✑ Professional & Technical Communication

A Supplemental Text for English 3764 at Virginia Tech as taught by Traci Gardner <tengrrl @ vt. edu> (mailto:tengrrl@vt.edu)

Subject Selection Message

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Your Task

Worth 10% of your course grade

Write a **neutral-news email** (good-news up front, details in the body, cordial close) that identifies and supports your topic choice for the **semester-long project (https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/216149/pages/semester-long-project-overview-writing-with-ut-prosim-in-mind)** that will include the following:

- a research proposal

- a user document
- an informational report for non-expert readers
- a progress report
- a fact sheet

➡️ **Review Document Samples (https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/220090/pages/document-samples) and the Deliverable Checklist (https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/220090/files/40171653?wrap=1) as you work.**

Assignment Learning Objectives

By completing this assignment, you will learn how to plan and draft a professional, neutral-news email that communicates your research intentions clearly and persuasively. You will practice organizing your message using a reader-focused structure (good news up front, details in the body, polite close). You will also develop your ability to:

1. Identify and articulate a clear and feasible research topic relevant to your field.

2. Justify the value and scope of your topic, including key questions you intend to explore.

3. Analyze a real-world non-expert audience and tailor your message to meet their needs in terms of content, tone, and design.

4. Practice appropriate professional email etiquette, tone, and formatting to build credibility with your reader.

This assignment strengthens your skills in project planning, audience awareness, and workplace communication.

Your Audience

Write your message to Traci, your teacher for the course. She's the person who decides whether your subject is appropriate for the projects.

Provide her with the basic details on the subject and clear, concrete details on how it fits the *Ut Prosim* project. This is a neutral-news message, but you still have to persuade her to approve your idea!

Assignment Requirements

In this message, aim for **4-5 concise paragraphs** (roughly 250-350 words total, 12 pt font).

- **Project Format:** Your project should be written as an email message in Word or Google Docs, using these guidelines:
  - Download and use the **email template (https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/216149/files/40320965?wrap=1)**.
  - Include a polite **salutation** and a cordial **close**.
  - Use a professional **signature block**.

- **Organization:** Your message must include the following FOUR sections:
  - **Introduction (1 short paragraph)**: Direct statement of purpose (the topic you plan to pursue). No heading.

  - **Scope & Feasibility (1-2 paragraphs)**: Use "Scope & Feasibility" (14 pts bold, no quotation marks) as your heading. Explain why you have chosen this subject and why you believe it is important enough to research in depth. Sketch the key questions you expect to answer. (Don't worry; they can change over time as you research!)

  - **Audience Analysis (1-2 paragraphs)**: Use "Audience Analysis" (14 pts bold, no quotation marks) as your heading. Identify a real non-expert group (e.g., first-year majors, community members, patients, town council members, investors, etc.) and briefly explain the following information:

    - what they already know about your subject.
    - what they need to know about it.
    - why they care about it.
    - how you will need to approach them in terms of language and design.

      Remember the audience for your Subject Selection Message (Traci) is not the same as your *Ut Prosim* project audience (a real non-expert group).

  - **Polite Close (1 paragraph):** Ask for approval or guidance, thank the reader, and provide your contact info within a single paragraph. No heading.

- **Plain Language:** Use short sentences and other plain language techniques.

- **Document Design:** Chunk paragraphs; single-space within paragraphs; add one blank line between paragraphs (double space); no internal headings needed; do not indent paragraphs.

Success Tips

- Use a **clear and objective tone**. No need to be a cheerleader.

- Use the **required headings** (Scope & Feasibility, and Audience Analysis).

- Remember there are **no headings** for the Introduction or Closing.

- Identify a **real non-expert audience** with specific needs for your *Ut Prosim* project.

- Provide **specific details** on your topic. Details make your idea clear to your audience.

Optional AI Feedback

You can submit a draft to your preferred generative-AI tool (e.g., Copilot, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude) for feedback. If you do, you must follow the procedures outlined on the Ethical AI Usage page (https://canvas.vt.edu/courses/216149/pages/using-ai-ethically-in-this-course), which include these rules:

- **Keep** the original draft untouched.

- **Use** a prompt that asks AI to review your draft and provide suggestions for improvement only. (No direct revisions)

- **Copy** the AI comments or revision advice below your original draft.

- **Briefly note** which tool you used and what prompt you gave it.

- **Copy and paste** your first draft below the AI comments and revise it based on the advice you have received.

Submission Details

If you did NOT use AI, submit ONE item by the deadline:

- Upload the final version of the assignment on this page.

If you used AI, submit TWO items by the deadline:

- Upload the final version of the assignment on this page.
- Upload the AI-review file on this page as well.

How You'll Be Graded

Check the rubric on the assignment page for full assessment criteria.

Once I add feedback, you'll find comments in annotations on the document and in the rubric. Allow 3-4 days for me to add feedback.