

Lutgers College of Business
Writing Guidelines
Update on September 5, 2018



In the workplace you are expected to write clearly and coherently. The Lutgers College of Business faculty expect college level writing on all assignments. Please read this completely to understand our writing expectations and use this as a guide for your assignments. The two sample formats provided can be used for most writing assignments within the LCOB. Individual faculty may have different or more extensive requirements.

Important Information and Suggestions

(More suggestions are available in Appendix A in a check list format)

- Carefully read your professor's instructions regarding formatting. If not specified, the assignment should be written in 12 pt. font with line spacing at 1.5 lines.
 - Consider your audience expectations.
 - Use appropriate grammar, syntax, and language to address a business audience.
 - Avoid prepositions in beginning or ending sentences.
 - If your summary is step-by-step directions, but the prompt was not a "how to," it is not audience appropriate.
 - Avoid conversational tone (e.g. "I was wanting to have...")
 - Use the phrase "less expensive" versus "cheaper," or use "at the present time" or "in the current year" versus "Year 0," etc.
 - Frequently used words that are not audience appropriate: formula, plug-in, calculate
 - Use the same tense (past, present, future) throughout, with appropriate exceptions. Usually, the most appropriate tense is present.
 - Gather enough credible information about your subject.
 - Organize your ideas so they flow smoothly.
 - Limit the use of long quotes; paraphrase sourced information into your own words.
 - Include a documentation statement with references and a description of any assistance from other individuals.
- Plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty.**
- Ideas and statements within the report must reference sources.
- Optional APA style for documenting references: <http://www.apastyle.org>
 - Spreadsheets should be well organized and easy to read.
 - Use borders, alignment settings, font settings, number settings, etc. to create a professional spreadsheet.
 - If appropriate, include full calculations/data/spreadsheets in appendix.
 - Tables should be accompanied by explanations.

Fatal Error Policy:

Many LCOB faculty adhere to the Fatal Error Policy and will stop grading a paper if it exhibits 3 or more of the fatal errors below on a single page or 9 errors in total (whichever comes first). **If your professor implements this policy**, you may receive a grade of zero on the paper for violating the Fatal Error Policy.

Each instance of the following is a Fatal Error:

1. Misspelled word
2. Sentence fragment
3. Run-on sentence or comma splice
4. Mistake in capitalization
5. Serious mistake in punctuation
6. Error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement
7. Sentence ending with a preposition
8. Improper citation or lack of a citation where one is needed
9. Serious grammar error that obscures meaning
10. Misuse of terminology

Students should use

- Headings
- Short paragraphs, each of which discusses only one topic that matches to the heading/sub-heading of the section.
- Bulleted and numbered statements, where appropriate
- Tables and charts, where appropriate to aid in explanation of results. Use only short sentences to explain your findings from the tables and charts. Generally, smaller tables are appropriate within the body of the report, while larger tables are appropriate in an appendix.
- Use CRAPP (Currency, Relevancy, Authority, Accuracy, and Purpose.) test at <https://survey.fgc.edu/Survey.aspx?s=09fa1908362844e7b14dfe682421f7ba> to check the information source.
- Sample formats are attached and links to examples of effective business writing can be found here: :
 - https://oup.useremarkable.com/production/images/uploads/3676/original/sample_Business_Report.pdf?1479137052
 - <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/businessenglish/biz6/>

***** See the sample formats on next pages for further instructions and suggestions.*****

Sample Analytical Assignment Title

Introduction (One paragraph: 3-5 sentences)

Here you may want to write

1. Objective and goal of this report
2. What you are going to write (main sections).
3. Brief conclusion/recommendation of this report if appropriate.

Background (One or two paragraphs)

Here you may want to write

1. Why you did this analysis (why it is important)
 2. Any background information the reader should know
- Note: Validity of the data should be checked

Method or Framework of Analysis You Use (One or two paragraphs)

Here you may want to write

1. An analytical method/framework you used/you created
2. Brief justification of why the analytical method/framework is appropriate in this particular case.

Data Collection (One or two paragraphs)

Here you may want to write

1. How you collected data for your analysis
 2. Summary of the data
- Note: Validity of the data should be checked

Results of Analysis (Two to five paragraphs)

Here you may want to write and include

1. Assumptions you made if appropriate
 2. Summary of the analysis
 3. Tables
 4. Charts
 5. Explanations of findings
- * Limit use of pictures

Conclusions/Recommendations (One or two paragraphs)

Here you may want to write

1. Your conclusion or recommendation.
2. Limitations of the analysis if appropriate.
3. Further analysis you think necessary.

References

Doe, J. and Smith, J. (2014). What is systems thinking? International Journal of LCOB, 1(1), 20-25.

Johnson, K. (2015). The definition of systems thinking. Is it good or evil for the information technology industry? Journal of FGCU, 1(1), 1-2.

Descriptive Assignment Title

INTRODUCTION

Describe what this document is about and list 4-5 main points of the document. Note: "List" does NOT necessarily mean a numbered list or bulleted list. For example, you can write "This report explains aaaaaaaaaa, bbbbbbbbbb, ccccccccc, dddddddddd, and eeeeeeeee in detail." or similar.

AAAAAAAAAA (Note: This is your 1st main point. Use short descriptive section heading)

Explain and elaborate your 1st main point. Use data, facts, expert opinions and/or examples and thus references to support your explanations. Make sure you add in-line reference information and add the reference to the list of references at the end of the report. For example, you write "Systems thinking is defined as xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx (Doe & Smith, 2014; Johnson, 2015)." For the in-line reference information. Follow APA reference guideline.

BBBBBBBBBB (Note: This is your 2nd main point. Use short descriptive section heading)

Explain and elaborate your 2nd main point. Use data, facts, expert opinions and examples and thus references to support your explanations. Make sure you add in-line reference information and add it to references at the end of the report.

CCCCCCCCCC (Note: This is your 3rd main point. Use short descriptive section heading)

Explain and elaborate your 3rd main point. Use data, facts, expert opinions and examples and thus references to support your explanations. Make sure you add in-line reference information and add it to references at the end of the report.

DDDDDDDDDD (Note: This is your 4th main point. Use short descriptive section heading)

Explain and elaborate your 4th main point. Use data, facts, expert opinions and examples and thus references to support your explanations. Make sure you add in-line reference information and add it to references at the end of the report.

EEEEEEEEEE (Note: This is your 5th main point. Use short descriptive section heading)

Explain and elaborate your 5th main point. Use data, facts, expert opinions and examples and thus references to support your explanations. Make sure you add in-line reference information and add it to references at the end of the report.

CONCLUSIONS or SUMMARY

Conclude and summarize what this report was about and your main points. Rephrase your main points. Do NOT copy the introduction.

REFERENCES

Doe, J. and Smith, J. (2014). What is systems thinking? International Journal of LCOB, 1(1), 20-25.

Johnson, K. (2015). The definition of systems thinking. Is it good or evil for the information technology industry? Journal of FGCU, 1(1), 1-2.

SHORT DESCRIPTIVE TITLE OF REPORT

Author's Name

Date Created

INTRODUCTION

Write a very short paragraph to explain what this report is about and what it does. No more than 3 lines.

BACKGROUND

Write a brief background of the company and situation but don't explain too much. The details will go in the next sections. Minimize the redundancy. No more than 5 lines.

PROBLEM (OPPORTUNITY) AND GOALS

Write one short sentence of the most important problem or opportunity. Write facts and data backing the problem or opportunity. Write why solving the problem or taking the opportunity is important that leads to the list of an immediate goal and/or a long-term goal to achieve. No more than 5 lines.

- Describe immediate goal. (This is typically eliminating the obstacles the company currently facing to solve the problem or take the opportunity.)
- Describe long-term goal when appropriate. (This is typically true reason why the company wants to solve the problem or take the opportunity)

KEY FACTORS AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Write an introductory transition statement. Write another sentence to explain what this section is about. 2 lines.

Short descriptive sub-heading of 1st Key Factor

Write a paragraph that explains a factor affecting the problem or opportunity with backing evidence and/or numeric data. Explain logic of how this factor affects the problem or opportunity. Explain logic of how appropriately handling this factor helps the business achieve its immediate and/or long-term goal(s). If quantitative data regarding this factor are given or you have collected/estimated them, select an appropriate quantitative analytical technique and conducted the analysis. Then, summarize the result. Put the details in Appendix and refer that here. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary. You can use a bulleted/numbered list for evidences.

Short descriptive sub-heading of 2nd Key Factor

Write a paragraph that explains another factor affecting the problem or opportunity with backing evidence and/or numeric data. Explain logic of how this factor affects the problem or opportunity. Explain logic of how appropriately handling this factor helps the business achieve its immediate and/or long-term goal(s). If quantitative data regarding this factor are given or you have collected/estimated them, select an appropriate quantitative analytical technique and conducted the analysis. Then, summarize the result. Put the details in Appendix and refer that here. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary. You can use a bulleted/numbered list for evidences.

Short descriptive sub-heading of 3rd Key Factor

Write a paragraph that explains the third factor affecting the problem or opportunity with backing evidence and/or numeric data. Explain logic of how this factor affects the problem or opportunity. Explain logic of how appropriately handling this factor helps the business achieve its immediate and/or long-term goal(s). If quantitative data regarding this factor are given or you collected/estimated them, select an appropriate quantitative analytical technique and conducted the analysis. Then, summarize the result. Put the details in Appendix and refer that here. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary. You can use a bulleted/numbered list for evidences.

Short descriptive sub-heading of 4th Key Factor if necessary

Write a paragraph that explains the fourth factor affecting the problem or opportunity with backing evidence and/or numeric data. Explain logic of how this factor affects the problem or opportunity. Explain logic of how appropriately handling this factor helps the business achieve its immediate and/or long-term goal(s). If quantitative data regarding this factor are given or you collected/estimated them, select an appropriate quantitative analytical technique and conducted the analysis. Then, summarize the result. Put the details in Appendix and refer that here. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary. You can use a bulleted/numbered list for evidences.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Write an introductory transition sentence. Write another sentence to explain what this section is about. 2 lines.

1. Short description of 1st recommended action to achieve the immediate goal. 1-2 lines.
2. Short description of 2nd recommended action to achieve the immediate and/or long-term goal. 1-2 lines.
3. Short description of 2nd recommended action to achieve the long-term goal. 1-2 lines.

Write a paragraph to explain logic of why you recommend your 1st recommended action and how it helps the company achieve the immediate goal. If you conducted a quantitative analysis, use the results to support this idea. Refer Appendix for the detailed information. This paragraph must have more information than the table. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary.

Write a paragraph to explain logic of why of you recommend your 2nd recommended action and how it helps the company achieve the immediate and/or long-term goal(s). If you conducted a quantitative analysis, use the result to support this idea. Refer Appendix for the detailed information. This paragraph must have more information than the table. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary.

Table 1: Summary of Recommended Actions

	2-7 words that describe 1 st action	2-7 words that describe 2 nd action	2-7 words that describe 3 rd action
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-7 words• 3-7 words

Write a paragraph to explain logic of why of you recommend your 3rd recommended action and how it helps the company achieve the long-term goal. If you conducted a quantitative analysis, use the result to support this idea. Refer Appendix for the detailed information. This paragraph must have more information than the table. Approximately 7 lines. Add a small table or chart if necessary.

Write a short paragraph to conclude this report. No more than 5 lines. Re-emphasize the problem (or opportunity) and the importance of addressing the problem (or taking the opportunity).

REFERENCES (The below are APA examples of online source, article in periodical, and book.)

Bernstein, M. (2002). 10 tips on writing the living Web. *A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites*, 149. Retrieved from <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving>

Harlow, H. F. (1983). Fundamentals for preparing psychology journal articles. *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, 55, 893-896.

Calfee, R. C., & Valencia, R. R. (1991). *APA guide to preparing manuscripts for journal publication*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

APPENDIX A

Include the details of data, quantitative analysis and other necessary information to back your problem, goals, and solutions.

Appendix A: DOs and DON'Ts for Business Writing

Written Communication

Context of and Purpose for Writing

- Pretend that you are a professional consultant hired by the company in the case and writing a report to your managers, client, business partners, government agents, accountants, lawyers, or other professionals.
- Clearly define problems and set goals (clearly write why you are writing this report.)
- Explain significance of achieving the goals you defined.
- Read the instructions thoroughly to understand what is required to do.
 - Write your report to directly address the problems or issues you are required to analyze.
 - Ask the teacher if you are not sure what you are supposed to do.
- Consider your audience expectations.
 - If your summary is step-by-step directions, but the prompt was not a “how to,” it is not audience appropriate.
 - Avoid conversational tone (e.g. “I was wanting to have...”).

Genre and Disciplinary Conventions

- The report should be written in 11 pt. font with single line spacing.
- Use section headings.
- Write short paragraphs, each of which discusses only one topic that matches to the heading/sub-heading of the section. (As a loose guideline, don't write more than 7 lines for each paragraph)
- Avoid writing statements irrelevant to the section headings.
- Use bulleted and numbered statements with parallel structure to list main points, facts, evidences, alternatives, or recommendations, where appropriate.
- Use tables and charts, where appropriate to aid in explanation of results.
 - Summarize numeric data in a table or chart.
 - Use a table to make a comparison of alternatives easier.
 - Use short phrases (3-5 words) to make the table as shallow as possible.
 - Format the table professionally by naming and numbering them as well as removing unnecessary space.
 - Use a paragraph or paragraphs to explain your findings from the tables and charts.
 - Generally, smaller tables are appropriate within the body of the report, while larger tables are appropriate in an appendix.
- Write your report as it is a property of the company that may be shared with external constituents.
- Do NOT write as if you speak or talk.
- Write facts as facts.
- Define or describe field-specific terminologies appropriately for possible readers.
- Avoid “I”, “my”, “me”, “we”, “our”, “us”, “you” and “your”.
- Use the company name as much as possible and avoid using a person's name unless necessary.
- Spell out an acronym when you mention it for the first time. E.g. Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU).
- Avoid meaningless adjective and adverb such as “very” and “extremely”.
- Flow of writing: smooth passage from one to another and how paragraphs and sections are separated around the written content.
 - Add transition sentence at the beginning and/or end of each paragraph/section when appropriate.
- Do NOT use direct quotations; paraphrase sourced information into your own words.
- See sample formats of a report on pages 5 through 7 of this document.
- Also, see examples at
 - https://oup.userremarkable.com/production/images/uploads/3676/original/sample_Business_Report.pdf?1479137052
 - <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/businessenglish/biz6/>

Control of Syntax and Mechanics

- Use appropriate grammar, syntax, and language to address a business audience.
 - Correct all of misspelled words.
 - Avoid misuse of terminology.
 - Avoid sentence fragment.
 - Avoid run-on sentence or comma splice.
 - Avoid mistake in capitalization.
 - Avoid serious mistake in punctuation.
 - Avoid error in verb tense or subject/verb agreement.
 - Avoid serious grammar error that obscures meaning
 - Avoid prepositions in beginning or ending sentences.
 - Use the phrases like “a large amount of” instead of “a lot of”, “less expensive” instead of “cheaper,” or “at the present time” or “in the current year” instead of “Year 0,” etc.
 - Frequently used words that are not audience appropriate: formula, plug-in, calculate
- Use the same tense (past, present, future) throughout, with appropriate exceptions. Usually, the most appropriate tense is present.
- Use parallel structure when you use a bullet or numbered list.
- Ask at least one person to proof read your report. (We recommend to use FGCU Writing center).

Critical Thinking

Content Development:

- Assure problems are clearly defined and goals are established.
- Explain significance of achieving the goals you defined.
- Document relevant data, information and evidence you use for analysis.
- Establish appropriate analytical framework or select appropriate analytical tool.
 - Define alternatives you evaluate.
 - Establish appropriate criteria for evaluation of the alternatives.
- Describe your analysis and summarize the results.
- Use section heading to organize your report in a logical manner as shown above.
- Assure all of the problem, goal, evidence, alternatives, and .summary of the analysis are logically consistent.
- Explain fully one idea, then connect to the next one.

Evaluation of Information & Conclusion:

- Describe your analysis of data, information and evidence, and summarize the results. Make a conclusion or recommendation based on the data and evidence you provided in the main body.
- Make clear connection among the problem, goals, evidences, your conclusion or recommendation and your analysis and its results.
- Use descriptive statistics when appropriate.
- Do NOT introduce new topics in the conclusion you did not mention in the main body of your report unless it is a suggestion for future research.
- Use tables and charts, where appropriate to aid in explanation of results.
 - Summarize numeric data in a table or chart.
 - Use a table to make a comparison of alternatives easier.
 - Use a paragraph or paragraphs to explain your findings from the tables and charts.
 - Generally, smaller tables are appropriate within the body of the report, while larger tables are appropriate in an appendix.

Information Literacy

Identification and Access of Information/Evidence:

- Gather enough credible information about your subject.
 - All sources are written by known authors who have credibility.
 - Sources are NOT written by authors who have significant bias (E.g. A report written by Microsoft or Apple that praises its own products).
 - All sources are NOT outdated.
 - Find multiple sources to validate an evidence when possible.
 - Look for information and evidence that contradicts with your opinion, conclusion and recommendation.
 - Do NOT hide information and evidence that contradicts with your opinion, conclusion and recommendation.
- Document references properly both in the body and at the end of the report.
 - Assure your claims are supported by evidence which requires the in-text reference information and a list of references at the end of your report.
 - Include a documentation statement with references and a description of any assistance from other individuals. **Plagiarism constitutes academic dishonesty.**
 - Follow APA style for documenting references: <http://www.apastyle.org>

Use Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose

- Assure your claims are supported by evidence which requires the in-text reference information and a list of references at the end of your report.
- Avoid improper citation or lack of a citation where one is needed.
- Do NOT use direct quotations; paraphrase sourced information into your own words.
- **Tables & Spreadsheets:**
 - Spreadsheets should be well organized and easy to read.
 - Use borders, alignment settings, font settings, number settings, etc. to create a professional spreadsheet.
 - If appropriate, include full calculations/data/spreadsheets in appendix.
 - Tables should be accompanied by explanations.