A résumé or vitae serves as a marketing tool to highlight an individual's relevant experience, skills, and accomplishments. An effective résumé will assist in obtaining interviews and job possibilities. The goal of a résumé is to illustrate one's achievements, attributes, and expertise to the best possible advantage and minimize any possible weaknesses. Students will find that different jobs sometimes require different résumés. At the very least, write a different objective for each different job.

Below are important characteristics for a résumé (Phieffer, 2007):

- Résumés must be concise, easy to read, and easy to understand.
- Use words that are familiar to most readers and that have universal appeal.
- Limit résumé to one page and two at the most.
- The résumé should portray the applicant as a problem solver.
- Organize information into clear categories (e.g., Education, Experience, etc.).
- Present the educational and working experience in reverse chronological order (e.g., the most recent first) so that the résumé highlights the most recent accomplishment. Include the beginning and ending dates of each experience.
- Use bullets to draw the reader's attention to listed information.
- Use strong, active verbs to highlight accomplishments (Refer to *Appendix G* for examples of action verbs).

There are three types of résumés (Texas A&M University Career Center, 2008):

1. **Chronological** (most frequently used)
This format focuses on work history and activities and lists the experiences, beginning with the most recent and/or relevant. A chronological résumé lists Cooperative Education and internship experiences before more recent part-time work.
2. **Functional**
In a functional résumé, the experiences that are most relevant for the job are highlighted. The purpose of a functional résumé is to promote key skills and experiences without emphasizing where or when they were developed. Place specific jobs, employment dates, and job titles at the end of the résumé.
3. **Combination**
This résumé type is a combination of chronological and functional résumés. The résumé starts with a brief personal summary, then lists job-specific skills relevant for the job, and continues with the how, when, and where these skills were acquired.

Steps on writing a résumé (Texas A&M University Career Center, 2008):

1. Identify skills, abilities, and strengths.
2. Specify the objective or purpose for writing the résumé.
3. Compile extensive data for the résumé.
4. Prepare the first draft incorporating all of the pertinent sections and data.
5. Edit the initial data thoroughly.
6. Finalize the résumé data.
7. Produce a final draft of résumé and save final draft to a jump drive (flash drive) and a hard drive.
8. Develop a plan to distribute the résumé.
9. Write a cover letter for each résumé distributed by mail, fax, or e-mail.
10. Maintain a file of all the data gathered to prepare your initial draft; continue to add to this file for future reference.
11. Update the résumé every 6-12 months, or whenever significant changes occur.
12. Each time the résumé is updated, have someone review it to catch mistakes and gain another person's perspective.

Refer to Résumé Worksheet (*Appendix H*) to start writing a résumé.

Common Résumé Concerns:

- Length:
 - ✓ Try to keep résumé to one page; the average time a recruiter will spend to read a résumé for the first time is two minutes.
 - ✓ Arrange categories in order of relevance.
 - ✓ Present the most marketable information first.
- High school information:
 - ✓ Generally, once in college, exclude any high school information.
 - ✓ If you must put this information in your résumé:
 - College freshmen and sophomores can include high school achievements because they are recent and significant.
 - College juniors and seniors should only include them if they are truly unique, relevant, and significant.
- Appearance:
 - ✓ Use high-quality printer.
 - ✓ Use 8 1/2" by 11" bond or heavier paper of cotton/linen blend.
 - ✓ Appropriate colors are white, off-white, ecru, eggshell, light gray, and light tan.

- Grade Point Ratio:
 - ✓ It is an indicator of applicants' abilities and how much effort they put into their coursework.
 - ✓ Companies typically want to know an applicant's GPR.
 - ✓ Include the overall GPR.
 - ✓ In addition, include GPR in major and/or last 60 hours GPR if they are higher than overall GPR.

- Format:
 - ✓ Organize the résumé logically.
 - ✓ If using reverse chronological order, begin with the most recent education, work experiences, leadership role, etc. Be consistent in style across all sections.
 - ✓ Use brief, descriptive phrases instead of sentences.
 - ✓ Avoid using personal pronouns.

- Layout:
 - ✓ Margins should be no less than one-half inch in width.
 - ✓ Font size should be no smaller than 10 point.
 - ✓ Keep the résumé visually appealing and easy to read.
 - ✓ Use bold type, capitalization, or italics to emphasize section headings, employers, and job titles.
 - ✓ Use bullets to highlight responsibilities, achievements, and leadership.

- Critique and proofread:
 - ✓ Have at least four people review the final draft of the résumé. Attempt to attain the assistance of individuals who are "good" writers and who are willing to be objective and thorough.
 - ✓ Do not rely solely on the spell-check function in your word processing software.
 - ✓ Encourage your reviewers to be "picky." You do not have to use all of their edits, but the more input you have, the better your résumé will be.

- Cover Letter:
 - ✓ Always include a cover letter when sending a copy of your résumé by mail, fax, or e-mail.
 - ✓ Be sure to individualize each cover letter to the specific job and company to which you are applying.
 - ✓ Be sure to address the cover letter to the individual who will be reading the letter and reviewing your résumé.

Examples of each type of résumé may be found on Texas A&M career center website:
<http://careercenter.tamu.edu/guides/resumes/>.

COVER LETTER

Cover letters are powerful tools in competing for employment in today's job market. Most companies require applicants to include a cover letter with their résumé. The cover letter is an introduction for the applicant to the employer. The basic idea of a cover letter is to convey to the potential employer why he should hire you. The following tips come from the Texas A&M University Career Center (2008).

A cover letter's objective should be to:

- Entice prospective employers to review a candidate's résumé.
- Assist in answering the question of "Why should I hire you?"
- Indicate which position the candidate is pursuing and how he/she learned of the employment opportunity.
- Provide an outline of the individual's action plan and what steps will be taken next.

A cover letter should be:

- Formatted as a word-processed original unless the employer prefers e-mail correspondence.
- Addressed to the hiring manager.

Cover letter Don'ts:

- Do not exceed one page.
- Do not handwrite a cover letter.
- Do not have grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors.
- Do not repeat what is in the résumé.
- Do not attempt to flatter the employer.
- Do not use pre-printed form letters; instead, use individually-typed letters.
- Do not type on erasable or copy paper instead of résumé bond paper.
- Do not double-space the letter so that it takes two pages to say what could be said in one.
- Do not have lengthy paragraphs with run-on sentences.
- Do not forget to sign the letter. This indicates lack of attention to detail.
- Do not use overly-formal language.
- Do not show a lack of graphic appeal in terms of text size and margin.
- Do not include inappropriate information and do not omit critical data.

Cover Letter Checklist:

- ✓ Is the letter an original (i.e., not a mass-produced copy)?
- ✓ Have you addressed the letter to the correct person?
- ✓ Have you checked the gender of the person to whom you have addressed the letter?
- ✓ Will the letter capture the reader's attention?
- ✓ Is the format attractive, neat, and organized?
- ✓ Have you checked for spelling and other grammatical errors?
- ✓ Is the letter less than one page in length?
- ✓ Is the language concise?
- ✓ If you are responding to an ad, does the letter address the requirements of the position specified by the company?
- ✓ Have you specified what you want to do for the company rather than what you want the company to do for you?
- ✓ Did you avoid repeating details from your résumé in your cover letter?
- ✓ Have you specified personal accomplishments as well as future goals?
- ✓ Have you used active rather than passive verbs?
- ✓ Did you specify when you would contact them?
- ✓ Does your letter reflect confidence – not arrogance?
- ✓ Have you had one or more individuals review your cover letter?
- ✓ If sending your letter electronically, either sign the original and scan the completed letter and send it as a PDF or develop and incorporate an electronic signature into the letter.

*Refer to **Appendix I** for *Résumé Cover Letter example*.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An executive summary is a concise and clear conclusion of a report, regardless of its purpose, whether it is a proposal, business plan, or business report. The purpose of an executive summary is to acquaint the reader with the full document without having to read the entire paper. It conveys the core message of the report; its main goal is to sell, not to describe. Thus, it is result oriented. An executive summary gives a succinct answer to questions such as (e-Business Plan Tutorial, 2007):

- Why should the decision maker follow your recommendation?
- Why should a decision maker choose your solution to a problem?
- Why should a customer select you?
- Why should potential investors invest their capital in your business?

An executive summary is an initial interaction between the writers of the report and their target readers: decision makers, potential customers, and/or peers. A business leader's decision to continue reading a certain report often depends on the impression the executive summary gives. This is why it is crucial to have a clear and convincing executive summary that communicates the essence and energy of the report. Below are the key components of an executive summary.

1. Strong beginning

Start with the most compelling statement of why the recommendation/solution/business plan is excellent. It should be direct and specific.

- Describe the 'key change' factor, either internal or external to the firm, which motivated the analysis in one or two sentences.
- Reveal the *key results* that will give credence to the recommendation and will grab and keep the decision makers' attention. Examples of key results:
 - ✓ Size of target market addressed by the product innovation.
 - ✓ Net Present Value.
 - ✓ Estimate of working capital needed.
 - ✓ Value of strategic options.
 - ✓ Core competencies and/or competitive advantage.
 - ✓ Resources deployed.
 - ✓ Cost of production.
 - ✓ Breakeven level of production.
 - ✓ Required market share.
 - ✓ Breakeven market price.
 - ✓ Price elasticity of demand.
- Avoid general or known facts in the executive summary.

2. The problem or opportunity

State the problem to solve or the opportunity to exploit. Provide brief backgrounds on the products or company to support this statement. The purpose of this section is to establish the value of the recommendation that has been stated in the beginning of the summary. Types of information:

- What market need does the product fill?
- What trend can the firm take advantage of by taking the action recommended?
- Is this project competitive with other opportunities the firm has?

3. Reasoning behind the recommendation

Give a brief explanation on conceptual frameworks, models, and key assumptions made to derive recommendations. This section is to inform the decision makers of what they *need to do* or *to know*:

- Will the project add value to the firm?
- How much money will be tied up in this project?
- How long is the time horizon on this proposed activity?
- Will the firm make money right away?
- What type of market analysis was used?
- What competitive threats were taken into account?
- What key changes in company direction are needed?

Sequence the information by its importance. Do not force the decision makers to wait for the main point.

4. Readability and guide to the main report

Follow all of the directions provided by the decision makers or target readers. Do not have any typographical or spelling errors (there is zero tolerance in industry). Keep the executive summary short; it should be no more than five pages (double-spaced) or three pages (single-spaced). Consider using bullets for key points that are short lists, and consider including graphs to describe trends.

Examples:

“Svelte” considers the following demographic cohort in creating its next product:

- 15 years and over;
- 25 years and over; and
- 45 years and over.

Figure 2 shows substantial growth in China's GDP.

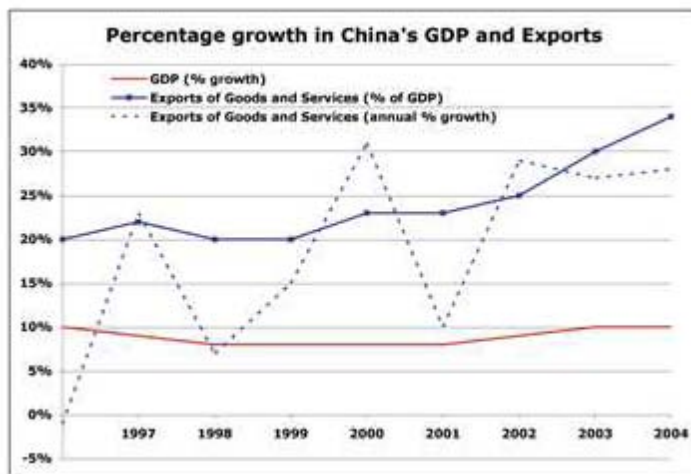


Figure 2. Trends in China Gross Domestic Product and Exports (Eedan 2007).

Include guides so that the readers can navigate the main report or portfolio sections based on the summary.

Example:

Executive summary says: “The market analysis of the target demographic of young adults in East European countries indicates that with a 30% market share, “Shiver” will provide revenue of 25 million zlotys.” (Refer to section 2 for demographic analysis and market forecast using econometrics and simulation).

What an Executive Summary is NOT (e-Business Plan Tutorial, 2007)

- Step-by-step description of technical model.
- Just a brief description.
- An outline of the plan.
- Hyperbole or an exaggeration.
- Cut-and-paste exercise.

Appendix J contains an example of an executive summary used for AGEC 431.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – THE OUTLINING PROCESS

Example of an informal outline (Hacker, 2004):

Thesis: States need to regulate the use of cell phones on the road.

Supporting ideas:

- Drivers are distracted by cell phones.
- Cell phones have been a factor in traffic accidents.
- Scientific research confirms the dangers of using phones while driving.
- Laws on negligent and reckless driving are inadequate.

Note: An informal outline is a continuation of “explore the subject step (refer to page 6 of this manual). Collected ideas and clustering diagrams can be used as rough outline. Sequence all the data to create a logical order. An informal writing can be produced and changed easily. This form of organizational structure is appropriate at the early stage of writing.

Example of a formal outline (Hacker, 2004):

Thesis: States must regulate use of cell phones on the road because drivers using phones are seriously impaired and because laws on negligent and reckless driving are not sufficient to punish offenders.

- I. Drivers distracted by cell phones are seriously impaired.
 - a. Cell phones have been a factor in traffic deaths.
 - b. Expert testimony, public opinion, and even cartoons suggest that driving while phoning is dangerous.
 - c. Scientific research confirms the dangers of using phone while driving.
- II. Laws on negligent and reckless driving are not adequate.
 - a. Under state laws, drivers distracted by phones can receive light punishment even when they cause fatal accidents.
 - b. When certain kinds of driver behavior are especially dangerous, we draft special laws making them illegal; phoning in a moving vehicle should be no exception.
- III. In the United States, state legislatures must take the responsibility for passing laws regulating use of cell phones in moving vehicles.
 - a. Many other countries have passed legislation regulating use of car phones, but the U.S. government leaves such matters to the states.
 - b. Although some counties and towns in the United States have restricted use of cell phones on the road, local laws are not likely to have the impact of state laws.

Notes: A formal outline will be more useful in the latter part of writing process, especially if the subject of writing is complex.

APPENDIX B – TIPS ON CLARITY

Academic writing is many times persuasive in character. This forces writers to have a large measure of clarity. Clear writing results when you unambiguously express what you intend to express (Wheaton College, 2008). Clarity at a deep level involves the clarity of your argument. On a more surface level, clarity is the clearness of your diction and sentence structure. To check for clarity of diction and sentence, read your paper aloud and listen for awkward sentences. Here are some other helpful hints taken from Hacker (2004) to improve the clarity of your paper.

I. Balance parallel ideas.

One important facet of writing that is often misunderstood is that of consistency. Consistency means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can also be called parallelism. Parallel ideas are easier to understand when expressed in parallel grammatical forms. Single words should be balanced with single words, phrases with phrases, and clauses with clauses. **The following examples start with the incorrect format. Any words that should be removed or changed are crossed through. Any words that should be added appear in brackets (e.g., []).**

- Balance parallel ideas in a series.

Abused children commonly exhibit one or more of the following symptoms: withdrawal, rebelliousness, restlessness and ~~they are depressed~~ [depression].

The revision presents all of the items as nouns.

- Balance parallel ideas presented as pairs.

Paired ideas are usually connected with: coordinating conjunctions [*and, but, or*], a pair of correlative conjunctions [*either... or* or *not only...but also*], or a word introducing a comparison [*than* or *as*].

Many states are reducing property taxes for home owners and ~~extend~~ [extending] financial aid in the form of tax credit to renters.

I was advised either to change my schedule or [to] take the train.

It is easier to speak in abstraction than ~~grounding~~ [to ground] one's thoughts in reality.

- Repeat function words such as prepositions (by, to) and subordinating conjunctions (that, because) to clarify parallels, although they can sometimes be omitted.

Many smokers try switching to a brand they find distasteful or [to] a low tar and low nicotine cigarette.

II. Add the word “that” if there is any danger of misreading without it.

Looking out the family room window, Sarah saw [that] her favorite tree, which she had climbed so often as a child, was gone.

Note: Sarah did not see the tree; she saw that the tree was gone.

III. Add words needed to make comparisons logical and complete.

The forests of North America are much more extensive than [those of] Europe.

IV. Avoid *is, when is, where, and reason...is because* constructions.

Anorexia nervosa is ~~where people~~ [a disorder suffered by people who], believing they are too fat, diet to the point of starvation.

Note: Anorexia nervosa is a disorder, not a place.

V. Repair misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Modifiers should point clearly to the words they modify.

- Put limiting modifiers in front of the words they modify.

Lasers ~~only~~ destroy [only] the target, leaving the surrounding healthy tissue intact.

- Place phrases and clauses so that the readers can immediately see what they modify.

Ambiguous: *The exchange students we met for coffee occasionally questioned us about our latest slang.*

Clear: *The exchange students we occasionally met for coffee questioned us about the latest slang.*

Clear: *The exchange students we met for coffee questioned us occasionally about our latest slang.*

- Move awkwardly-placed modifiers to avoid splitting thoughts (nouns and verbs).

Hong Kong, after more than 150 years of British rule, was transferred back to Chinese control in 1997.

Revised:

After more than 150 years of British rule, Hong Kong was transferred back to Chinese control in 1997.

VI. Eliminate distracting shifts:

- a. Make the point of view consistent in person and numbers.
 - First person [*I or We*] for informal letters and writing based primarily on personal experience.
 - Second person [*You*] for giving advice or explaining how to do something.
 - Third person [*he/she/it/one or they*] for formal academic and professional writing.

- b. Maintain consistent verb tenses.

There was no way I could fight the current and win. Just as I was losing hope, a stranger ~~jump~~ [jumped] off a passing boat and ~~swims~~ [swam] toward me.

- c. Make verbs consistent in mood and voice.

The officers advised us against allowing anyone into our homes without proper identification. [They also suggested that we] ~~Also~~, alert neighbors to our vacation schedules.

APPENDIX C – EMPTY AND INFLATED VERSES AND JARGON

One of the main problems with writing today is the widespread use of inflated verses or jargon. Inflated writing is taking too many words to say something simple. Below are several common examples. Whenever possible, try to be concise in your writing. Professors, co-workers, and supervisors appreciate your writing more if it makes a clear and concise point, rather than aimlessly filling a page with words.

INFLATED

along the lines of
as a matter of fact
at all times
at the present time
at this point in time
because of the fact that
by means of
by virtue of the fact that
due to the fact that
for the purpose of
for the reason that
have the ability to
in light of the fact that
in order to
in spite of the fact that
in the event that
in the final analysis
in the nature of
in the neighborhood of
until such time as

CONCISE

similar to
in fact
always
now, currently
now, currently
because
by
because
because
for
because
be able, to, can
because
to
although, though
if
finally
similar to
close to
until

Examples:

We will file the appropriate papers [if] ~~in the event that~~ we are unable to meet the deadline.

We will continue to meet here [until] ~~until such time as~~ we find a more suitable location.

Our budget next year will be [close to] ~~in the neighborhood of~~ \$5,000,000.

Jargon is specialized language used among members of a trade, profession, or group. Use jargon only when readers will be familiar with it and when plain English will not do. For example, several selected jargons and their meanings are:

Ameliorate (improve)	Indicator (sign)
Commence (begin)	Optimal (best, most favorable)
Components (parts)	Parameters (boundaries, limits)
Endeavor (try)	Peruse (read, look over)
Exit (leave)	Prior to (before)
Facilitate (help)	Utilize (use)
Factor (consideration, cause)	Viable (workable)
Impact (v.) (affect)	

JARGON: *For years, the indigenous body of politic of South Africa attempted to negotiate legal enfranchisement without result.*

REVISED *For years, the indigenous people of South Africa negotiated in vain for the right to vote.*

APPENDIX D: AGECE 217 WRITING TIPS

Most of these writing tips have been derived from William S. Pfeiffer's Pocket Guide to Technical Writing. Since your work in AGECE 217 is based on this book, you are strongly encouraged to buy a copy and also read it.

1. Which vs. That: Many writers use **which** for nonrestrictive clauses, which are defined as clauses not essential to meaning. Note that such clauses require a comma before the **which** and a slight pause in speech.

- *The bull that escaped from the ring ran through my china shop, which was located in the square.*

That is used to introduce restrictive clauses that are essential to the meaning of the sentence. Note that such clauses have no comma before the **that** and are read without a pause.

- *The benefits package that our firm provides includes several options for medical care.*
- Avoid comma splices. It occurs when a comma instead of a semicolon or period is used in compound sentences connected by conjunctive adverbs like **however**, **therefore**, **thus**, and **then**. When these connectors separate two main clauses, either use a semicolon or start a new sentence.
 - INCORRECT: *We made it to the project site by the agreed-upon time, however the rain forced us to stay in our trucks for two hours.*
 - CORRECT: *We made it to the project site by the agreed-upon time; however, [or, "time. However,"] the rain forced us to stay in our trucks for two hours.*

NOTE: The conjunctive adverb or transitional expression (e.g., **immediately**, **in the meantime**, **however in addition**, and **as a result**) is usually followed by a comma when it appears at the beginning of the second clause. It can also appear in the middle of a clause, set off by two commas, or at the end, preceded by a comma.

- *Most students complied with the new policy; a few refused, however, to do so.*
- *Most students complied with the new policy; a few refused to do so, however.*
- Comma Usage (I): Use a comma after introductory phrases or clauses of about five words or more.
 - *After completing its topographic survey of the area, the crew returned to headquarters for the weekly project meeting.*

- Avoid confusing **affect** with **effect**.
As a verb, **affect** means “to influence.” As a noun, **affect** means “a feeling or an emotion.”

- *Inflation affects our sense of security.*
- *To study affect, psychologists probe the unconscious.*

As a noun, **effect** means “result.” As a verb, **effect** means “to make or accomplish.”

- *Inflation is one of the effects of war.*
- *Inflation has effected many changes in the way we spend money.*

- Avoid confusing **their**, **there**, and **they’re**.
Their is a possessive pronoun:

- *They gave their lives.*

There is an adverb of place:

- *She was standing there.*

They’re is a contraction of *they are*:

- *They’re reading more poetry this semester.*

NOTE: As a general rule, the Agricultural Economics Department strongly suggests that you do not use contractions in your formal writing.

- Do not use **as** as a synonym for **since**, **when**, or **because**.
 - *I told him he should visit Alcatraz since [not as] he was going to San Francisco.*
 - *Because [not as] we asked her nicely, our teacher decided to cancel the exam.*

7. Comma Usage (II):

Use a comma in front of a coordinating conjunction (such as **and** or **but**) that joins two independent clauses:

- *Injuries were so frequent that he began to worry, and his style of play became more cautious.*

If the word groups you are joining are not independent clauses, do not add a comma:

- *Injuries were so frequent that he became worried and started to play more cautiously.*

8. Comma Usage (III):

Use a comma or commas to set off words of direct address, yes and no, mild interjections, and tag questions.

- *We have finished this project, Mr. Smith, without any help from your foundation.*
- *Yes, I will meet you at noon.*
- *Of course, if you think that is what we should do, then we will do it.*

9. Number Rules:

- Follow the 10-or-over rule. Use words for numbers below 10 (e.g., Three) and use figures for numbers of 10 or more (e.g., 15).
- Use figures with dollars. Use figures with all dollar amounts, except in legal documents. Avoid cents columns unless exactness to the penny is necessary (e.g., \$3 per gallon, \$2.50).
- Always use commas in four-digit figures (e.g., 1,500), however be careful to not include commas in dates (e.g., 2008).

10. Capitalize titles that come before names.

- Examples: Congressman Tom Delay; Hurricane Katrina; Congressional District 22
 - When titles are used by themselves or follow a person's name, usually they are not capitalized.
- *Tom Delay, congressman of the 22nd district, visited our school today.*

APPENDIX E: CITATION STYLES

There are numerous styles that can be used to cite references in a paper. The most common ones used are MLA (Modern Language Association) and APA (American Psychology Association). Below are links to several style guides that can be found on the web, including the formatting guide for the American Journal of Agricultural Economics (AJAE).

MLA

- MLA style guide from Purdue University
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>
- Capital Community College Writing Research Paper Based on MLA Guide
<http://www.ccc.commnet.edu/mla/index.shtml>
- MLA style guide from Ohio State University
<http://library.osu.edu/sites/guides/mlagd.php>

APA

- APA style guide from Purdue University
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>
- University of Wisconsin – Madison APA Guide
<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocAPA.html>

American Journal of Agricultural Economics

- Guide to Formatting –
<http://ajae.arec.umd.edu/formatting.htm>

Listed below is the style guide provided in the textbook for AGEC 217 by Pfeiffer. If a student does not wish to use MLA, APA, or the AJAE style and no style is specified by their professor, then this method would be an acceptable style to use for references.

Book with two or more authors: Note that second author's name is given in normal order, with a comma between the two authors' names.

Andrews, T. S., and L. Kelly. 1965a. *Geography of Central Oregon*, 4th ed. New York: Jones and Caliber Press.

Book by the same authors: Note that the blank line indicates another source by same authors. The "b" is used because the same authors published two cited books in the same year. Also, the state abbreviation is used for clarity, since Hiram is a small town.

_____. 1996b. *Geography today*. Hiram, OH: Pixie Publishers.

Journal article: Note that there are no spaces between the first page number of this journal article and the colon that follows the volume number. Also, there is only a space, but no punctuation, between the journal title and the volume number.

Cranberg, E. V. 1986. Fossils are fun: The life of a geologist in the 1980s. *Geology Issues* 34:233-344.

Article in collection: This entry is for an article that appears in a collection, with a general editor. Note the comma and “ed.” (for “edited by”) after the collection title. This same format would be used in other cases where the writer was referring to a piece from a collection, such as a paper in a conference proceeding.

Fendell, C. N., L. Guest, H. M. Smith, and Z. H. Taylor. 1976. Achieving purity in your sampling technique. In *Geotechnical Engineering Practices*, ed. J. Schwartz, 23-67. Cleveland: Hapsburg Press.

Interview: The writers refer to themselves in the third person as the “author.”

Iris, J. G. 1988. Resident of Summer Hills Subdivision. Interview with the author at the site of toxic-waste dump, 23 March.

Newspaper article: This reference includes the day, section and page number of the article. If no author has been listed, the entry would have begun with the article title.

Mongo G. P. 1989. Sinkhole Psychology: The ground is falling, Chicken Little. *Dayton Gazette*, 12 July, sec. D, p. 5.

Article from popular magazine: reference is handled like a journal article except that the date of the particular issue is also included, after the volume number. Note that there is no extra spacing around the parentheses.

Runyon, d. G., and L. P. Moss. 1967. Sinkholes are coming to your area soon. *Timely News* 123 (15 July):65-6.

Information from personal email message: This entry concerning a personal e-mail message contains information on both sender and receiver, as well as the date and subject of the message.

Jankowski, S. X. (sjan@spdu.edu). Nature of the Mahikari movement. Personal email to Matthew B. Knob (mknob@aol.com). 22 Dec. 1999.

CD-ROM citation: Reference to a CD-ROM does not require inclusion of the date the writer consulted the source.

Jasic, H. D. (1972). Japanese religions today [CD-ROM]. Available: USD Quest File Ondisc Item QF 54/4.

Database and Web Citations: Note that the Web citations must include the date that the information was found.

Traeger, C (n.d.) The Will of the Prius, Carlist.com. Retrieved 10 August 2001 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.carlist.com/newscars/2001/toyotaprius.html>

Einstein, P. (1999, October 29). The Benefits of Insight. Professional Engineering, 12.19, ProQuest:<http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>

Glynn, M. (2001, January 19). Automakers will offer “2 for the price of 1”: Many major manufacturers are hoping gas-electric hybrids can power future sales. Seattle Times, <http://www.galileo.peachnet.edu>

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF MEMORANDUM

There is no set form to use in writing memorandums, but the basics are the same for all forms. The memo starts with a heading that includes who the memo is to, who it is from, the date of the memo, and the subject of the memo. These can be in a different order. This heading is always double spaced (Purdue OWL, 2008).

Memos are usually kept to a single page, but can be longer. If the memo continues longer than a page, put a heading on the second (and any additional pages) page that has the name of the person the memo is sent to on the left, the page number in the center, and the date on the right margin. List any attachments to the memo listed at the end in the following format:

Attachment: Exhibit 1.

The following page is a memorandum that is taken from Pfeiffer's text. It has been modified to fit the formatting that is discussed above. The scenario in the memo is fictional, as are all names, places, and numbers.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Danielle Firestein, Head of Purchasing

FROM: Barbara Ralston, Assistant Head of Marketing Department

DATE: July 23, 2007

SUBJECT: Recommendation for AIM 500 Fax

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to present the results of the study requested on the AIM 500 facsimile (fax) machine. This study recommends purchase of additional AIM 500 machines, when needed, because they deliver fast, dependable service and include features needed most by this company. This report includes the following sections: Ease of Operation, Features of the AIM 500, Dependability of the AIM 500, and Conclusion.

EASE OF OPERATION

The AIM 500 is so easy to operate that a novice can learn to transmit a document to another location in about two minutes. Here is the basic procedure:

1. Press the button marked TEL on the face of the machine. This gives a dial tone.
2. Enter the telephone number of the person receiving the fax on the number pad on the face of the machine.
3. Lay the document facedown on the tray at the back of the machine.

At this point, wait for the document to be transmitted - about 18 seconds per page to transmit. The fax machine will even signal the user with a beep and message on its LCD display when the document has been transmitted. Other more advanced operations are equally simple to use and require little training. Provided with the machines are two different charts that illustrate the machine's main functions.

The size of the AIM 500 makes it easy to set up almost anywhere in the office. The dimensions are 13 inches in width, 15 inches in length, and 9.5 inches in height. The narrow width, in particular, allows the machine to fit on most desks, file cabinets, or shelves.

FEATURES OF AIM 500

The AIM 500 has many features that will be beneficial to this company's employees. In the two years of use, the following features were found to be most helpful:

- Automatic redial
- Last number redial memory
- LCD display
- Preset dialing
- Group dialing
- Use as a phone

Automatic Redial. Often when sending a fax, the sender finds the receiving line busy. The redial feature will automatically redial the busy number at 30-second interval until the busy line is reached, saving the sender considerable time.

Last Number Redial Memory. Occasionally, there may be interference on the telephone line or some other technical problem with the transmissions. The last number memory feature allows the user to press one button to automatically trigger the machine to retry the number.

LCD Display. The display feature clearly shows pertinent information, such as error messages that tell a user exactly why a transmission was not completed.

Preset Dialing. The AIM 500 can store 16 preset numbers that can be engaged with one-touch dialing. This feature makes the unit as fast and efficient as a sophisticated telephone.

Group Dialing. Upon selecting two or more of the preset telephone numbers, the user can transmit a document to all of the preset number at the same time, without having to initiate multiple faxes.

Use as a Phone. The AIM 500 can also be used as a telephone, providing the user with more flexibility and convenience.

DEPENDABILITY of AIM 500

During the recent test period of more than two years, there have been no complaints or mechanical issues with the AIM 500. The machine provides clear copies and recipients have not complained of poor results on their end. This record is all the more impressive in the light of the fact that the AIM 500 averaged 32 outgoing and 15 incoming transmissions a day.

CONCLUSION

The success and dependability of the AIM 500 demonstrate how valuable this machine can be to a company. The ease of operation, many exceptional features, and record of dependability are all good reasons to buy additional unit. Further questions about the AIM 500 can be directed to Barbara Ralston at 979-555-1155.

APPENDIX G: ACTION VERBS

Use action verbs when describing experiences/accomplishments in a résumé. Typically, skills can be broken down into three basic types: people, things, and ideas. The following are common verbs used to describe skills of the three basic types (Texas A&M University Career Center, 2008).

PEOPLE	THINGS	IDEAS
Administered	Used	Established
Conducted	Built	Wrote
Motivated	Constructed	Proposed
Promoted	Compiled	Coordinated
Directed	Specified	Illustrated
Coordinated	Designed	Modified
Supervised	Changed	Analyzed
Advised	Improved	Adapted
Explained	Prepared	Investigated
Effected	Calculated	Explained
Managed	Completed	Defined
Taught	Invented	Devised
Activated	Created	Innovated
Prepared	Programmed	Implemented
Organized	Revised	Created
Conducted	Expedited	Educated
Stimulated	Drafted	Synthesized
Accomplished	Edited	Initiated
Adapted	Enlarged	Integrated
Adjusted	Established	Interviewed
Advertised	Evaluated	Maintained
Analyzed	Examined	Manipulated
Arranged	Expanded	Marketed
Assembled	Facilitated	Monitored
Assisted	Familiarized	Negotiated
Catalogued	Formulated	Obtained
Collaborated	Generated	Persuaded
Calculated	Governed	Presented
Consulted	Guided	Presided

APPENDIX H - RÉSUMÉ WORKSHEET

The following is taken from the Texas A&M University Career Center website (2008).

Identifying Data Section

- Name
- Address, City, State, Zip
- Telephone Number, cell and/or home
- Email-address

Career Objective (Optional)

This section helps the preparer and the reader to think about future career direction. Keep it to no more than two sentences. It should include how the career objectives relate to the job the applicant is seeking. Avoid over-used phrases such as: opportunity for advancement, a challenging position, position dealing with people, or progressive company.

Education

Include degree, name of school, location, date graduated, major, minor, and GPR.

Experience

Reflect the skills and abilities of the applicant and how they were acquired and used previously. Begin with the most recent employer. List all employers, dates of employment, titles of position held, key responsibilities, and accomplishments in each position.

Other Possible Categories

- Achievements
- Activities
- Skills
- Foreign Languages
- Computer and Technology Skills
- Honors and Awards
- Memberships
- Leadership
- Publications

Personal Information

Do not include a personal information section on your résumé and do not attach photograph of yourself to your résumé.

References

Unless already requested by the company/individual to whom the résumé is being sent, omit the reference section because it is assumed that applicant will provide references to an employer who asks.

- References should be written on separate page from the résumé.
- The reference list should list complete contact information including the person, organization/title, physical address, telephone numbers, and e-mail address.
- Always ask permission first before using someone as reference and notify them of different jobs for which you are applying.
- Persons used as references can be employers, professors, advisors and any professional individuals who know the applicant well. Attention should be directed toward satisfying particular reference types specified by the employer.

Examples

On the next three pages are examples of the three types of résumés discussed in the résumé chapter, chronological, functional, and combination. The examples were obtained from the Texas A&M Career Center (2008).

The first example on page 44 is a chronological résumé. Remember, chronological résumés focus on work history and activities and lists the experiences, beginning with the most recent and/or relevant.

The second example, found on page 45, is a functional résumé. Functional résumés purposes are to promote key skills and experiences without emphasizing where or when they were developed.

The third example on page 46 is a combination résumé. A combination résumé includes portions of both a chronological and a functional format.

Chronological Résumé

Martha G. Vermillion

1234 Gail St.
College Station, TX 77840
Home: (979) xxx-xxxx
Cellular: (979) xxx-xxxx

1234 Saly Way
Alice, TX 77444
(231) xxx-xxxx
sal@tamu.edu

EDUCATION **Texas A&M University**, College Station, TX Expected Graduation
College of Engineering May 2001

Bachelor of Science in Industrial Distribution
Major GPA: 3.378 Overall GPA: 3.241

Self-Financed 100% of college education

ACTIVITIES **Professional Association for Industrial Distribution**, 1998 – Present
Career Fair Team Leader
• Responsible for recruiting volunteers for golf tournament and career fair.
• Organized corporate-student golf teams for sixty-four companies.
• Produced a successful career fair with revenue exceeding \$30,000.
Society of Women Engineers 1999 - Present
Sisters of the Sword and Shield 2000 - Present

HONORS **SIGMA DELTA**, *National Honor Society of Industrial Distribution*
Dean's Honor Award, *Dwight Look College of Engineering*
TAMU Representative at TDA Convention, *New York, NY*

WORK EXPERIENCE **The Rap**, College Station, TX 2/98 to Present
Bartender
• Independently facilitate sales and generate revenue.
• Ensure repeat business through personal sales technique.
• Personally responsible for monetary transactions in excess of \$5,000.

GFI INC, Fort Worth, TX 6/00 to 8/00
Summer Intern
• Participated in a rotational program to maximize understanding of all jobs associated with a successful distribution operation.
• Supported activities within internal and external sales groups.
• Gained knowledge of the daily operations of customer service representatives and product support.

Johnson TI Moving and Storage, College Station, TX 5/99 to 6/99
Moving Consultant
• Provided estimates and quotes via telephone, Internet, and fax.
• Prepared daily and monthly efficiency and sales reports.
• Scheduled logistics of each move for CEO.

Functional Résumé

AGGIE NAME

LOCAL ADDRESS
100 Wehner Drive
College Station, TX 77840

aggie11@tamu.edu
979 (555-5555)

PERMANENT ADDRESS
1177 Home Road
Hometown, TX 77777

EDUCATION

Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas
Bachelor of Business Administration in Management, August 1999
Overall GPA: 3.35

LEADERSHIP

Mays Business School Fellows Program – *Group XVI Fellow (1998)*

- Selected as part of the top 1% of the business school in involvement and academics to participate in intense interaction with business professionals through speakers, an in-depth study, and a New York study trip

Aggie Fish Club (AFC) – *Assistant Director (1997-1998); Counselor (1996-1997)*

- Staff Director – Strategically positioned the 78 member organization as a premier Freshmen Leadership Organization on campus
- Interviewed, selected, and trained 14 sophomore counselors and 56 freshmen
- Organized the First Annual Aggie Fish Club Golf Tournament intergrating the work of eight committees, negotiating with local and national businesses for sponsorship, and raised \$3,200
- Prepared a tri-fold brochure, presentations, and speeches for Aggie Moms Clubs and other organizations

Fish Camp – *Chairperson (1997 and 1998); Counselor (1996 and 1997); Speaker (Summer 1997)*

- Chairperson – Interviewed, selected, and directed 24 counselors in forming a four-day orientation camp for incoming freshmen to ease their transition into college
- Discussion Group Leader – Conducted activities and discussions aimed at forming a cohesive support group for 12 freshmen

MSC Hospitality – *Coordinator (1996 and 1997)*

- Organized and Easter Egg Hunt for over 100 underprivileged children
- Prepared and conducted team building exercises for the entire organization

American Marketing Association – *Business Student Council Representative (1996)*

- Acted as a liaison to the Business Student Council

RELATED WORK EXPERIENCE

Intercom, Inc., Dallas, Texas – *Lead Tracking System Administrator (Summer 1996, 1997)*

- Administered and analyzed sales/expense ratios for the Lead Tracking System for the entire sales force
- Trained new employees and the Lead Tracking System (Brock and Computer Intelligence)
- Coordinated the Telemarketing Program, Consultant Relations Analyst Tour, and Mail-out Program
- Assisted in the development of the Consultant Relations Database
- Analyzed Customer Satisfaction Surveys
- Received Call Center Industry, PBX, Lead Tracking System (Brock and Computer Intelligence), Business Objects, and Desktop Video Conferencing training courses

Management Internship Program, Dallas, Texas – *Intern for the Dallas Hockey Team (1994 and 1995)*

- Aided in the development of the Marketing Department

Health Economics Corporation, Dallas, Texas – *Teleservices Representative (Summer 1993)*

- Developed a sales lead telemarketing program generating significant sales activity

HONORS

Academic Excellence Scholarship Award – *1996-1998*

Intercom Outstanding Service Award – *Summer 1997*

Mays Business School Distinguished Student – *Fall 1995, Spring 1996, Spring 1997*

Combination Résumé

John O. Student

1234 Arbor (979)
Some City, TX 71234

979-123-4567
student@neo.tamu.edu

- Education** Texas A&M University, College Station TX
Bachelor of Science in Microbiology; Minor in Business Administration
Graduation: May 2004
Cumulative GPR: 3.64/ 4.0
- Skills** Ability to speak and read Spanish fluently
Proficiency in Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint
Familiar with Microscopy, Gel Electrophoresis, and Gas Chromatography
- Related Coursework** Biology (lab) Inorganic Chemistry (lab)
Organic Chemistry (lab) Microbiology (lab)
Biochemistry Immunology (lab)
- Experience** **Texas A&M University**, College Station, TX
Undergraduate Research Assistant, Fall 2002-Spring 2003
- Assisted in research of Circadian Clocks in Mammalian and Avian systems
 - Engaged in pertinent techniques of animal handling
 - Observed anatomy of Mammalian systems through surgical procedures
- Department Of Horticulture**, Texas A&M University
Lab Assistant, August 2001 – April 2002
- Researched the biochemical properties of pecans as part of a health study for the Department of Agriculture
 - Worked independently to develop fatty acid profiles for different types of pecans using gas chromatography as a mechanism for analysis
- Department of Residence Life**, Texas A&M University
Resident Advisor, August 2000 – August 2001
- Managed a floor of approximately 60 students in a large residence hall
 - Responsible for enforcing all departmental policies and regulations
- Activities** *Circle K International (CKI)* Fall 2001-Present
- Participated as a member of a world wide service organization
 - Helping One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) Mentor Fall 2002-Present
 - Served as tutor and mentor for at risk Elementary school students
- ASPIRE Mentor Fall 2001-Fall 2002
Aggie School Volunteers/ Aggie Buddy Volunteer Spring 2002-Present
Pi Sigma Epsilon Business Fraternity Fall 2001-Present
Microbiology Society Fall 2001-Present
- Honors** Texas Livestock Show and Rodeo Scholarship

APPENDIX I: RÉSUMÉ COVER LETTER EXAMPLE

The following is an example of a cover letter taken from the Texas A&M University Career Center Website (2008).

Student Address1
Student Address2

Date

Company Name
Company Address1
Company Address2

RE: Position Title

First Paragraph: State the reason for writing the letter. Specify the position or type of work for which you are applying. Indicate from which source (friend, media, internet, Career Center, etc.) you learned of the opening or received his/her name.

Second Paragraph: State why you are interested in the position, the company, its products, or services. If you are completing a degree or are a recent graduate, explain how your academic background qualifies you for the position. If you have some practical experience, completed an internship, and/or participated in cooperative education, point out your specific achievements or unique qualifications. Highlight strengths, skills, or abilities and state how your background relates to the job duties and responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. You may refer the reader to the enclosed résumé, but be careful not to repeat your résumé entirely in your letter. Provide details and explanations that are not found in your résumé. Indicate what you can do for the employer – do not inquire about what the organization can offer you.

Concluding Paragraph: If you do not refer to the résumé in the previous paragraph, you may refer to it here. Indicate what you want to happen next. For example, if you want an interview, then request a meeting. Indicate your flexibility. Repeat an e-mail address or a phone number where you may be reached. You may want to ask if the organization will be recruiting in your area, or if additional information and/or references from you would be helpful. Finally, thank the reader for his/her time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Student Name

Enclosure

APPENDIX J: EXAMPLE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Mills is facing an increasingly competitive supermarket environment with a customer base that is experiencing severe budget constraints. Furthermore, volatility and cost inflation of inputs have strained General Mills' profit margin. Strategic pricing strategies, keeping in mind consumers' price elasticity of demand, will help General Mills mitigate these pressures and remain price competitive in the supermarket environment. As a result, we recommend that General Mills implement a strategic price increase on Pillsbury refrigerated dough products, generating a cumulative additional funds needed (AFN) of \$34.96 million. This strategy will also maintain profitability levels at a competitive level, reducing the negative impact of input cost inflation.

General Mills' high level of indebtedness, combined with the capital market's current instability and liquidity crunch, will result in limitations on the company's strategic options and future capital needs. As a result, we recommend debt reduction to be a priority for General Mills fiscal year (FY) 2009. By issuing new equity shares on the primary market, General Mills will be able to raise \$572 million to reduce debt by \$550 million. In compliance with the debt reduction strategy, an additional \$36 million can be raised with equity in order to fund the expected growth in the firm.

Pricing strategy

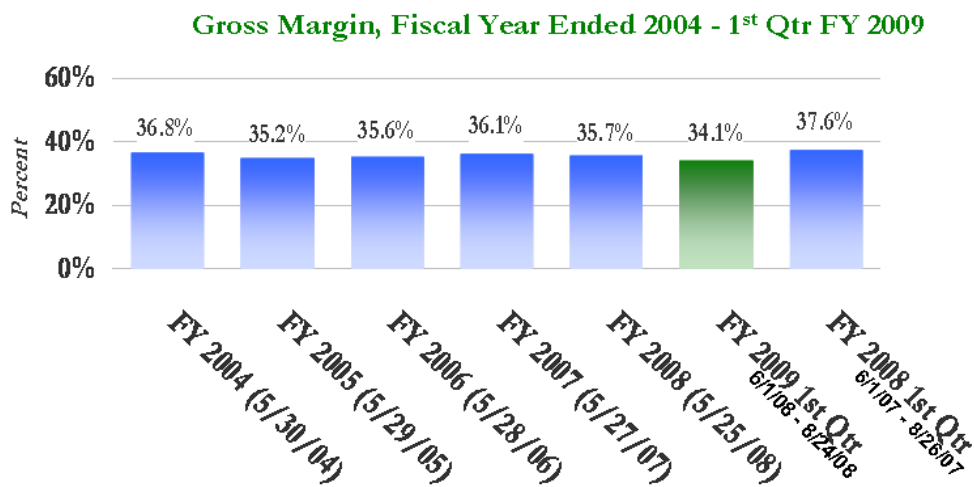
Food inflation, coupled with high gasoline prices, has resulted in consumers' real income declining during 2008. This greatly impacts their food expenditure behavior. Gross domestic product decreased 0.3% over the most recent quarter of 2008 and is expected to further decrease by 3% into mid-2009 (Wall Street Journal). Evidence of changing consumer behavior rests in the difference in the sales of food at home, which have increased at a higher rate in June-September 2008 than sales of food away from home. Importantly, sales of food away from home in September 2008 were 0.6% lower than September 2007's sales of food away from home (ERS). Under the circumstance of decreasing real income, it is expected that expenditures of food at home will increase more than food away from home in the next two to three quarters of FY 2009, thereby giving General Mills an opportunity to gain higher revenues in the supermarkets. Furthermore, with constrained consumer budgets, sales of private labels are estimated to increase.

General Mills has experienced significant rising costs of key input commodities. Input cost inflation was 7% in fiscal year 2008 compared to 2007 and is expected to further increase by 4.9% in FY 2009 from our analysis. The table below shows the expected input cost volatility from FY 2008 to FY 2009 facing General Mills for the most common raw materials used by the company.

Estimated Percent Change in Input Costs

Input commodity	% change FY 08 vs FY 09
Wheat	-14.00%
Corn	21.71%
Aluminum	2.66%
Natural gas	-11.45%
Crude Oil	3.65%
Sugar	8.10%

Increasing input costs have resulted in declining gross margin for the company (See below).



As a result, General Mills is faced with the challenge of preserving their margins in order to price competitively for the consumers and maintain healthy profitability to encourage potential investors.

Protection of margins and mitigating input cost increases must come in the form of price increases to the consumers. However, consumers are willing to accept only a limited amount of price increases as their budgets are already constrained.

Based on these conditions, implementing a mixed pricing strategy will be the best strategic option for General Mills at this point in time. Our team recommends General Mills increase the price of Pillsbury products by 20%. The forecasted sales growth of 5.1% from this pricing strategy results in cumulative additional funds needed of \$34.96 million, according to our short-term forecast for fiscal year 2009.

The price elasticity of General Mills' products and the pricing strategies relating to these categories will determine how consumers will react to the pricing actions. If the sales volume decreases after the price increase, it is a sign the consumer is very price sensitive to the product. These pricing strategies will also be constrained by private label substitutes that consumers will be more willing to purchase if they believe the price increases are too much. As a result, fully offsetting input cost inflation in FY 2009 will be difficult to achieve. Our goal is to limit the negative impacts of input cost inflation on profitability.

Econometric models were used to estimate General Mills' sales growth for fiscal year 2009 and to analyze two pricing strategies pertaining to an inelastic product category, Pillsbury, and an elastic product category, Hamburger Helper. Price elasticities of demand were calculated for both Pillsbury and Hamburger Helper based on the regression results, but both are underestimated due to the absence of data on competitor's prices. However, the price elasticities of demand did reveal Hamburger Helper as being more elastic than Pillsbury.

Quarterly food at home expenditures were used as an essential variable in the model because it captures the responsiveness of the change in sales volume of General Mills' products based on recent food inflation and tightening consumer budgets. With recent budget constraints, more consumers are shifting their food dollars from "food away from home" spending to increased "food at home" spending. With these models estimated, we were then able to examine pricing-strategy alternatives for General Mills.

Debt reduction through equity issuance

General Mills was highly leveraged in fiscal year 2008. The debt-to-equity ratio was slightly over 200%, which is significantly higher than the industry average of 77%. This weak debt management has led our team to conclude General Mills needs to reduce its debt through a new equity issuance of common stock (alternative 2). The debt reduction amounts to \$550 million, which includes the total upcoming maturities of long-term debt and some bonds that are currently issued at high interest rates.

Based on the debt amount to be reduced and current stock market prices, 9.5 million shares would need to be issued in order to raise the necessary funds to pay off the debt of \$550 million. A 5% discount from the market share price is applied in order to sell the equity shares at a discounted price of \$60/share. This equity issuance will raise \$572 million of which \$550 million will be used to pay off debt capital leaving \$22 million to be paid to the investment bankers as a brokerage fee. This strategy will immediately improve debt management based on the immediate reduction in debt. However, the issuance of stock will result in an immediate dilution effect for current stockholders as the supply of shares on the open market will increase by 9.5 million.

Further considerations

We also considered an alternative pricing strategy when analyzing General Mills' strategic issues and the appropriate actions the company should take in order to respond to those issues. This pricing strategy increases the price of Pillsbury by 15% and executes a 5% price increase for Hamburger Helper. The pricing strategy was applied to both estimated models to forecast the sales revenue for these product categories for fiscal year 2009. The forecasted revenue for both product categories, which was integrated into a pro forma for fiscal year 2009, resulted in cumulative additional funds needed of \$79.4 million. This alternative was not chosen because the pricing strategy yielded a lower profit margin compared to the single price increase in Pillsbury. Furthermore, consumers' response to the price increase of the more elastic Hamburger Helper will lead to decreased sales for this category.