

General Feedback, COMP90044 Assignment A

Four broad themes emerged in our feedback to individual students across the board:

- 1) Introduction was often too focussed on an expert audience, using specialist terminology from the start. Often this insufficiently explained the practical motivating problem, and also overlooked the potential benefits of progress in the area. More rarely, these were expressed in general vague terms. For example, compare the following two examples introductions:
“Scrolling is a key part of human-computer interaction. Fitt’s law has played a key role in predicting and improving new designs. The growing use of mobile technologies indicates we need further improvements to scrolling speed and accuracy, particularly in ballistic interactions where error and backtracking rates are known to be high.”
“Over 50% of all web reading is now on mobile phones. When reading on small screens users must move up-and-down, or ‘scroll’ to find text that is of interest to them. Human-computer interaction has repeatedly investigated effective scrolling techniques. However, current methods perform poorly when reading long texts on small screens.”
- 2) Conclusions frequently failed to identify specific areas for progress. This frequently was associated with a lack of summary regarding current roadblocks or issues. It is important to give the reader a sense of potential ways forward – see the future work sections of papers for a starting point. Take care to identify one or two areas or techniques that appear to be immediate candidates for further progress. Ideally, there should be some reason to expect a good chance of success.
- 3) Grammar and presentation. All too often the standard of grammar was weak. This was occasionally so severe that it was genuinely hard to understand what was being said. Please take care to fully proof-read your text. Around 10% of submissions even had a number of spelling mistakes and errors. A related issue was that around 20% of submissions were substantially over-length. This often was associated with the next problems.
- 4) Reproducing too much technical detail, rather than explaining broader principles and ideas. One issue that was found in many submissions was that an equation might be included, without explaining the meaning of the terms within it. Take care to articulate what the maths *means* rather than simply regurgitating it. Explaining common themes at the start can save a lot of repetition, and help the reader understand the big picture from the start. If you’re repeatedly saying something, consider saying it once.

However, to underline the positives, this year we had very few poor submissions. This reflects well on the effort taken with almost every draft. Well done. In most cases, the individual feedback issues are readily addressed. Take care to incorporate the points in your individual feedback in your final draft. Check if any of the four points above help you improve your own text.