Report Style Guidelines

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Business Administration 3033: Business Communication

Report Style Guidelines

- Use active voice, positive writing, you attitude, and personal pronouns. Remember the recommendations from the SEC Handbook.

For example: We want to tell you about an exciting opportunity.

Not: It is recommended that investors consider this exciting opportunity.

- Make sure that all graphics are numbered, titled, labeled, introduced in the text, and correctly placed. Each figure should be able to stand on its own without further explanation.

- Spacing: Either double space the text and indent all new paragraphs or single space the text with a double space between paragraphs and no indentation.

- Give some thought to visual appeal. Use white space and one-inch margins, balance the pages, don't crowd the text, consider places to use color.

- Do not justify the right margin-leave ragged.

- Carefully edit for consistency-tone, style, voice (using we or I), person (using you or one), heading format, page format, font size and style, etc.

- Carefully proofread for grammar, spelling, word choice, and punctuation errors.

- New sections should either begin with a new page and a new level one heading or a just with a new level one heading. Be consistent with this choice.

- All pages after the table of contents should be numbered-including your appendices. Place numbers in the headers or at the bottom of the page-either centered or at the right edge.

- All items in the appendices must be referred to in the text by their page number.

- Make sure that every page is easy to skim. Use informative headings and subheadings. In general do not have more than half a page of text without a heading.

- Leveled headings format. For this report you will probably have 3 - 4 different levels of headings. Each level of heading should be parallel:
  - Visually distinct from the other levels
  - Easily distinguishable from the text
  - Informative
  - Consistently formatted-size, font, style, capitalization
    - Avoid using all caps (ok for titles, but that's it)
    - Be consistent with capitalization within each level of heading. For example, either capitalize all the first letters of the words in the headings.
(except articles and prepositions-a, an, the, by, for, etc.) or only capitalize the first word.

- Here is one way you might do your headings. (There are also many other options, just be consistent in your choice and formatting).

**Level One Headings**

20 point font; Verdana, Arial, or Helvetica; bold; centered; text three spaces below

**Level Two Headings**

16 point font; Verdana, Arial, or Helvetica; bold; left justify; text three spaces below

**Level Three Headings**

14 point font; Times New Roman or Garamond; bold; left justify; underlined, text two spaces below

**Level four heading:** 12 point font; Times New Roman; bold; first line of text ending with punctuation; not to exceed 8 or 9 words

**Normal text:** 12 point font, Times New Roman or Garamond.