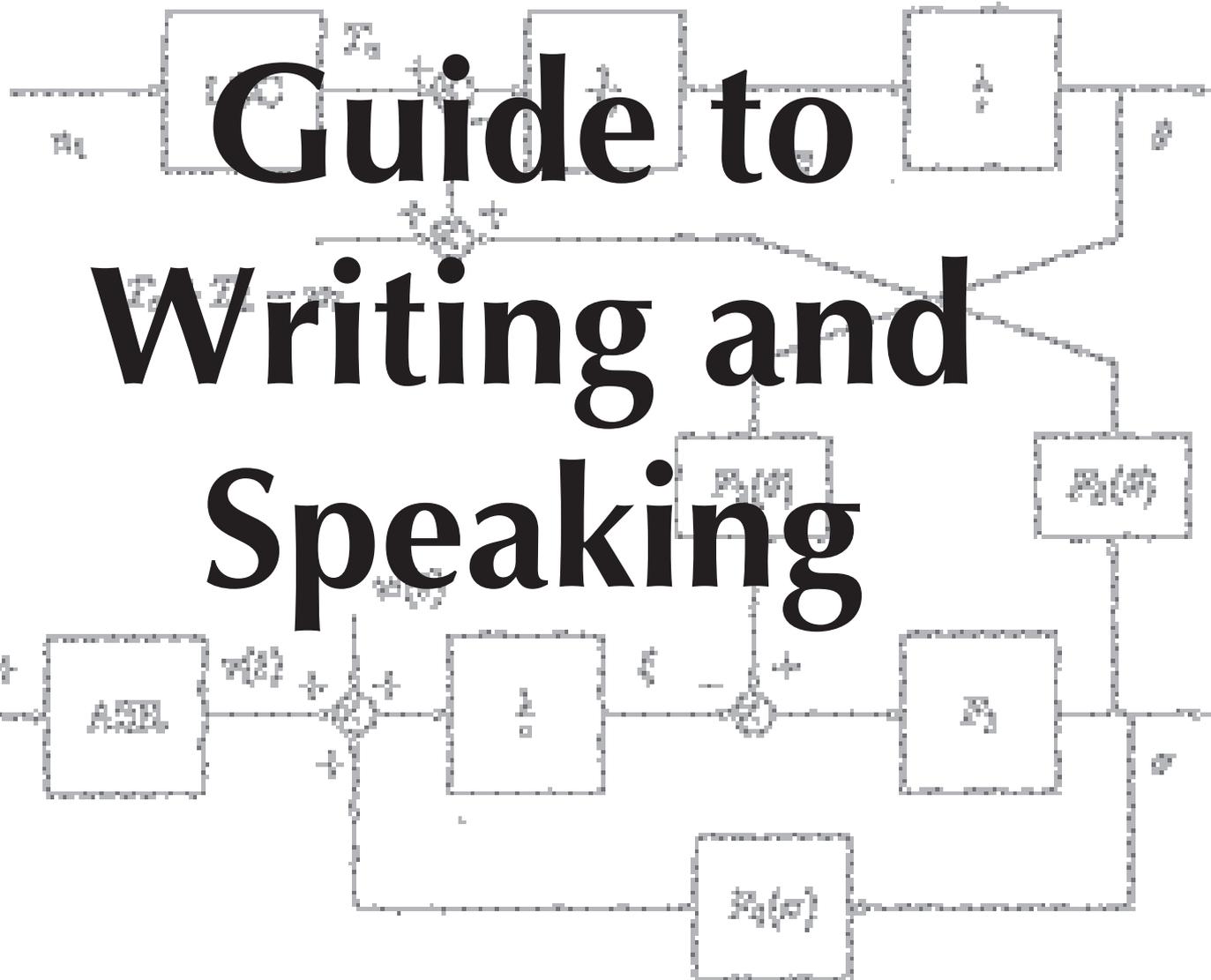


The University of New South Wales
School of Electrical Engineering and
Telecommunications



Prepared by The Learning Centre, UNSW 2009 ©

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More than half of an engineer's 'work' involves writing and speaking to others—both engineer and non-engineer. These sections explain how to structure and present your communication.

You need to present information in ways that satisfy markers. Later, these conventions will also be required in your professional work.

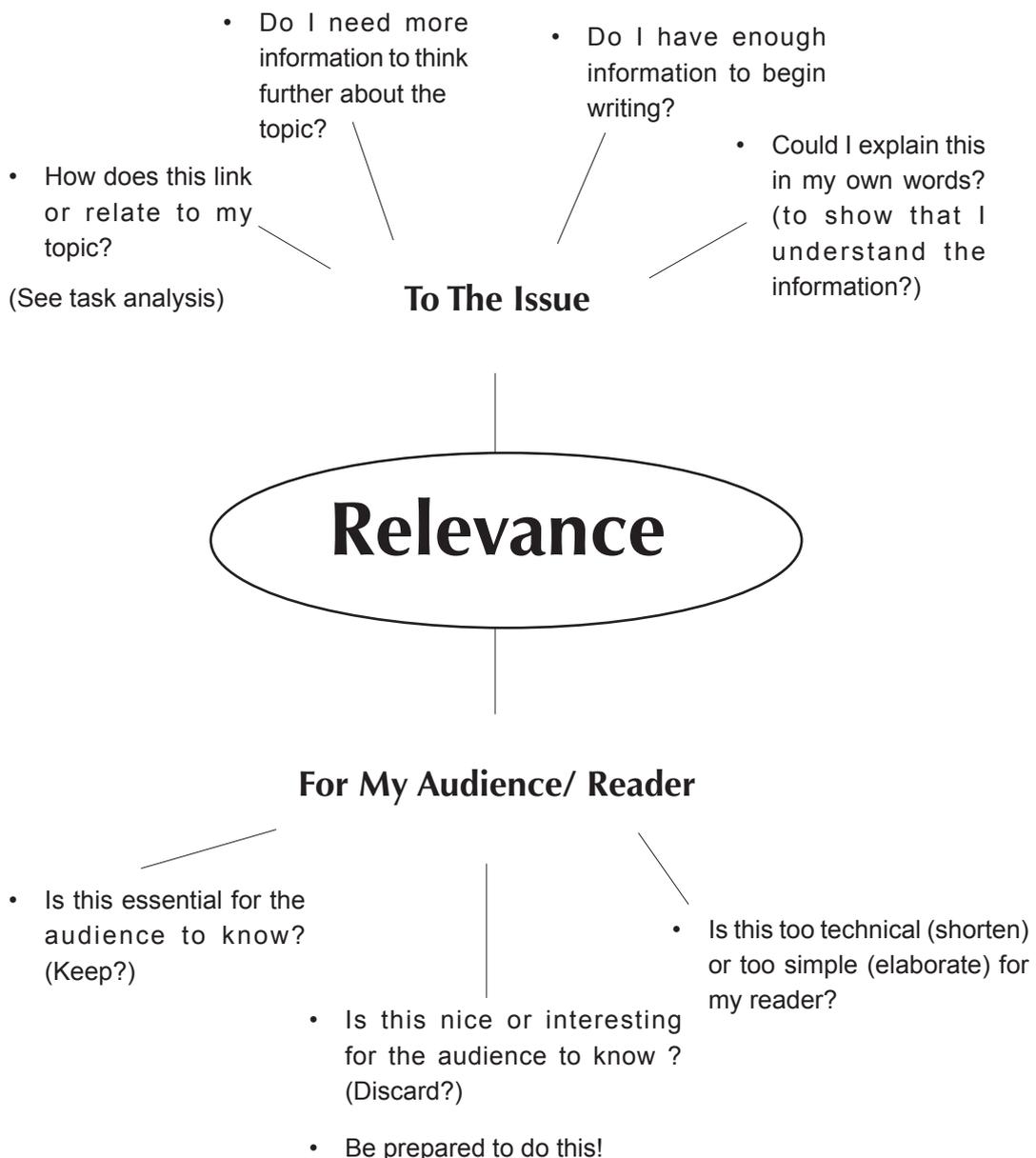
Some more advice to help you review your approach to study.



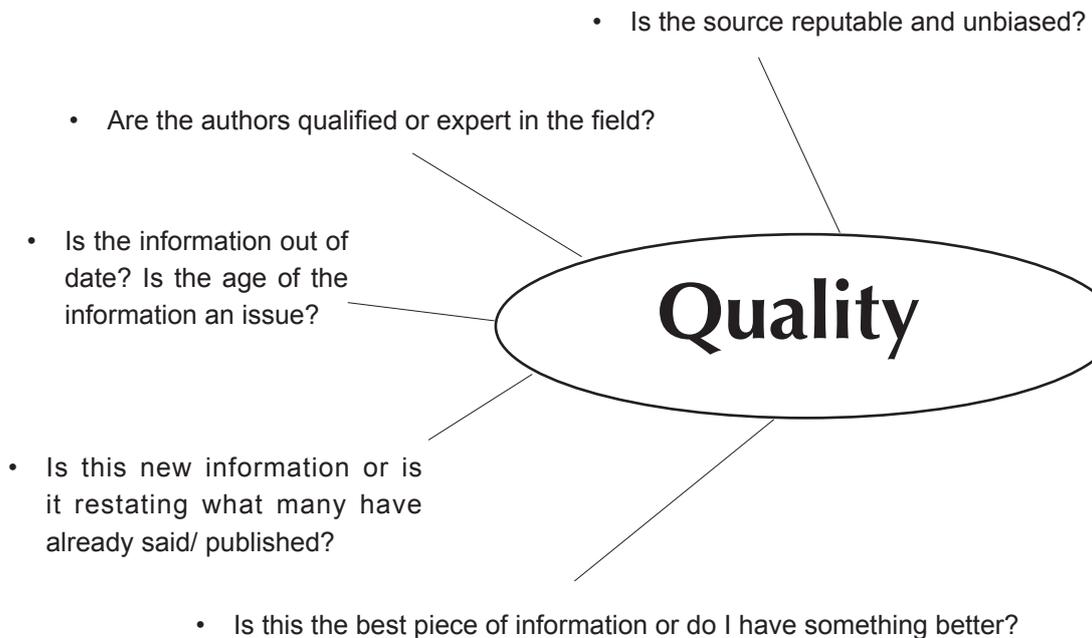
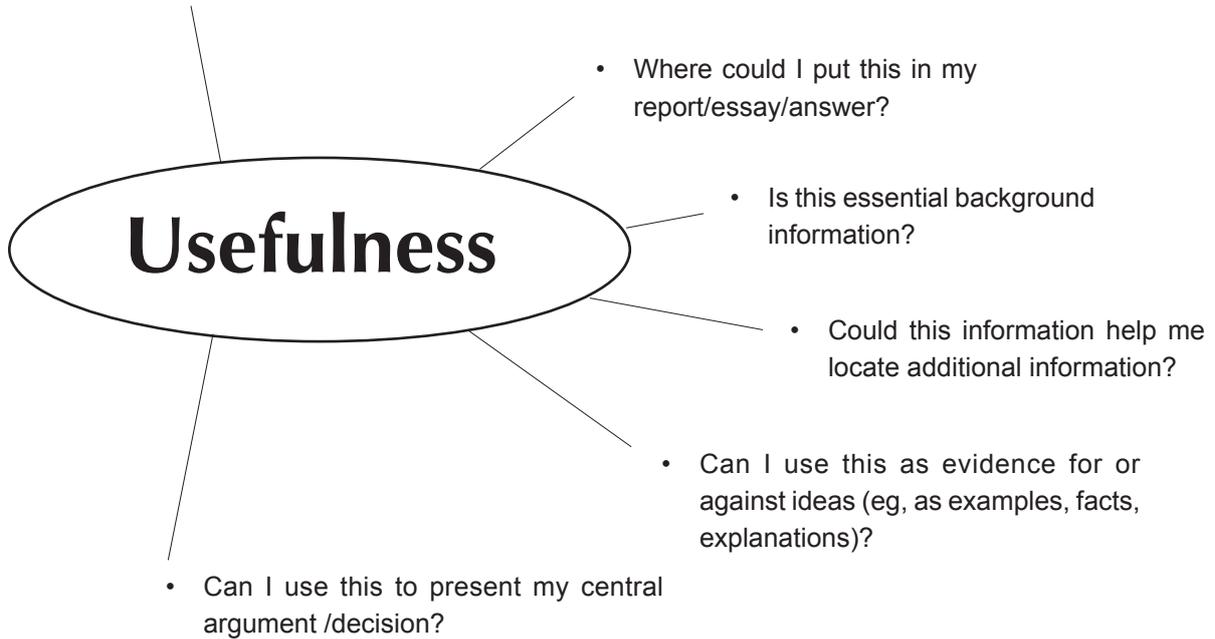
Selecting Information

Information should never be used indiscriminately. When looking at material there should be a continual evaluation process occurring. Evaluate information for its relevance, usefulness and quality.

Here are some questions to assist you in evaluating what information to record for a task.



- Does this information help me focus my thoughts?





Writing Style

Editing your written work so it is free of errors and is in a consistent style is essential to producing a professional piece of work. Poorly edited work will certainly lose marks! This section describes common features of technical and academic writing.

Once you have decided on your tone and style, use it consistently in your writing. This also applies to your tone and style for your oral presentations. If you are preparing a group report, your group should agree on a common format and style. This will ensure that the whole text has a consistent look and sound, and help prove that you have worked as a team.

Aim to inform

Scientific or technical writing differs from literary writing in a number of ways. Primarily, the aim of technical writing is to inform rather than to entertain. A simple and concise style is recommended.

An example of a literary sentence might read as:

“The wind was blowing fiercely and the air outside was becoming chilled.”

A scientific/technical sentence would probably read as:

“The wind velocity was 45 kph which reduced the air temperature to 15°C.”

Since the primary aim of the report writer is to inform, emotive language should be avoided. You should try to transmit information as objectively as possible.

Be concise

Avoid too many long sentences. Sentences with four or more clauses (or parts) can be confusing to read. Your text will often read better if you consider making two shorter sentences rather than one long sentence. If you need to include some qualification or an example, however, then a long sentence might be more appropriate.

An example of a long sentence may read as:

“After consulting three manufacturers: Dibble and Co., Sooky Ltd., and Bungle Pty Ltd., we have found two types of temperature sensor devices for the air flow meter and both are simple in design but have inherent drawbacks.”

More concise sentences might be:

“Three manufacturers were consulted: Dibble and Co., Sooky Ltd., and Bungle Pty Ltd. Two temperature sensor devices were found for the air flow meter. Though the design is simple each has inherent drawbacks.”

Use words and expressions economically. If you can use one word instead of two or three, then choose the one word. Often the single word is more precise and more suited to a written context. For example use the word “avoid” in preference to “get around.” Similarly, avoid long paragraphs. A simple but effective rule is that each paragraph should address one theme. The theme should be introduced in the opening sentence, developed in the body of the paragraph with a concluding remark made in the final sentence.

Be correct

You are responsible for checking your spelling, punctuation and grammar (particularly tenses!) not the computer! Do not depend on a spell checker.

*I have a spelling checker
It came with my PC;
It plainly marks four my revue
Mistakes I cannot sea.
I've run this poem threw it,
I'm sure your pleased too no,
Its letter perfect in it's weigh,
My checker tolled me sew.*

(Source unknown)

Sometimes you can see errors more easily if you do not proof read your writing until a day or two after printing the draft. This is called ‘the bottom-draw treatment’. Reading aloud can be helpful for ‘hearing’ errors that your eyes may miss.

What’s wrong with this sentence?

The Learning Centre at UNSW (located at G23 on the Upper campus) has many resources on punctuation, grammar and spelling that you can be used to improve your written expression.

Do not discriminate

Nondiscriminatory language must be used when talking generally about people. Non-discriminatory language helps you avoid stereotyping, patronising and demeaning people on the basis of their gender, status or race. This issue will be even more important in the workplace when you graduate.

Table 5. Non-discriminatory language

<i>Instead of ...</i>	<i>Use in preference...</i>
workman	operator/employee
(to) man	staff/operate/use/work/direct
man hours	operating hours/working hours
man power	staff/workforce/personnel