

# **A Reflection On Writing For Engineering: My Experience Learning Technical Writing Over The Semester**

An important, but often overlooked, factor in being a competent engineer is the ability to not only be able to perform technical tasks but also to be able to explain those tasks in ways that can be easily understood by a wide variety of people. As such, City College students that are in engineering programs are required to take Writing for Engineering in order to build the necessary skills to succeed when doing technical writing in the future, these skills include information literacy, citation, drafting, synthesis, reading, understanding a text's audience and purpose, and how to use technology to aid in technical writing. In order to build these skills, we were required to complete a variety of assignments that all focused on one or more of these skills.

When doing technical writing, it is extremely important to understand the **audience and purpose** of whatever you are writing. This was exemplified most in the resume and cover letter project. In said project, students were asked to look back at what they have accomplished in their academic and professional careers in order to create two documents, one that paraphrases all of their accomplishments and skills into one page and one that functions as a request for hire that succinctly acts as an explanation of your potential in a job position, a resume and cover letter respectively. To complete this assignment, students were asked to go to various **job-hunting websites** with the purpose of looking for a job that they could theoretically do at their current skill level. Then they would look at the required skills and if they match the skills outlined in their resume, they would highlight those relevant skills and write a cover letter explaining scenarios where said skills came into use.

As for **information literacy** and **citations**, this was brought into focus by the lab report project. For this assignment, all students were given the task of rolling two dice 100 times and recording the outcome. In order to conduct this, students were advised to make a program in **Python** in order to have the results easily generated so they can be recorded in a spreadsheet. In addition to this, students were told to use CCNY's online library so they could get access to research on this topic done by professional researchers. With this, students can further back up the claims they came to in the lab that they did themselves. Of course, the students were told that they had to properly **cite** the research articles they used to back themselves up. As a result of this I feel that I have a better grasp on how to properly research using online databases along with how to properly cite the gained research materials.

To teach us about how to **collaborate**, students were asked to make a proposal project within a group of 4. Over the course of the semester, students were encouraged to interact with their classmates so that for the project they would have people that they would want to collaborate with. For this project a **Powerpoint** presentation and an essay had to be made in order to explain the proposal the groups came up for a potential student center. Like the lab report students were mandated to use and properly **cite** outside sources in order to back up their arguments after **reading** through said information and **synthesizing** into an essay that has a consistent voice. Afterwards students would take this essay and adapt it into a ten minute presentation so it could be presented to an **audience** consisting of their classmates. In my experience this was done by delegating different tasks to different people, for example the essay was worked on by everyone by giving one person about 2 paragraphs, then I would go through the **draft** and rewrite their paragraphs somewhat in order to make the voice of the essay

consistent. After we would take what we individually wrote and adapted it, and then practiced so the powerpoint could successfully presented to the class.

While being able to collaborate on a presentation is important in the real world, it is also important for individuals to be able to present topics on their own. For the technical presentation, the main goal was to teach students how to create a presentation to teach a specific **audience** about a topic they were not familiar with in a short period. The main thing this taught me personally is how to be succinct as these presentations where done on posterboards which did not have a lot of space. This lead to a reliance on paraphrasing what the sources I used said far more than direct quotes as that way I could limit how many words are put into a segment during the **synthesis** process so I could make them bigger and more readable. Furthermore, the inclusion of a frequently asked question section forced me to consider the lack of experience most people would have with my topic giving me the idea to rewrite some parts to make it more accommodating.

The final assignment that should be mentioned is the quest, a portmanteau of test and quiz. This quiz emphasized out ability to read sentences and identify and identify any grammatical issues with them. In order to practice for this test I re-read the study materials provided by our teacher, those being the powerpoints presentation and the associated textbook chapters. As a result I was better able to identify the grammatical issues within the questions along with how to fix them.

As an engineer it is very important to be able to explain technical subjects in a way that can be understood by a wide variety of people. As such students in CIty college are required to take a class to learn how to do it. In said class we learned skills such as information literacy, citation, drafting, synthesis, reading, understanding a text's audience and purpose, and using

technology in writing. As a result I feel that my grasp on technical writing has improved massively from the experiences I had in the class.