User Document Rubric

Traci Gardner / September 16, 2025

Criteria	Description	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Almost There	Needs Work	Missing
Project Focus	Directly ties to the report subject and a real user need.		Focuses on a user-facing document related to the subject of your informational report.	Focuses on a user-facing document but does not fully relate to the subject of your informational report.		Focuses on another topic.
Audience & Accessibility	Tailors content for non-expert users; considers access needs.	Anticipates diverse users; choices consistently support access.	Is appropriate for non-experts; all information is clear and accessible.	Is generally accessible but uneven in places.	Tone/choices impede usability for target users.	Does not adequately address audience accessibility.
User Document Introductory Sections	Includes clear title, document date, introduction to the document and relevant, general notices.	Provides clear, accurate title; includes document date; introduces document professionally; and includes useful notices.	Includes all required elements; provides a detailed and complete beginning to the document.	Includes all elements, but one is weak, incomplete, or unclear.	Missing one or two required elements and/or several elements are incomplete or confusing.	Missing more than two required elements.
Terminology & Background	Defines terms; adds brief background as needed.	Anticipates all knowledge gaps; provides just-enough theory.	Defines all unfamiliar terms and provides relevant background information.	Defines most unfamiliar terms and provides background, but misses some details.	Uses jargon and undefined terms and/or background is incompletely explained.	No explanation of terminology; necessary background information missing.
Equipment & Supplies	Provides complete, specific list of tools/materials.	Provides complete list of tools/materials with	Provides complete list with necessary specifications.	Makes minor omissions and/or	Omits major items and/or specifications.	Equipment & supplies not included.

		helpful specifications/alternatives and visuals as needed.		includes vague specifications.		
Directions & Step Quality	Uses active voice; one action per step; correct list types; nesting/alternatives as needed.	Uses well-organized steps with active verbs and properly formatted lists.	Uses clear, complete, and correctly formatted steps. Uses active verbs throughout.	Includes some multi-action or mis-formatted steps, and/or occasional active verb errors.	Includes many unclear/mis-ordered steps.	Steps missing or unclear.
Conclusion & Troubleshooting	Wraps up document, explains what to do if it goes wrong, and includes contact info.	Provides a clear wrap-up with actionable troubleshooting and contact info.	Includes wrap-up, basic troubleshooting, and contact info.	Omits or does not fully provide one element.	Omits more than one element (e.g., troubleshooting information missing).	Conclusion and troubleshooting information missing.
Visuals	Includes at least four relevant visuals, each with two-part captions. Refers directly to the visual in the text with clear explanation and context. Avoids clipart.	Includes 4 or more relevant, professional visuals; provides clear two-part captions; refers directly in the text with full explanation and context.	Includes 4 or more useful visuals with accurate two-part captions; refers directly in the text with clear explanation and context.	Includes 4 or more visuals but captions are incomplete, context is limited, or references are unclear.	Includes visuals that are weak, irrelevant, or unprofessional. Does not include captions or references in the text to explain them.	Uses clipart or irrelevant images OR includes fewer than 4 visuals.
Documentation (as needed)	Lists all sources in correct format.	Cites all sources accurately with correct formatting.	Includes all sources with consistent formatting.	Omits a source and/or makes minor formatting errors.	Omits two or more sources and/or makes frequent formatting errors.	Section missing.
Cover Memo	Uses neutral-news structure; Explains purpose of the memo, indicates the intended audience and purpose for the	Thoroughly explains audience, use, and connection to report topic. Uses memo format flawlessly.	Explains audience and purpose for the user document with clear connection to the report topic.	Provides some incomplete or unclear content and/or makes minor errors in memo format.	Is missing significant information and/or uses incorrect memo format.	Cover Memo is missing.

	user document, clearly connects user document to report topic. Includes contact info.		Uses memo format accurately.			
Document Design & Use of CRAP Design Principles	Uses headings, lists, spacing, and paragraphing. Uses CRAP design principles, fonts, chunking, and other formatting elements effectively to increase readability.	Uses flawless formatting. Shows strong contrast between headings and the document paragraphs. Uses spacing, fonts, and chunking and CRAP design principles to make the message highly readable and professional.	Uses accurate and appropriate formatting. Formats headings, spacing, and CRAP design principles consistently. Uses lists, horizontal rules, and boxes as effective visual elements.	May include minor formatting errors and/or includes minor errors in headings, paragraphing, spacing, or application of CRAP design principles.	Uses incorrect formatting, inadequate contrast between headings and text, large paragraphs, and/or inaccurate spacing. Inconsistently applies CRAP design principles.	Does not meet formatting or design requirements.
Tone & Plain Language	Uses clear, objective, professional tone. Uses short sentences and other plain language techniques.	Is consistently objective, professional, and reader-friendly. Phrases sentences concisely and smoothly. Perfectly written for the audience.	Is objective, professional, and clear throughout. Effectively uses plain language.	Is mostly objective and professional but occasionally uses complicated, overly technical, wordy, and/or repetitive phrasing.	Uses unprofessional tone and/or language that is too technical or confusing	No attempt to customize the tone and language to the audience.