

Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to summarize what I have learned in English 202C at Penn State. Within the paper, I discuss my main learning experiences of the various projects I have completed and how I have created my E-Portfolio.

English 202C

Throughout English 202C, I have learned a great deal regarding the finer points of technical writing and how to properly construct a technical writing document. One of the most valuable aspects of writing I have learned is how to concisely discuss a topic without adding extraneous information. While this may be a generic skill, it is incredibly useful when creating documents with a strict page limit. Moreover, I also learned that technical writing is much more than creating instruction sheets for different products. Many documents that are used in the workplace such as memos, process or product descriptions, and resumes are forms of technical writing. I now understand that technical writers have to not only be knowledgeable about the subject matter they are writing about, but must be effective communicators and understand how to adapt their writing to suit their audience. Being able to adjust my writing style to better convey information to different groups of people will be paramount. Working in the sciences, there are often many cultures and non-native English speakers and this skill will allow me to mold my documents in a more easily understandable fashion. Most of the projects included were written before this class, but still contain elements of clear and concise writing. If these documents were to be rewritten, I believe they would be even more effective. These pieces were chosen as they are indicative of typical documents a biological researcher would write in their career.

Projects

The projects that I have included are intended to provide an overview of the broad spectrum of work I have completed at Penn State. On English 202C tab of the E-Portfolio, I have included my process description of the mechanism of penicillin. While writing this project, I learned how to describe an abstract concept that you cannot observe without a high-powered microscope so that people with a science background could understand it the process. It is often difficult to have a clear understanding of a process that occurs on the molecular scale, so a document that is able to effectively break it down into easily digestible steps is often necessary. I have also included my instruction set on how to use a light compound microscope to illustrate my improved capacity to explain how to use a tool to a novice of the subject. This skill will be ever-present in my job as during an experiment write up, I will need to discuss how I obtained my results in the materials and methods section. When comparing my reports written before this class, there is a substantial improvement in the quality of writing in my later work in English 202C. While my laboratory reports were completed before this class, if revised they would be improved upon by including some of the techniques discussed in this class such as parallel structure and audience consideration. Moreover, I have improved upon my older techniques of writing concisely.

Potential employees should view these projects as a sample of my ability to create professional and effective documents and communicate my ideas in a clear manner.

Career

Learning the finer points of technical writing and the vast applications it has in my field has made me a more attractive job candidate. If faced with a task to create a memo to inform my team of our research goals, or if tasked to create an instruction set for others to replicate my work, I will be able to complete this clearly and effectively. This class has allowed me to improve upon my communication skills and to work more effectively in my future career as a public health employee. This course has prepared me to better communicate with people less knowledgeable about the subject matter which will be relevant if I am a CDC employee and need to communicate information about disease transmission to the public. For example, the skills learned in the process description will be invaluable for this as it was to be explained to a general audience. Moreover, outlining the process described in the instruction set will be useful for my summer research fellowship where I will need to outline how I came to the conclusions of my research at the end of summer presentation.

The Portfolio

Many choices had to be made regarding the content that was included in this portfolio and how it was presented. I decided to host the site on my own private website in order to preserve it for future use and to have access to more customization features than on the Penn State website. In order to create a pleasant navigation experience, I broke up the information into separate tabs so visitors can find the information they are looking for with ease. The information was broken up into a general home page, academics, research, English 202C, an about me page, and a contact tab. Potential users of this site should find it easy to navigate and visually appealing with the addition of relevant pictures and consistent typography. All documents referenced in the portfolio are hyperlinked to a .pdf version of the document so that they can be opened on any operating system. In the contact page, there is only my email address and LinkedIn information to maintain much of my privacy. I have also redacted my home address from the resume for security purposes. By learning about the different functions of an e-portfolio from this course, I was able to mold the website to be useful for potential employers and general visitors. Potential employers may wish to read about my research, while general visitors may choose to read my short biography. English 202C allowed me to make informed decisions to include information relevant to all audiences.

Summary

English 202C has been an excellent course which has taught me many technical writing skills that will be an asset in papers for future courses and communication in my professional career.