



A Short Guide to English 3764: Technical Writing

Traci Gardner
Spring 2022

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For more information on this course, see the [Course Manual](#) and [our Canvas site](#).

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Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognize their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. I pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging. To learn more, visit [the Monacan Nation website](#). You can also visit the [American Indian & Indigenous Community Center](#) in 122 Squires Student Center.

I also acknowledge the enslaved Black people who lived and worked on the former plantation lands upon which Virginia Tech stands. These families include the Fractions, McNortons, and Saunders, as well as others. Read more about these families in the *Virginia Tech Magazine* article "[Family Tree](#)."

Your Access to this Course

Everyone needs special accommodation at some point because we all learn differently. I am happy to work with the [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\) staff](#) or directly with you to make sure that you have the support you need.



For anyone who needs extra time on assignments

No problem. You can arrange whatever you need. If you need more time on a project, take the time you need. This course has a grace period that allows everyone extra time if needed. Check the [details on Due Dates & the Late Policy](#) for more details.

For anyone who needs a less-distracting environment

You can arrange to do your work for this course any place that works for you. Since all work is done online and independently, you have complete control over where you work.

Providing documentation of special needs

I generally do not require official documentation unless the university requires it for some reason. I do prefer that you let me know of any accommodation you need so that I can make sure I give you the support you need.

For anyone with official documentation:


Contact [Services for Students with Disabilities \(SSD\)](#) in 310 Lavery Hall ([map link](#), above the Turner Place Dining Center) as soon as possible to ensure that you have the resources you need to participate in the class. The procedures and forms you need are also available on the SSD website.

For anyone without official documentation:


I know that the official testing can be expensive and time-consuming. Send me [a private message in Canvas](#) that tells me what you need, and I will try to help.

Technical Writing Overview

English 3764 ● CRNs #15011, #15027, #15029, and #15031 ● Spring 2022

<p>Who</p>  <p>Traci Gardner tengrrl@vt.edu she, her, hers</p> <p>Straight, cisgender, white. Disabled. Lifetime Girl Scout. Hokie alum. Steelers fan. Poodle lover.</p>	<p>What</p> <p>This course examines how to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • write about technology and technical subjects in ways readers understand. • analyze your situation so you present information clearly and effectively. • choose the best design strategies for composing in digital environments. 	<p>Where</p> <p>Online course site on Canvas: canvas.vt.edu/courses/146101</p> <p>Low bandwidth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streaming videos • PDFs • Web pages • Google Drive <p>Times and dates correspond to the Blacksburg Campus (Eastern US Time Zone).</p>
<p>When</p> <p>Anytime!</p> <p>Asynchronous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work at your own speed • Set your own schedule <p>No required real-time sessions. Course begins January 18.</p>	<p>Why</p> <p>To succeed in the workplace, you need skills in writing and communications.¹ In this course, we will focus on these skills so that you learn strategies that will help you prosper in your career.</p>	<p>How</p> <p>Follow Canvas Modules to write these documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letters, memos, & email • Instructions • An oral presentation • A technical description • A recommendation report


What You Need

<p>Course Textbook</p> <p><i>Technical Communication</i> by Markel & Selber. 13th ed. Macmillan, 2021. (Print or ebook).</p> 	<p>Computer</p> <p>A reliable computer—Linux, FreeBSD, Windows, or Mac.</p>	<p>A/V Gear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A camera or a phone with a camera. Screenshot support on your computer. • Earbuds and a microphone
<p>Internet</p> <p>Working, dependable Internet access and a backup plan. If the connection where you live goes out, know where you can go for free WiFi.</p>	<p>Software</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word processor & slide software that saves DOCX, PDF, & PPTX files, OR Google Drive. • Image editing software that saves JPG & PNG files. • Video recording software that saves MP4s or MOVs. 	<p>Email</p> <p>I will use your VT.EDU email and the Inbox tool in Canvas. I will respond as quickly as possible, usually within 24 to 48 hours on class days. I take holidays and weekends off and reply on the next class day.</p>

¹ Pew Research Center, October 2016, “The State of American Jobs: How the shifting economic landscape is reshaping work and society and affecting the way people think about the skills and training they need to get ahead.”

Short Course Schedule

This schedule may change to adapt to your needs and those of others taking the course. Check Canvas Announcements for updates and changes to the dates. Check the Module Instructions each week for specific details on what's due. *Last updated January 7, 2022.*

Week	Dates	Activities and Work	Markel & Selber Readings
1	Jan 18-21	Module 1: Course Intro	Ch 1, "Introduction to Technical Communication"
2	Jan 24-28	Module 2: Getting Started in Tech Writing Jan 24: Last Day to Add	Ch 2, "Understanding Ethical & Legal Considerations" Ch 3, "Writing Technical Documents"
3	Jan 31-Feb 4	Module 3: Convincing Your Audience	Ch 5, "Analyzing Your Audience & Purpose" Ch 8, "Communicating Persuasively"
4	Feb 7-11	Module 4: Conducting Research	Ch 6, "Researching Your Subject" Ch 20, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, & Instructions," pp. 561-569
5	Feb 14-18	Module 5: Writing Instructions	Ch 20, "Writing Definitions, Descriptions, & Instructions," pp.569-587
6	Feb 21-25	Module 6: Finishing Your Research	
7	Feb 28-Mar 4	Module 7: Writing Your Progress Report Feb 28: Last Day to Drop	Ch 17, "Writing Informational Reports," pp. 468-478 Ch 14, "Corresponding in Print and Online," pp. 368-388
	Mar 5-13	Spring Break No classes/Limited email	
8	Mar 14-18	Module 8: Pitching Your Topic	Ch 21, "Making Oral Presentations"
9	Mar 21-25	Module 9: Using Graphics & Visuals	Ch 12, "Creating Graphics"
10	Mar 28-Apr 1	Module 10: Submitting Your Pitch Mar 28: Last day to resign w/o penalty	Ch 9, "Emphasizing Important Information"
11	Apr 4-8	Module 11: Structuring Your Recommendation	Ch 7, "Organizing Your Information" Ch 18, "Writing Recommendation Reports"
12	Apr 11-15	Module 12: Drafting the Body Sections of Your Recommendation	Ch 18, "Writing Recommendation Reports" Ch 11, "Designing Print & Online Documents"
13	Apr 18-22	Module 13: Drafting the Front & Back Matter of Your Recommendation Nov 17: Last day to reschedule exams	Ch 18, "Writing Recommendation Reports" Ch 11, "Designing Print & Online Documents"
14	Apr 25-29	Module 14: Revising & Submitting Your Recommendation	
15	May 2-4	Module 15: Evaluating Your Progress May 4: Last day of classes; Last day to withdraw	Ch 8, "Communicating Persuasively" (Review)
Exam Week		May 6: Exam opens at 12:00 AM May 11: Final Exam due by 11:59 PM	

Due Dates & the Late Policy

I accept late work. You do not need to ask in advance or explain why your work is late. Just take more time when you need it, as many times as you need it. Turn your work in when you can before the grace period ends.

I accept late work
(no questions asked)

Grace Period

If you cannot meet a due date, use the grace period. The grace period covers most situations, whether a religious holiday, academic conflict, illness, or a personal issue.

The grace period occurs between the due date and the last moment that you can submit work in the course. Canvas indicates the end of the grace period as the “available until” date, shown in the screenshot on the right.

The screenshot shows a Canvas quiz interface for 'Turtle Anatomy Exam'. At the top, it says 'Due: Fri Jul 23, 2021 11:59pm' with an arrow pointing to the text 'Due Date'. Below that is a dropdown menu for 'Attempt 1' and a green 'IN PROGRESS' indicator with 'Next Up: Submit Assignment'. Underneath, it says 'Unlimited Attempts Available: Jul 20, 2021 12:00am until Jul 28, 2021 11:59pm' with an arrow pointing to the text 'End of Grace Period'. A 'Details' section is partially visible at the bottom, containing the instruction: 'Identify all of the portions of turtle anatomy or fail this course.'

If you turn in your work during the Grace Period, Canvas will mark the activity as *Late*. Don't worry about this late label. There is no grade penalty for work submitted during the grace period.

Nearly everything in this course has a grace period. The length of the grace period depends upon the kind of activity (explained below).

Suggested Due Dates with Open Grace Period

Much of the work on projects in this course is flexible. Work with suggested due dates has an open grace period that ends at 11:59 PM on Friday, April 29.

Take my advice however, and don't wait until the last minute! Try to keep up with the suggested due dates so you can spread your work across the term. Taking a few extra days occasionally should not derail your progress.

Examples of work with open grace periods, ending on April 29:

- Brainstorming notes for your projects.
- Your recommendation report.

Firm Due Dates with Five-Day Grace Period

Some work in the course needs to be completed in a timely manner. Work with firm due dates has a five-day grace period (including weekends and holiday). For example, if your work is due on Friday, January 28, the grace period ends five days later, on Wednesday, February 2 (shown in the table below).

Fri, 1/28 Firm Due Date	Sat, 1/29	Sun, 1/30	Mon, 1/31	Tue, 2/1	Wed, 2/2 Grace Period Ends at 11:59 PM
Five-Day Grace Period					

Examples of work with five-day grace periods:

- Activities assigned during the first week of the term.
- Weekly Work Logs, throughout the term.
- Your Midterm Progress Report.

Firm Due Dates with No Grace Period: Peer Feedback

Peer feedback in the course must be completed on time—because of limits in Canvas and because your classmates' work depends upon it.

To make up for the lack of a grace period, most peer feedback activities happen in two rounds. Each round gives you five days to complete your feedback. You can participate in the first round, the second round, or both rounds. **I expect you to participate in one round for each project.** It's up to you which round you choose. Examples of the two rounds are shown below:

Date	Related Peer Feedback	Feedback Round
Fri, 2/18	Rough draft due for Round 1 feedback by 11:59 PM.	Round 1
Sat, 2/19	Canvas automatically assigns feedback partners at 12:01 AM.	
Sun, 2/20		
Mon, 2/21		
Tue, 2/22		
Wed, 2/23	Round 1 feedback due to partners by 11:59 PM.	
	Rough drafts due for Round 2 feedback by 11:59 PM.	Round 2
Thu, 2/24	Canvas automatically assigns feedback partners at 12:01 AM.	
Fri, 2/25		
Sat, 2/26		
Mon, 2/28		
Tue, 3/1	Round 2 feedback due to partners by 11:59 PM.	

Firm Due Date with No Grace Period: Final Exam

The final exam has no grace period. We can't extend the course beyond the end of the term. There are no make-ups or extensions unless approved by the Dean of Students. Regardless, you should still have plenty of time to take your final.

When to take your exam

Any time that you want to during exam week. You have all six days, from 12:00 AM on Friday 5/6 to 11:59 PM on Wednesday, 5/11. **Your final exam must be submitted by the due date so that I can submit grades on time.**

Rescheduling because of three exams in 24 hours

You won't need to reschedule your exam for this course. Simply choose another day during the exam period. You can take the exam whenever you want during exam week.

Interruptions in Course Progress

In the case of extenuating circumstances, please let me know **immediately**. I understand that things happen. As long as you are honest and timely in letting me know what's going on, we can try to work something out.

Incomplete Policy

My department's policy states, "Incompletes are for students who did their work during the semester but could not complete course requirements because of a problem or emergency at the end of the term." As a result, I cannot offer Incompletes for anyone who failed to keep up during the term. If you find you have an impossible amount of work to complete by the end of the term, withdrawing from the course is likely the best solution.

Sequence of Technical Writing Projects

In this course, you will compose formal and informal documents that build toward your Recommendation Report. The sequence of projects below will be your focus for the term.

Choose Your Target Website

Following the [Recommendation Report Website Requirements](#), you will choose a target website for your Recommendation Report that

- belongs to a local business, nonprofit, organization, or other group, and
- includes content that you can navigate and observe without a login.



For example, you identify a website for a food bank, a campus department, or a local religious community. Your report explains your recommendation for improving the content and design of the website. You can review the [Recommendation Website Examples](#) page for help.

Once you make a choice, you will complete a short form and audience analysis to propose your topic.

Conduct Secondary Research



You will gather secondary research (information other people have collected) to support your project by finding books, journal articles, and/or professional websites. Resources on technical writing and online content design will provide basic details about effective strategies and give you support for your report.

While conducting your research, you will create a description of one of the most significant writing or design strategies that relate to your site. This description will become part of the Methods section of your Recommendation Report.

Conduct Primary Research

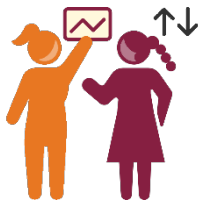
You will also include primary research (information you collect). You will examine and analyze the website, gathering data on how it works.

You need to examine and analyze each page of the site consistently. As a result, you will write a how-to document, with step-by-step instructions on how to conduct this primary research.



This how-to document will become an Appendix in your Recommendation Report.

Pitch Your Idea



You will pitch your recommendation in a short presentation that describes the website you are examining, your analysis of the site, and then persuasively recommends improvements. Your pitch will be presented as a short video (no longer than 3 minutes) with an accompanying transcript.

Your transcript will become a first draft for the introduction section of your Recommendation Report.

Make Your Recommendation

Your recommendation report identifies the website you examined, outlines your research methods and results, draws conclusions about improving the site, and finally makes a recommendation to your audience.

The final report may be 15-18 pages long, including all the front and back matter. We will work through the different portions of the report one-by-one, building the entire report by assembling all your informal and formal work by the end of the term.



A Module in Canvas is like a Bucket

This course uses Modules in Canvas to organize the work that you will do for each week.

You may notice that some of the sidebar navigation, like Assignments and Quizzes, does not show in the course Canvas site. That's because everything you need is in Modules.



What Is a Module?



In this course, a module is like a bucket. It contains everything you will need for a week.

Inside, you will find details on the readings and other activities that you are to complete for the relevant week.

What's Inside the Bucket?

The Instructions Page



The Module Instructions page outlines the instructions for the week. This page tells you what to do with everything that is in the bucket, and it gives you the suggested due dates for the work.

Be sure to notice these details on the Module Instructions page:

- General details on the current projects in the first paragraphs
- Sections on what you need to read, to write, to discuss, and to track
- Links to the resources and activities for the week

Activities for the Week



The activities you need to complete for the week are listed under these headings on the Module Instructions page:

- *To Read*: the textbook chapters, Canvas pages, and LinkedIn Learning videos
- *To Write*: informal and formal document assignments
- *To Discuss*: peer feedback and self-reflection Discussions
- *To Track*: writer's log instructions and self-assessment assignments

Typical Weekly Schedule

The schedule outlined below suggests how to break up your work during the week and submit your work on the suggested due dates. Take this as a suggestion, not a required schedule. Everyone works differently, and we all have other obligations. Adjust the schedule to make it work for you.

Monday

- Check the the Module Instructions page in Canvas for the specific activities for the week.
- Schedule time to complete the activities for the week.
- If you participated in the first Feedback Discussion, start your peer review assignments.
- Track what you do in your work log.



Tuesday

- Read the textbook and other readings/viewings, looking for details that will help you complete the activities for the week.
- Fill out your work log.



Wednesday

- Continue work on the week's activities.
- Post peer review for the first Feedback Discussions if you participated.
- Post your cover letter and draft in Second-Chance Discussions by 11:59 PM, if desired. Canvas automatically assigns feedback partners at 12:00 AM Thursday.
- Add details on your work to your work log.



Thursday

- Use feedback from first Feedback Discussion to revise your work.
- Continue work on any other readings and activities for the week.
- Make sure your work log is up-to-date.



Friday

- Post your cover letter and draft in first Discussions by 11:59 PM. Canvas automatically assigns feedback partners at 12:00 AM Saturday.
- Submit work you have completed by the Suggested Due Date. If you need more time, turn it in later.
- Fill out your work log.



Weekend

- Take a break. No one should work all the time!
- Work if you want to. If you do, be sure to track your work in your log.
 - Get started on the work for the next week, if desired.
 - Catch up on work as needed.



How Assessment Works

You will receive feedback from me and your classmates, and you will assess your own progress and learning. Rather than focusing on grades and grading, we will concentrate on feedback and assessment (primarily formative assessment).

So Why Formative Assessment Instead of Grades?

This course focuses on learning, specifically on learning about how people communicate in the workplace. Research tells us that grades are a terrible way to measure learning.

Why? Learning cannot be readily quantified. Two people may feel that they have learned a great deal, yet if we try to turn that learning into a number, we usually fall short.

What We Know About Grades

- Grades are used to rank students. They were created so gatekeepers could sort students into piles that let them decide who gets which privileges (like entrance to college and scholarships).
- Grades are not fair. The usual grading process compares student work to an ideal text. Unfortunately, that means your success on a writing project depends upon perfect grammar and style. But whose grammar and style count? And who decides? That's the problem.
- Grades are arbitrary systems. There is no particular reason that 89.999 is a B+ and 90.000 is an A- other than an arbitrary decision someone made. Likewise, there are arbitrary decisions about whether to curve or round grades.
- Grades do not motivate students to learn. They just make students anxious and encourage them to do the least work possible to reach their goals. With grades, students do only as much as the teacher says to do. There's no motivation to go beyond the least possible amount of work a grade requires.
- Grades don't matter outside the school system. No one cares what grades you got once you leave school and enter the workplace. Managers don't give out letter grades. They expect you to show up, put in your best effort, and accomplish the goals your company sets.



If you want to learn more about grades and assessment, check out the work of [Jesse Stommel](#), [Alfie Kohn](#), and [Susan D. Blum](#).

Complete or Incomplete?

This course does not use letter or number grades on the work you submit. Research tells us grades are a terrible way to measure learning, so we are doing away with them.

Your work in this course is marked Complete or Incomplete, based on the effort you put into the task and on whether the work meets the criteria for the assignment. Since this course focuses on workplace writing, the work you do needs to meet specific genre requirements. These requirements drive the criteria for each task you complete.



Complete

I mark your work Complete in Canvas when it meets **all** of the following criteria:

- Submitted before the end of the Grace Period.
- Demonstrates your best effort.
- Matches the assignment.
- Meets the criteria for the assignment.



Incomplete

I mark your work Incomplete when it falls into **any** of the following categories:

- Submitted after the end of the Grace Period.
- Is not finished.
- Does not demonstrate good effort.
- Does not match the assignment.
- Does not meet the criteria for the assignment.



If your work earns an Incomplete, you can revise and resubmit as long as the Grace Period is still open.

Complete and Incomplete Notation in Canvas

The Grades tool in Canvas keeps track of your work. Work you submit is marked as 1 for Complete or as 0 for Incomplete. These numbers are a simple binary code. They do not bear any point value.

When Is Work Marked Complete/Incomplete?

Use the information in the table below to determine when I will mark your work in Canvas Grades. These are general guidelines. The specific situation may change how quickly I can respond to your work.

For instance, if a personal issue comes up for me (like I get sick or have an unexpected family issue to take care of), I may not be able to mark your work as quickly as usual. Always allow an extra day or two just in case.

Kind of Work	When It's Marked in Canvas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekly Work Logs• Feedback Discussions	Marked within 24 hours after the Grace Period ends, but allow a few days.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading Reviews• Pathways Self-Assessment	Marked immediately by Canvas after submission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Best Submissions• Midterm• Other Weekly Activities	Marked after the Suggested Due Date. Allow a week. If submitted during the grace period, marked within a week of the submission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Final Exam	Marked after the end of exam week

Effort Expectations for Each Grade Level

To do well in this class, you need to put in your best effort by trying to complete all the work in the course. The expectations in the table below indicate the amount of work you need to put in for each grade level.

It's likely many of you will have effort that falls in between two levels. In such cases, you'll use evidence from your Work Log to propose the grade you believe you should earn in the course.

For instance, perhaps you earn a Complete on only five of the Best Draft Submissions and you only participated in five Feedback Discussions, but you completed all of the other expectations for an A. You will use evidence of your effort and learning in the course to argue that you deserve a B+ or an A-.

Grade Level	Effort Expectations
A	Earn a Complete on all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Best Draft Submissions All Weekly Work Logs All Weekly Activities All Reading Reviews Six of the Feedback Discussions The Midterm Progress Report The Pathways Self-Assessment The Final Exam: Performance Review
B	Attempt and submit all six of the Best Draft Submissions Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Five Best Draft Submissions 85% of the Weekly Work Logs 85% of the Weekly Activities 85% of the Reading Reviews Five of the Feedback Discussions The Midterm Progress Report The Pathways Self-Assessment The Final Exam: Performance Review
C	Attempt and submit all six of the Best Draft Submissions Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four Best Draft Submissions 75% of the Weekly Work Logs 75% of the Weekly Activities 75% of the Reading Reviews Four of the Feedback Discussions The Midterm Progress Report The Pathways Self-Assessment The Final Exam: Performance Review
D	Attempt and submit fewer than six of the Best Draft Submissions Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three Best Draft Submissions 65% of the Weekly Work Logs 65% of the Weekly Activities 65% of the Reading Reviews Three of the Feedback Discussions The Final Exam: Performance Review
F	Attempt and submit fewer than six of the Best Draft Submissions Earn a Complete on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer than three of the Best Draft Submissions 64% or less of the Weekly Work Logs 64% or less of the Weekly Activities 64% or less of the Reading Reviews Fewer than three of the Feedback Discussions

Where Do Course Grades Come From?

There is only one letter grade in this course: the course grade that I enter for you at the end of the term. Using information from your Weekly Work Logs, you will propose your course grade, in your Midterm Progress Report and in your Final Exam: Performance Review, based on the following four measures:

- the effort expectations that you met (chart on the previous page).
- the time and intensity you put into your writing.
- what you learned by engaging in the course activities and assignments.
- how you improved your writing and communication skills over time.

Your Work Log

In your Midterm and Final, you will tell me about what you've learned in the course and the effort you put into your work. To track this data, you will record everything you do for the course and reflect on how well you have done in a weekly work log.



Your log entries are critical to the course grade you propose. They will provide evidence of what you have worked on and how long you worked.

Work logs have Firm Due Dates with Five-Day Grace Periods.

Your Midterm Progress Report

At midterm, you'll review the work you've completed and compare it to the effort expectations. You'll also consider the four measures listed above and the extent to which you have put in your best effort.



Additionally, you'll outline a plan to reach your goals during the rest of the term and suggest the grade you believe you should earn based on your work so far.

Your Midterm Progress Report has a Firm Due Date with a Five-Day Grace Period.

Your Final Performance Review

For your final exam, you'll write a performance review that evaluates your work and proposes the course grade you should receive. As with the midterm progress report, you'll use details from your work logs and consider your effort during the term.



I will read your performance review and the notes that I have on your work. In most cases, I will record the grade you suggest as your course grade. I reserve the right to change your grade if appropriate. I typically change grades in these situations:

- when someone proposes a course grade that is lower than they deserve for reasons that have nothing to do with learning in the course.
- when someone proposes a course grade higher than their effort merits, such as proposing an A when the student has not met the effort expectations for an A.
- when someone proposes a course grade that does not use the review form and/or does not include evidence that supports the proposed course grade.

Your Final Performance Review (the final exam) has a Firm Due Date with No Grace Period.

How Do You Focus Your Effort on Learning & Progress?

In this course, you assess your own progress and learning. That's probably not what you are used to, so I want to talk about what focusing on learning and feedback means. Rather than working toward grades, place your effort on these characteristics:

Focus on Ideas (Not Mistakes)

Focus on what you're trying to say. Forget about the pressure to be perfect. Why? Your ideas and the purpose of your message are the most important part of what you write.

Focusing on perfection can distract writers from developing their ideas. Because we will focus on what you accomplish and how you improve, mistakes won't undermine your course grade.



Write for Yourself (Not for Me)



In this course, you are learning writing strategies that will use in the workplace. Don't worry about writing to impress me, as your teacher. Why? I am not going to be with you when you enter the workplace.

You need to develop your own sense of what makes writing effective in your field. Your course grade is based on how hard you work to find that out.

Take Risks (Don't Play It Safe)

Try writing and composing strategies that stretch your abilities and help you learn new things. There's no need to play it safe. Why? Taking risks doesn't count against you.

In fact, taking risks can demonstrate that you're putting in time and effort. After all, the safe, easy route doesn't push you to learn and improve.



Have a Do-Over (No Penalty)



If you take a risk and it doesn't turn out, just try again. If your peer feedback or my comments ask you to revise, there is no impact on your grade. Just like in a game, you have unlimited do-overs, as long as the Grace Period is open. Why? Making mistakes is part of the learning process.

Whether it takes two tries or more, you are investing time and effort in your writing. As long as you are working to improve, you can't fail.

Put in the Effort (No Pain, No Gain)

Going through the motions won't produce strong workplace writing. You have to put in hard work and try all the projects. You need to write, rewrite, start over, and try again to improve your projects. The more you work, the better you'll do in the course.

Why? All your work counts toward your course grade, as long as you do the work, listen to feedback, incorporate what you hear, and reflect on how to improve your writing and communication.



Succeeding in This Online Course

The assessment system relies on you to set goals for the course. You are probably thinking primarily of writing and communication goals. Because this is an asynchronous online course however, you should consider some additional guidelines to ensure that you do well.

The key to success in this course is to focus on consistent, regular interaction—with the course materials, with your classmates, and with me. Here are five specific ways to make that happen.

1. Use Courses Resources

Explore everything on our course Canvas site, and always do the readings. These resources are the online classroom for the course. You'll do better if you use them.



2. Check Canvas Daily

If anything changes (like a suggested due date or an assignment), you'll find it in Canvas Announcements first. Check in at least once daily so that you always know what is going on. Alternately, you can [set your Canvas Notifications](#) for the course so that you receive an email or text message when a new Announcement is posted.



3. Set a Schedule

Schedule regular class sessions for yourself. Dedicate three or four two-hour sessions on different days, rather than a one-day marathon session of 6 to 8 hours.



4. Avoid Last-Minute Work

You'll do better in the class if you get started early. If you wait until the last minute, you may not have time to complete your work or improve your draft before its suggested due date.



5. Questions? Talk to me

I have no way to know when you need help. Tell me how it's going—what works for you and what you're unsure about. Use posts in Canvas Discussions to connect with me. If you have a personal question, use the [Inbox tool in Canvas](#).



How to Email Your Professor

Want to write email messages to persuade me to help you? Follow these guidelines.



Identify Yourself Up Front

Don't make me guess who you are

State how I know you in the beginning of your message. Don't assume I will know which class you're in or which class you took in the past.

Focus on the Basics about Health Issues

Don't share TMI about your health

No one wants to read how many times you "barfed your guts out" or hear the saga of how your cat, a torn carpet, and an order of Nachos BellGrande resulted in your broken ankle. Okay, that story might be interesting, but just say you have the flu, or you broke your ankle.

Include Any Attachments

Don't make me reply for more information

If you have a note from the doctor or the Dean, include it with your email. Don't ask if I want to see it. That just means I have to reply to say I do. If all you have is a piece of paper, take a photo with your phone and send the photo with your message.

Make Reasonable Requests

Don't ask for miracles

Don't beg or demand things. Don't ask me to do the impossible. Skip the sob stories. I don't have a TARDIS, a Time-Turner, or a magic wand. Ask for things that are practical and fair, and I will do what I can.

Stick with Basic Explanations

Don't bring the drama

Don't tell complicated stories about why your work is late or why you need more time to revise. The more excuses you come up with, the less believable you sound. Just share the basics—and please don't say some other course was a higher priority!

Tell Me How You Can Fix It

Don't make me find the answer

Solve the issue yourself if you can. If something is late, turn it in and tell me you've done so. If you can't fix things, suggest a solution that would work—and tell me what you have already tried.

Course FAQs

To do well in this class, you need to know the answers to these five questions. With these answers, you are ready to succeed.

What Am I Supposed to Do?

Every week, read the Module Instructions page to find a list of everything you need to read, write, or do.

The work in this course includes reading the textbook and other resources, writing various documents, and completing other activities in Canvas.



When Is It Due?



Submit your work in Canvas by **11:59 PM on Fridays if you can**. Check the **Module Instructions page** each week to see the specific dates.

If you need more time, take more time, using [the grace period](#). As we get closer to the end of the term however, I will run out of time to give you feedback. As a result, the sooner you turn your work in, the better. Remember to submit all course work by 11:59 PM on April 29. Only the Final Exam can be submitted after April 29.

How Did I Do?

Find feedback in **annotations on your submissions in Canvas**. Check Announcements for feedback to the whole class. Allow 48 hours after the end of the grace period for me to provide feedback.

You will suggest your own course grade at the end of the term. If you are worried about your grade, review the work you've done and your notes in your work logs. If you are doing the assigned work and putting in a reasonable amount of effort, you should be on target.



Where Can I Get Help?



- Read the step-by-step instructions for each Assignment in Canvas. Often, you'll find the answer there.
- Check Announcements in Canvas for the most recent help and advice.
- Look for Help Q&A Posts in Canvas Modules for each major project.
- Contact me using the Canvas Inbox if you can't find an answer. I usually reply within 48 hours during the week. I reply by Monday for questions sent during the weekend.

What More Can I Do?

Keep these guidelines in mind:

- Put in your best effort. Hard work pays off in this class.
- You have to try, but you don't have to be perfect.
- Take risks! Stretch your abilities and learn new things.
- Remember that you can always try again if something isn't working.

