

## Technical Description

### **Overview**

For this assignment, you will be asked to write a technical description of a civil engineering process, concept, or device for a lay audience. You will need to choose one process, concept, or device and describe said process (et al) to an audience that knows little about any type of engineering. The goal of this writing assignment is for you to act as an expert (which you are) and offer a description of something to someone who is ignorant regarding engineering.

This may be harder than you think. It's difficult to explain a complex thing as a simple thing. But, you should consider yourself a type of teacher and the audience as your student. Be patient. Help your audience understand what you understand. It is an immensely powerful skill to help people understand that which they often find intimidating.

### **Guiding Questions**

Here are some questions for you to consider as you write this description:

- What does this process, concept, or device do in context of civil engineering?
- What is the history of this process, concept, or device?
- What are the main aspects of this process, concept, or device that one would need to know in order to understand it?
- What is the importance of this process, concept, or device?
- How does this process, concept, or device work?
- Is it possible for this process, concept, or device to be improved on?

These questions are not prescriptive; they are only guides to help you think through your technical description. You are the expert, and you should write as one.

### **Details**

The general requirements of this writing assignment include the following:

- Length: 600-900 words.
- Format: 12 point Calibri font and 1.0 line spacing; Margins should be one-inch all around; Headings and sub-headings should be used.
- Graphics: You should use at least one (or more) appropriate graphic, illustration, picture, etc. that complements your description. You can create your own or use an existent one with proper reference.
- File Naming: You should name your file clearly. For example, "kays3402description.doc." This will help you and me keep your work organized through the revision process.
- Works Cited: In-text citations and bibliography (in APA style) are required if source material is used. (You shouldn't need source material for this assignment, but you may need some for the next assignment.)

### **Evaluation Criteria**

- Does your writing use coherent language and flow smoothly?
- Does your writing reflect careful thought and planning?
- Does your writing include details? Do those details clearly and cogently support your description?
- Does your writing clearly refer to and stem from a specific process, concept, or device? Do you discuss that content in the context through which it arose?
- Does the tone of your writing and style employed fit your audience?
- Does your writing adhere to standard written English?
- Will a lay audience understand the process, concept, or device you've described?
- Is your visual appropriate for your description, and is it formatted correctly?

### **Resources**

Here are some resources to which you can refer should you need a little extra help:

- "The Writing Process," from the University of Toronto's Engineering Communication Program: <http://j.mp/TQa139>.
- "Understanding Genre," from the University of Toronto's Engineering Communication Program: <http://j.mp/UzkwG0>.  
"Designing Documents," from University of Maryland University College Technical Writing: <http://j.mp/WuvfSy>.
- "Professional, Technical Writing," from the Purdue University Online Writing Lab: <http://j.mp/YBbN9K>.
- "Visual Rhetoric: Use of Images," from the Purdue University Online Writing Lab: <http://j.mp/XHxD4N>.

Onward!