

Software Security

415.725SC

Lecture 30: Report Writing #5

Revisions

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12-Oct-00

Report Writing

415.725sc-1.1

Woodford's Steps 19 to 25

19. Are major alterations necessary?
20. Polishing the style.
21. Give drawings to Illustration Department.
22. Write title and abstract in final form.
23. Reread the journal's instructions to authors before having the manuscript typed.
24. Departmental review. (Ask a friend to read and comment.)
25. Shelve the manuscript for a while.

12-Oct-00

Report Writing

415.725sc-1.2

19. Major Alterations?

19.1 Logical Flaws [Trelease, 1969]

- Avoid confusing facts with opinions or inferences. (Facts should be supported by reference or observation; opinions are rarely appropriate; inferences should be supported by logical reasoning that is apparent to your reader.)
- Guard against misunderstandings of language, e.g. by defining terms as precisely as possible.

Other Major Alterations?

19.2 Correct any misquotations.

- *Precision*: Avoid any suspicion of misinterpretation by
 - quoting precisely
 - showing additions by [] and deletions by ...
 - setting quotes in an appropriate context.
- *Logic*: Be wary of self-deception and wishful thinking.
- *Clarity*: Be sure that every quotation is relevant to the point under discussion.

Other Major Alterations?

19.3 Re-examine the order of presentation

- Will the function of each section be clear on its first reading?
- Did you realise, when writing your first draft, that a re-organisation is necessary?

19.4 Combine or simplify tables where necessary.

- Is there “unnecessary information” in your tables?
- Will your reader be enlightened or overwhelmed?

20. Polishing the Style

The following stylistic elements are required.

- *Logic*: rational construction of each sentence and paragraph.
- *Precision*: technical accuracy and consistency.
- *Clarity*: ready comprehensibility.
- *Directness*: steady movement toward “the point” you’re making in your paper.
- *Brevity*: no unnecessary detail.

Not required: *grace, mystery, urbanity, wit, lightness, word-music, rhythm, ...*

21. Final Drafting of Drawings

- Each element of each figure and table should be
 - understandable to someone who reads only your title, abstract, and preceding figures, and
 - supported by discussion in your text.
- If an element of a figure isn't "worth discussing" in your text, redraw the figure to eliminate this unnecessary element!
- Check the final draft of your figures and tables for technical accuracy.

22.1 Write Title in Final Form

- The title should not be "too long".
 - No unnecessary words.
 - No more than 10 words (64 ASCII bytes).
- The title should not be "too short".
 - Add qualifying words so that the reader won't expect much more than you actually deliver.
 - The title "Security in Java" would be appropriate for a paper that surveys a wide variety of security issues arising in a wide variety of uses of the Java language.
 - The title "Copy Protection for Java Applets" would be appropriate for narrower paper.

22.2 Write Abstract in Final Form

- Your abstract will “fill the gap” between a 10-word title and a 10-page paper, for any reader who wants more than 10 words but less than 10 pages.
- One hundred words is an appropriate length.
- Your abstract should
 - Answer the most pressing “questions” raised by your title.
 - Summarise the “issues” and “answers” that will be discussed at length in your paper.

Steps 23 and 24

23. Reread the journal’s instructions to authors before preparing your final draft.

24. “Departmental review”

- Ask a colleague to read your paper and comment critically and appreciatively.
- Their gift: a “fresh and unbiased reading” that will reveal some faults (and successes) in your logic, precision, clarity, directness and brevity.
- Don’t expect anyone to “write your paper for you” or to “solve your problems”!

Co-authorship Vs. Assistance

- Assistants may:
 - Correct your spelling and grammar;
 - Identify and briefly discuss errors in your logic, technical understanding, organisation and presentation of your paper.
- Co-authors may:
 - Rewrite paragraphs or sections, redraft figures and tables;
 - Correct errors in logic, understanding, organisation and presentation;
 - Add to your paper's "technical content".
- Acknowledge your assistants, briefly and generously, just before your Bibliography. It will reflect well, both on you (for your honesty and graciousness) and on them (for their ability and effort).

Shelve the MS for a While

- Allow yourself a generous amount of time (a few days or a week) for "one last revision".
- You might give me your final draft on Thursday 19th October, and ask "Would you accept a revision on Monday 23rd October? I might find a major problem over the weekend."
- I am willing to extend the submission deadline until 4pm Monday 23rd October to any student who makes a reasonable request in writing or in email, prior to the deadline 4pm Thursday 19th October.
- Submissions should be hardcopy in my mailbox.

Next Week

- By midnight Wednesday 18th October, send email to me containing the title and abstract of your term paper, on a single PowerPoint slide.
- Sometime next week, we may have a guest lecturer from the Government Communications Security Bureau.
- Course Evaluation forms will be handed out near the end of class on Monday.
- The remainder of the class time next week will be devoted to discussing your responses to the questions on the “sample final exam”.