Technical communications

Homework

- Found on Canvas

Types of communications

- writing
- presenting

Types of writing we create

- Programs
- Code, comments, web pages
- Design documents
- Requirements, diagrams, test cases and procedures, etc.
- How to documents
- Manuals
- Reports
- Communication
- Email, blogs, meeting minutes, etc.

Purposes of writing

- Typically not
  - Emotional
  - Inspirational
  - Confrontational
  - Leisure, entertaining
  - Etc.
- Typically
  - Informational, objective
  - Clarity
  - Quick
  - Dense and detailed
  - Comprehensive
  - Accurate

Implications

- Be extremely up front in your writing
- Make it easy to find what is wanted and skip what is not wanted
- Ambiguity is a death sentence
- Dry language is ok
- Avoid complex language whenever possible!

Important items for writing

- define the precise reason for the document
  - ▸ not just the topic but the reason
- If it is not essential, do not include it
  - ▸ From topics down to specific words. Don't fluff things!

Simple writing

- Have one idea per sentence/paragraph/section
- Have simple logical organization
- Use short words
- Use short simple sentences
- Use short paragraphs
- Avoid buzzwords and clichés
- Avoid excess (style, length)
- Omit unnecessary stuff
- Be specific (not abstract)
- Break rules only when necessary

Being accepted as an "Expert"

- You can't fake it
- If you don't understand it, putting in another's words won't help
- Don't try to force it
- Flash != expert
- Complex != expert
- Simple, clear == expert
- Expert.increase(examples)
- Own words increases expertise
- Straw man arguments don't help
- Refer to experts (esp. established ones)

Style

- Layout
  - ‣ Titles
  - ‣ Section headings
  - ‣ Labeling and placing figures
  - ‣ Page numbers
  - ‣ Section numbering
  - ‣ Spacing
  - ‣ Font size and type (underline, bold, etc.)
  - ‣ Justification
  - ‣ Bulleted lists
    - – Number and non-numbered

Style

- Content
  - Opening paragraph/sentence -> direct, straight forward
  - Paragraphs -> short and only one topic
    - No whiplash!
  - Sentences -> simple, short (one or two lines)
  - Keep the same voice (first person, second person, or third person, etc.)
  - Ambiguity ->try to read it a different legitimate way
  - Define terms when first used
  - Shorter words are better
  - Limit qualifiers but use them accurately!
  - Be careful about words with multiple meanings esp. if one is a loaded term in computing

Computing Words

- Acronyms -> esp. computing ones -> use correctly
  - ‣ GUI Interface, NIC card, etc.

- Diversity language

- Simplify!!!!!!

Types of presentations

- Inspiring
- Educating
- Entertaining
- Technical

Purposes of each type

- Inspiring

- Educating

- Entertaining

- Technical
  - details
  - precision
  - clarity

Types of technical presentations

- demo as they do
- present/demo for approval
- present for later use

Good things for any presentation

learn in COMM 171!

- be comfortable
  - ‣ practice
- don't be stuck behind the "computer" -> move around
- don't read the slides
  - ‣ purpose of slides
- engage the audience

Good things applied to technical presentations

- being comfortable -> Know what you are talking about

- moving around -> practice and use technology

- contents of slides

- engaging the audience
  - ▸ technical stuff can be boring and/or too complex

Aids

- major types
  - ‣ visual
  - ‣ take away

- purpose
  - ‣ keep audience engaged
  - ‣ take aways
  - ‣ details

Technical language

- writing -> short simple
  - ▸ why - accuracy
- presenting
  - ▸ unambiguous
  - ▸ jargon

Reading the audience

- likely scenarios
  - lost, confuse
  - excited
  - bored

Doing it virtually

- recorded
- live

Recorded

- practice
- Have all visual aids "perfect"
- time yourself
- do a draft run and check the visual quality/readability
- watch time
- easiest if in front of a live audience
- length
- include a screen of yourself

Virtually
live

- **test your visual aids**
  - ‣ readability
  - ‣ environment

- **reading audience**
  - ‣ chat
  - ‣ raising hands/etc.
  - ‣ question

- **allow them to follow along**

In class activity

- Compare and contrast the two different essays on network security written by ChatGPT
  - ‣ Identify at least 6 differences that indicate where the technical writing style makes a difference