

Rubric With Writing Corrections Directions

Use this rubric to help you with your writing corrections (writing correction directions start on page 6). The course rubric is based largely on Markel's Eight Measures of Excellence (clear, comprehensive, accessible, concise, professional in appearance, correct, accurate, and honest) and Auburn University's Chemical Engineering Department's Technical Report Rubric.

Recall that an "A" paper is *excellent*. It is difficult to improve. It demonstrates insight, originality, and attention to detail. It adheres to American English grammar and usage. It follows the assignment's formatting requirements *exactly*. It is submitted on time. It understands the target audiences' concerns and needs. The information is presented in a clear, comprehensive, ethical, and persuasive manner. It is like Mary Poppins: Practically Perfect in Every Way.

Overview of Error Deductions

Notice that most errors are major errors. The only minor errors are minor conciseness and spelling errors. All others are critical or will automatically fail the paper (including some that will give the paper a zero grade).

Conciseness, grammar, and spelling errors are counted each instance, that is, each time the same error occurs; this is true even for most critical errors. Formatting errors count off up to three times per memo or major section/chapter for a white paper for each specific error—that is, each different formatting error is treated separately. Critical formatting errors are counted once per memo or white paper major section (those beginning with a section title). However, one non-critical grammar error, one non-critical punctuation error, two *minor* conciseness errors, and two *minor* spelling errors are allowed per page without penalty.

A paper can lose more than 50% in deductions, so draft, revise, revise, and edit; have others look over your work (peer-review) and do not hesitate to visit the Writing Center. An overview of the error deductions is listed below. Error categories are discussed in the next sections.

- **Auto F** errors are so serious that they fail an assignment on their own.
- **Auto 0** errors mean the assignment receives no points.
- **Critical errors** cost five to ten percent each (half a letter grade to full letter grade)
- **Major errors** count one percent each.
- **Spelling and word choice errors** cost two percent each unless minor (see below).
- **Minor errors (conciseness and spelling only)** count 0.5 percent each. Most conciseness errors are minor, except for lengthy paragraphs and lengthy or complex sentences; sometimes long or complex is necessary, but try to keep your paragraphs tightly focused and seven or fewer sentences and your sentences simple (if you have to take a breath while reading a sentence out loud, it is probably too long). Minor spelling errors are British spellings or a compound word error that does not change the sentence's meaning or introduces a grammatical error.
- Some errors cause multiple problems and thus can count off more than once: for example, some grammar issues can cause clarity problems.

Thus, for a 200-point definition paper, *each* critical error costs 10 points, *each* spelling error costs 4 points, *each* grammar error costs 2 points, and *each* minor spelling error costs 1 point.

Error Categories: Automatic Fail Errors

First are the Auto-F and Auto-0 errors. In the next section, critical errors are listed.

Auto F: Automatic Fail Errors

- Writing is *not honest*: dishonest technical writing can open writers and their organization to legal charges. Intentional plagiarism will earn a zero grade. Unintentional plagiarism can fail a paper. Always cite quotes (including figures and tables—visual quotes).
- Writing is *not accurate*: as your textbook teaches, one wrong fact can confuse readers and can be dangerous. Most accuracy errors are critical.
- Paper is *not comprehensive*: more than one required section missing or incomplete.
- Paper has *too many errors*: so many accessibility, clarity, formatting, grammar, or spelling errors it is burdensome to read or has an unprofessional, low-quality appearance.

Auto 0: Automatic Zero Grade Errors

- The assignment is not submitted or submitted after two days.
- Writing is not on an assigned topic.
- Writing is mostly plagiarized. A second occurrence fails the course and earns a referral to the Honor Council.

Error Categories: Critical Errors

Most critical errors are counted off for each occurrence. Too many can fail a paper.

CE-acc (Critical Accuracy Errors)

Information or a visual is inaccurate or otherwise misleading. **Page errors**: Memo or paper directed to the wrong audience. For example, if you use CC: instead of Through: in a memo, the memo does not go through your supervisor first; they get it the same time as the primary audience; this can be a major problem with your supervisor as you went over their head.

CE-acs (Critical Accessibility Errors)

A heading level is inconsistently formatted, confusing the hierarchical structure. All or most items in the glossary, references, or unordered lists are not in alphabetical order. Numbers in contents or numbering of visuals (figures and tables) are missing or wrong. **Page errors**: page numbers are missing or wrong (counts off for each section in a white paper, once for a memo).

CE-cla (Critical Clarity Errors)

A visual (figure or table) is so fuzzy or so small that it is essentially unreadable; a visual is confusing because it was not explained.

CE-com (Critical Comprehensiveness Errors)

Information (text or visual) is missing, too brief, or not appropriate; this shows a lack of care or understanding for your audience or purpose. Include everything your audiences need, providing the

necessary details so that reasonably educated people are not confused. This error includes incorrectly written Ubiquitous email. Includes missing source information for illustrations and tables. **Page error:** missing one section (can cost 5% to 10% of the assignment grade).

CE-for (Critical Formatting/Professional Appearance Errors)

These are **page errors**. The document was not submitted as a Word file; font sizes are far too small or far too large (both errors result in a 5% reduction in grade). page headers not in the document header; section breaks missing (10% reduction in grade). This is cheating: learn how to insert page numbers instead of typing them; learn how to create and use section breaks.

CE-gra (Critical Correctness—Grammar and Usage—Errors)

Major Sentence-Level Errors: Comma splice, fragment, or run-on (fused); vague or confusing phrase, pronoun reference, contradictory language or confusing punctuation use. I have read the passage more than once and still do not understand what you are trying to say. These cost 5% of the assignment grade for *each* occurrence.

Error Categories: Major and Minor Errors

Major and minor errors are categorized based on Markel’s Eight Measures of Excellence.

ACS (Accessibility)

The document needs to be easy to navigate, easy to find information within. Accessibility errors include information not in the appropriate section, list information not organized logically, and table rows or columns not organized logically. **Page error:** page numbering position errors.

CLA (Clarity)

You say what you mean to say clearly. Clarity errors include missing a needed transition or transitional phrase or using an incorrect one; not integrating quotes or visuals; not discussing important features of visuals (pretend your reader is blind or is color blind); paragraphs not smoothly or logically organized on the page; a sentence or a paragraph not smoothly or logically organized; wording is vague (vague pronouns, unnecessary archaic language or jargon, unexplained terminology); a cliché or a cultural, religious, or sports analogy is used (unless such analogies are being discussed); awkward or weak writing that is difficult to understand the first read-through; and unsure language (“I believe,” may,” etc.) that robs your writing of its power.

COM (Comprehensiveness)

Everything that the readers need (and no more) is present. Leaving out required sections can automatically fail a paper. These errors include missing a purpose statement; missing contact information in memos; not using your Ubiquitous email, having weak or shallow analysis, justification, or support for your argument; giving an off-topic analysis; adding visuals just to be decorative, the abstract is too long, and adding information that is not needed. **Page errors:** missing titles from primary audience names; missing date or audience from memo page header, and incorrect memo title (“memo” instead of “Extended Definition Memo” for example).

CON (Conciseness)

Writing needs to be efficient, easy to read: word use needs to be simple, no fancy diction, no repetitive

words or phrases, no unnecessary modifiers or relative clauses—if a simple word means the same thing as a complex or fancy word, use the simple word.

CON-p/s (Conciseness—Paragraphs/Sentences)

A long paragraph needs to be split into two or more smaller paragraphs. When a paragraph gets too long, your reasoning may appear jumbled or confused as well as difficult to skim or scan. Paragraphs are steps that allow your reader to make progress through your paper. Usually, there are subtle shifts of emphasis within a long paragraph that can become a paragraph break. Try to figure out what your paragraph's main point is so that your reader does not have to.

FOR (Format—Other)

This error includes formatting errors not covered by the other categories, for example, table of contents or list of illustrations formatting errors, and list formatting errors. **Page errors** include missing the logo in the letterhead or on the cover sheet, pagination is visible on the cover or title page, and unapproved page numbering style.

FOR-al (Format—Alignment)

Formatting errors covering alignment of text and pages; for text, this includes evenly lining up of elements in tables, having an extra space before the first word in a paragraph, and indenting where you should not and not indenting where you should; **for pages**, this includes page margins are not one inch, page header and footer alignment errors, cover and title page alignment issues, memo logo alignment issues, and memo heading segment elements not aligned correctly.

FOR-hd (Format—Heading)

Page errors: Check the *Style Guide* section 4 for help in determining the error; includes heading titles not parallel in phrasing, titles too generic when specific is required, headings “bumped” or orphaned,” headings back-to-back without intervening text, line spacing issues, or wrong color.

FOR-ls (Format—Line Spacing)

Formatting errors covering spacing in the text or page headers/footers. These include wrong spacing between lines (line spacing); wrong spacing before or after main lists, paragraphs, or visuals; and wrong spacing between glossary or reference entries. Multiple extra lines can cost multiple FOR-ls errors; for example, having three blank lines after a heading instead of one can count as two errors (because there are two extra line). **Page errors** include wrong spacing between page headers and body text and wrong line spacing within headers/footers.

Two major causes for this error are copying and pasting and not getting rid of the extra padding that Word likes to do at the end of a paragraph (Paragraph→Line Spacing Options→Indents and Spacing→Spacing, set Line spacing to single and Before and After both to zero points).

FOR-MLA (Format—MLA)

These body, visual, and page errors stem from not using proper MLA 8 formatting. Your textbook has information on MLA 8 as well as the Writing Help resources on Moodle.

FOR-txt (Format—Text)

These body, visual, and page errors include issues with capitalization, color, emphasis (italics,

underlining), font family, size, weight (boldface or normal), and highlighting of text. **FOR-txt (ref)** means the error is with a citation or reference entry.

FOR-v (Format—Visuals: Figures and Tables)

Formatting errors for visuals. Check the *Style Guide* section 6 for help in determining the error.

GRA-art (Grammar—Article)

Incorrect or missing article. Sometimes this is caused by a noun incorrectly plural or singular, so your correction may involve correcting the noun. Too many article errors can fail an assignment.

GRA-h (Grammar and Usage—Hyphenation)

Refer to *Merchant's English Usage Guide for Technical Writers* for guidance using hyphens, en dashes, and em dashes. Also includes the following error: the dash between section title and page number is incorrect or missing in white paper or technical report page headers.

GRA-o (Grammar and Usage—Other)

This error includes grammar and usage errors not covered by the other GRA categories. This includes abbreviation use errors, double negatives, faulty modifiers, hyperbole, incorrect plurals not created by apostrophe errors, incorrect word order, incorrect (or incorrectly used) phrases (“could care less,” “begs the question,” etc.) and symbol use errors.

It also includes **pronoun errors**: antecedent-agreement, case, incorrect shifts, incorrect or overuse of “I” or “you,” and overuse of “it” or “this.” Confusing errors are critical errors.

This category also includes **number/numeral errors** (not page numbers): billion or trillion, formatting, range, and when to spell a number out.

Refer to *Merchant's English Usage Guide for Technical Writers* for guidance (index may be helpful); use the Writing Center; try the tricks I taught you: like reading the sentence out loud.

GRA-p (Grammar and Usage—Punctuation)

This is a big category. Refer to *Merchant's English Usage Guide for Technical Writers* for guidance (its index may be helpful). This includes errors using apostrophes, comma, punctuating headings, punctuating lists, punctuation with quotations, punctuating titles, and spacing with punctuation. Hyphenation errors are covered in the GRA-h error category.

GRA-prep (Grammar and Usage—Preposition)

This error includes incorrect preposition use that while awkward, distracting, or an odd choice, does not change the meaning of the sentence. This error also includes prepositions that should be deleted (not needed). A misspelled preposition is a spelling error.

GRA-v (Grammar and Usage—Verbs)

Errors in verb use. The most common are listed below (not an exhaustive list). Check *Merchant's English Usage Guide* for help with this error.

- Ending a sentence with a “to be” verb (too casual tone for formal writing). Avoid this by using

more polished word choices or sentence structures.

- Incorrect verb tense. This includes tense shift issues: needless verb tense shifting confuses your reader and is an unpleasant distraction.
- Passive voice. (Not all passive voice constructions are wrong; check the *Usage Guide* for more information.)
- Split Infinitive: too many words between “to” and the verb.
- Subject-verb agreement error.
- Weak verb (use a stronger verb).
- Wrong verb used is a word choice error (SPE error).

SPE (Spelling/Word Choice)

Every instance of a spelling error is counted. Writing with multiple errors has a lower ethos.

Misspellings and wrong word choices also increase the chances of misreading, especially by those whose first language is not English; these errors also increase the price of translating a document. Use spell check and the writing aids listed at davidmmerchant.com/writing-help/, including the *English Usage Guide*, to help catch spelling or word choice errors.

- Misspelled words or abbreviations; nonexistent words (words not accepted as official by major dictionaries; for example, “alot” and “conversate” are not proper words).
- Misused possessive pronouns.
- Wrong word choices (including coordinating conjunctions, compound word errors [that changes the meaning of the sentence], prepositions, sexist language, sound-alikes, and transitions). An example of a major compound word error is “back up” (a verb) used instead of “backup” (a noun) or vice versa. This also includes words that affect tone: you need a professional tone, not a casual or conversational tone; this does not mean use fancy diction as the language needs to be plain (not fancy).

SPE-min (Minor Spelling/Word Choice Errors)

- British spelling of a word.
- Compound word error that does not change the meaning of the sentence: two words should be a compound or a compound should be two words: “space flight” instead of the correct “spaceflight” or “lifeform” instead of the correct “life form.” (Yes, bands, songs, and Wikipedia use the incorrect “lifeform.” However, “life form” is the official spelling.)
- Potentially, another minor error is a word not using its first definition (first definition listed in a standard dictionary) but is otherwise properly used. However, for this course, I will ignore this error unless you are using the archaic definition of a word.

Writing Corrections

Do not be lazy: one of the goals of this course is for you to learn to be a self-editor. Businesses rightfully expect college graduates to have a command of the English language. You need to become stronger in your command of English and that is not done by giving you the answers outright. The above error codes are categories—they narrow down the range of errors but you need to determine the specific error (one of the course goals is to push you to become better self-editors). You must learn to find and fix the

mistakes you are making so that you will not continue to commit the same errors. You do have many resources to help you, though.

My Listing the Errors in an Assignment

Many errors will be listed each time they occur. However, *some* formatting errors will only be listed three times a specific error occurs (the maximum that I count off for them) even if they occur more often in the assignment. **Some students seem to think that when they reuse previous material in their white paper that they only need to correct what was listed or marked.** Please use your critical thinking skills and professionalism and realize you need to make sure all of your heading levels are formatted correctly.

For the first assignment, the proposal, I will sometimes give hints as to where exactly and what the error is. Sometimes, that is from my highlighting the error and marking it with the appropriate grademark (FOR-txt, CE-gra, etc.). Sometimes I may add a comment to the grademark: if you see a grademark that has a speech bubble, you need to click on the grademark and scroll down to see the comment. All grademarks have “generic” comments in them, reminding you what the error code covers, but if there is a speech bubble in the grademark, then I have added a specific comment where either a hint or outright correction given. Otherwise the grademarks are in the margins to the left or right of the page element (heading segment, level heading, page heading, paragraph, visual, etc.) listing the errors that are in that page element. I try to list them in order they are found and near the line where the error occurs.

For all other assignments, to push you in developing a command of the English language and ability to follow style guides, I will list the errors to the left or right of the page element and that is it. OK, I will list them in order they occur. For example, the first error that occurs in a paragraph will be listed first, then the next, etc.

At the top of the page I may make general comments which you do not need to address in the writing correction.

Correcting the Errors

For all assignments, you will write in the writing corrections sheet what you would do to correct each error. A correctly formatted corrections sheet is found at davidmmerchant.com/eng130/. **You will NOT rewrite the assignment**, but for each error write what you would do to correct the error. **You need to correct every error to get full writing corrections points.** The writing grademarks, discussed above, narrow down the range of errors.

For example, if you have a GRA-p in paragraph 3 on page 2, you would check for a punctuation error in that paragraph. You check and find you have a serial comma error (you did not use the serial comma). You write that the GRA-p error here is a serial comma error; you would then show how you would correct the error by just writing the part of the sentence with the error, but this time correctly.

One exception errors where you have multiple errors for the same word or phrase in a body text. For the first assignment, I will highlight such words or phrase twice and give two grademarks. Thus, in the proposal, if a word or phrase is highlighted two or more times, each highlight with its own grademark, you will list each grademark separately in the writing corrections sheet. **However**, for all other assignments, since I will be placing the grademarks in the left and right margins only, then I will

indicate that there is a word or phrase in that paragraph with multiple issues by adding a x2 or x3, etc., after the code. For example, you see FOR-t x3 listed. That means for a word or phrase in your paragraph you have three text formatting issues for that word or phrase (size, font family, and color, for example). You would then list FOR-t x3 in your writing corrections and then write that you got size, font family, and color wrong and then say what the correct size, font family, and color should be.

Do you have to correct the same error more than once? **Yes**, you do—every error that is marked must be corrected to get full writing correction points. For example, if you misspelled “affect” three times, you need to correct it three times. Hopefully, this will help reinforce learning.

Do you need delete sections that you have no errors in? No, do not delete a section. For example, if you do not have any visual errors, leave that part blank and skip to the body errors section. Do not delete any blank rows.

Merchant’s English Usage Guide, your textbook, and the Writing Center offer grammar help. Using the free writing tools listed at my “Writing Help” page at davidmmerchant.com/writing-help/ can help as well. *Merchant’s Style Guide* offers formatting help. The *Identity Standards Manual for Ubiquitous Corporation* has logo and color use information (color information is also in the *Style Guide*). If after you have used these resources you still need clarification, please ask me. But you need to show that you made a good-faith effort. You have plenty of resources available to you. I will not just give you the answer as that defeats one of the course goals.

You do not need to write in full sentences (see the example below) in your response except when you are showing what you need to do to correct an error that involves a sentence not being correctly written. But otherwise, this assignment is not quite as formal.

When finished, submit to Turnitin (make sure you submit it to the correct folder) within one week after the writing correction is assigned (see the course schedule for due dates).

Because of time constraints at the end of the quarter and that the technical report or white paper is essentially a final exam, writing corrections **only** apply to the proposal and definition memos.

If You Failed to Turn in the Original Assignment

Sorry, but you do not get to do the writing corrections for an assignment that was never turned in. No, you cannot submit the original assignment after two days past the due date (see the syllabus) nor can you submit the original assignment for writing corrections points.

Writing Corrections Sheet Formatting

You have an already formatted writing correction sheet at davidmmerchant.com/engl30/ in Word format. Just download and fill it out. The page margins are narrow and the body text font size is set to size 11 which is OK as this assignment is not a formal document. You do not worry about ending sentences with a period or using full sentences—again, this is an informal document; I want you to focus on the errors and how you would correct them. The next two pages are an **example** of a filled-out writing corrections sheet. Following that example is information on Turnitin.com Feedback Studio Layers, showing how to access the Feedback Summary.



E 303: TECHNICAL WRITING

School of Literature and Languages
Louisiana Tech University



Name: Kasumi Goto
Class section: 002
Assignment: Proposal

Make sure you fill out this section with *your* name, the name of the assignment you are correcting, and the class section.

Full Document Errors

(Page margins wrong for the entire document, document not submitted as a Word document; these error marks will be placed at the top right-hand corner of the first page)

Error code(s)	Specific error(s)	How I would correct the error(s)
CE-for	Not submitted as Word doc	Submit as a Word doc
FOR-al	Page margins are wrong	Use 1-inch margins for the memo

Heading Segment and Page Heading Errors

(Heading segment: alignment, divider line, info [To:, From:, etc.], logo, spacing, text, etc.)

(Page heading: alignment, info [Memo to, Date], page numbering, text, etc.)

Page #	Error code(s)	Specific error(s)	How I would correct the error(s)
1	FOR	Missing logo	Use the letterhead template
1	FOR-al	Heading segment not aligned correctly	Align heading segment so that each column is vertically aligned.
2 to 4	CE-acs	Pages numbering error: pages 2 to 4 are all page 2	Always use insert page numbers so that page numbering is correct

Heading Level Errors

(Alignment, boldface, capitalization, color, font type, hierarchy [level type], orphaned, size, spacing, etc.)

Page #	Error code(s)	Specific error(s)	How I would correct the error(s)
1	FOR-hd	My second level-1 heading on this page is in the wrong color	Use proper color, 31, 73, 125 for level-1 headings
1	FOR-hd	My second level-1 heading is also the wrong size	Use font size 14 for level-1 headings.
2	FOR-hd	My first level-2 heading on this page is in the wrong font type	Use proper font type, Arial, for level-2 headings
2	FOR-hd	My last level-2 heading on	Do not leave headings by themselves at the bottom of a page. Move

Make sure you put *your* name in the page header.

		this page is orphaned	them to the next page even if that means extra white space at the bottom of the page
3	FOR-hd x2	A level-1 heading on this page is in the wrong color and size	Use proper color, 31, 73, 125, and font size 14 for the level-1 heading

This is an example of how some grademarks will have x2 or x3, etc., added to them. The proposal will not have these types, but the other papers may. This is how you would treat them in the writing corrections sheet.

Visual # means first, second, etc., visual on that page, *NOT* the number you gave it.

Visual Errors—Figures and Tables

(Alignment, clarity, integration, numbering, titles [capitalization, color, font type, position, etc.], etc. Includes source information missing or incorrect. MLA formatting of source info not included here.)

Page #	Visual #	Error code(s)	Specific error(s)	How I would correct the error(s)
2	1	FOR-v	Table title is below the table	Put table titles before the table
2	1	CLA	Did not discuss the table	Introduce and then discuss the important information in the table.
2	2	CE-acs	Missing figure number	Number all visuals
2	3	CE-v	Figure is missing a title	Give all figures a title
3	1	FOR-v	Figure not centered	Center the figure
3	2	CLA	Did not introduce the figure first	Introduce the figure before discussing it
3	3	CE-cla	Chart is small and difficult to read	Chart was only 30% in size; I had room to make it larger and still fit within the margins, which would make it readable.
4	1	CLA	Figure is not referred to in discussion	I will refer to the appropriate parts of the figure during my discussion: as I discuss the lifecycle of the emerald ash borer I will refer to the appropriate part of the figure showed the lifecycle.

MLA, Reference Errors—References Section and Inline Citations

(Alphabetize, align, date, font type, integrate, italicization, punctuation, URL, etc.)

Page #	Error code(s)	Specific error(s)	How I would correct the error(s)
2	FOR-MLA	Missing date in source for Figure 3	Since the website had no date on it, I needed to add when I accessed it

Turnitin.com Feedback Studio Layers

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Click This to View Quickmarks



Click This to Read the Feedback Summary



Click This Layer for the Originality Report



Unfortunately, this may be what your view defaults to; if so, click on the blue stack above to see comments.

If you have not plagiarized, you can normally ignore the number you see: because of the nature of our writing, there will be some similarities between papers. However, if the number gets to be over 50 percent, you might want to double-check to make sure you are not inadvertently plagiarizing. If you have cited quotes, cited paraphrases, and your paraphrases are not very similar to the original text, you should be fine.

