Fact Sheet

🌐 **tracigardner.github.io**/TechComm/assignments/fact-sheet/fact-sheet-assignment.html

Your Task

Worth 10% of your course grade

Convert content from your Informational Report for Non-Expert Readers to a **one-page (front and back) fact sheet** that informs or educates an audience of non-expert readers about your topic in a way that is

- Visually engaging.
- Easy to understand (using plain language).
- Accessible to a general audience.
- Focused on key facts, practical relevance, and clear visuals.

Your fact sheet should help everyday people understand what's at stake, how the issue may affect them, and what they can do (if anything) in response.

Review [Document Samples](#) and the [Deliverable Checklist](#) as you work.
Use details from [Chapter 15: Fact Sheets & Other Visual Documents](#).

See sample fact sheets for suggested guidelines about layout.

Assignment Learning Objectives

▼ **Hide the Learning Objectives**
By completing this assignment, you will develop your ability to:

- Practice adapting technical content for a new audience with different needs and expectations.
- Apply plain language principles to communicate clearly and effectively.
- Identify and highlight key facts and takeaways from a longer informational report.
- Use visual design techniques (headings, bullets, charts, icons, etc.) to improve readability and engagement.
- Create a one-page (front and back) document that informs or educates a general public audience.
- Reinforce your understanding of how technical writing can support community service, problem-solving, or public good.
- Gain experience in designing public-facing documents that are both informative and usable.

Your Audience

Design your fact sheet for a new audience of non-experts: the constituents or community members served by the decision-makers you addressed in your report.

Understand the difference:

- Audience for your informational report: non-expert leaders who need to *decide* something.
  Example: Town of Blacksburg Mayor & Town Council
- Audience for your fact sheet: non-expert, everyday people who the leaders serve and who want to know more about the topic.
  Example: People who live and work in the Town of Blacksburg

Assignment Requirements

Basic Requirements

- **Length**: 1 page (front and back). No longer and no shorter. Take up the full front and back. Make sure you do not include a blank third page.
- **Software Options & Required File Format:** Whatever software you are comfortable with (e.g., Canva, Word), as long as you can export your fact sheet as a PDF (required file format).

Fact Sheet Requirements

- **Required Text Components**: title; byline; introduction or summary, key facts or data points, and conclusion. See [Writing an Effective Fact Sheet](#) for help.
- **Headings/Subheadings:** Body sections should have headings/subheadings. No heading for the intro or conclusion.
- **Visuals:**
  - 3 required graphics (diagrams, tables, charts, graphs) to summarize data. Must include at least 1 data visualization (See 7e in the textbook). Maximum of 1 photo allowed. No clip art.
  - A two-part caption (Figure 1: Description of Figure 1) for each visual.
  - Direct reference to and explanation of the visual in the text before you show it (See Figure 1, as Figure 1 notes, etc.).
  - Documentation for visuals you did not create in the Works Cited, References, or Bibliography.
- **Sources & Documentation:**
  - Six sources minimum but as many as needed to fully document your research.
  - Use the documentation system preferred by your field (e.g., CS majors use IEEE).
  - In-text citations + Works Cited or in-text numerical notations and endnotes.
  - Include your Works Cited, References, Endnotes, or Bibliography at the bottom of the back page. Your list should not take up an entire column or half of the second page.

- **Plain Language:** Use short sentences and other plain language techniques (like active voice and concrete words). Define any unfamiliar terms. Avoid jargon.
- **Tone**: Helpful, clear, and informative—avoid academic or formal language.
- **Document Design**:
    - **CRAP principles**: Contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity.
    - **Colors:** Black, white, and 1–2 additional colors maximum. Use colors that fit with the subject. Avoid neon and harsh colors.
    - **Useful strategies:** numbered/bulleted lists, limited bold fonts, white space, boxes/borders.

Formatting Requirements

- **Page size:** 8.5 x 11 (portrait)
- **Document Layout:** Portrait orientation (8.5 X 11) required. Consistent margin on all sides (Minimum of .5"; maximum of 1").
- **Spacing:** Single or 1.15 spacing between lines; double spacing between paragraphs (1 blank line)
- **Paragraphs:** Do not indent
- **Font Choices:** Arial, Calibri, Verdana, Aptos, or Helvetica—but just one! Don't mix fonts.
- **Font Sizes:** Be consistent. Headings should be larger than the body text. Each heading level should be larger than the next lower heading (e.g., Heading 1 is larger than Heading 2; Heading 2 is larger than Heading 3, and so on).
  TIP: The default heading sizes in Word and Google Docs follow this guideline automatically.

Success Tips

- Choose the most **relevant and actionable information** from your report.
- Use **plain language**. Avoid jargon, acronyms, and overly technical explanations.
- Use **document design techniques** like headings, bullet points, and charts to organize your content clearly.
- Include **visuals** such as maps, simple graphs, timelines, or illustrations if they clarify your points.
- Focus on **usability**: your readers should walk away knowing *what the issue is*, *why it matters to them*, and *what they can do*.