**Guidelines for Writing a Progress Report**

People write progress reports to keep interested parties informed about what has been done on a project and about what remains to be done. Often the reader is the writer's supervisor. As a result the tone should be serious and respectful. Even though progress reports are often in the form of a memo, the writer should be careful to write formal, standard prose. Progress reports represent not only the writer's work but the writer's organizational and communication skills.

Progress reports can be structured in several ways. The following suggested pattern helps the writer cover essential material.

Heading:  
If the progress report is a memo, it should contain the following standard elements:

* Date: Date the memo is sent
* To: Name and position of the reader
* From: Name and position of the writer
* Subject: A clear phrase that focuses the reader's attention on the subject of the memo

Purpose Statement:   
Because the reader is busy, get right to the point. Imagine you are meeting the reader in the hall, and you say, "I wanted to talk to you about this." Use the same strategy for the first line of the memo's body. Try saying out loud, "I wanted to tell you that" and then start writing what ever comes after that prompt. Often such a sentence will begin something like this: "Progress on setting up the new program in testing is going very well." If there is a request somewhere in the memo, make it explicity up front; otherwise, your reader may miss it.

Background:   
Usually in the same paragraph as the purpose statement, the writer gives the reader some background information. If the occasion demands a written progress report instead of a quick oral report, it is probably the case that the reader needs to be reminded of the details. Tell the reader what the project is and clarify its purpose and time scale. If there have been earlier progress reports, you might make a brief reference to them.

Work Completed:   
The next section of a progress report explains what work has been done during the reporting period. Specify the dates of the reporting period and use active voice verbs to give the impression that you or you and your team have been busy. You might arrange this section chronologically (following the actual sequence of the tasks being completed), or you might divide this section into subparts of the larger project and report on each subpart in sequence. Whatever pattern you use, be consistent.

Problems:   
If the reader is likely to be interested in the glitches you have encountered along the way, mention the problems you have encountered and explain how you have solved them. If there are problems you have not yet been able to solve, explain your strategy for solving them and give tell the reader when you think you will have them solved.

Work Scheduled:   
Specify the dates of the next segment of time in the project and line out a schedule of the work you expect to get accomplished during the period. It is often a good idea to arrange this section by dates which stand for deadlines. To finish the progress report, you might add a sentence evaluating your progress thus far.

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