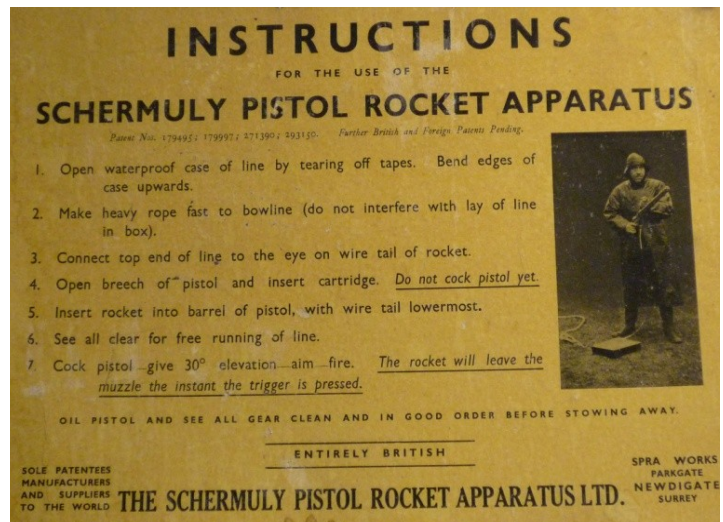


ENGL 308

Instructions Project

Instructions Project – you will compose paper-based and multimedia instructions 25% of final grade (250 points).

Instructions are often the most ignored of professional documents in our daily lives – few of us sit down with a cup of coffee to read an instruction manual. Yet YouTube and TikTok are full of “how-to” videos, and millions of people watch them to learn how to accomplish almost any task.



Instructions are among the most important documents in the workplace, as they help to guide customers' or workers' actions when they perform simple or complex tasks. Instructions can protect a company from lawsuits when people injure themselves without following directions. We may turn to them when we can't figure something out about a product (“when all else fails, read the instructions”), and we may even enjoy sharing our expertise with the world by producing instructional videos.

For this project, you will create a set of instructions on how to perform a task of your choosing subject to the guidelines below. The intended audience for your instructions is your fellow students at NIU.

Task selection criteria

- The task you choose should be neither too simple (how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich) nor too complex (how to build an atomic reactor) for the average college student.
- These directions must be in your own words, and they need to follow the guidelines from class readings and discussion on best practices for writing and providing instructions.
- Your instructions must be easy to follow and must define or explain any terminology. Explain or demonstrate how to use any tools the average student would not be familiar with.

Media

- We begin with what I call “paper-based instructions.” These need to be well-designed and in keeping with what we have learned about document design this semester. Outstanding work for the paper-based draft **must** go beyond the default setup offered by Microsoft Word (the standard portrait mode, 8.5” by 11” sheet of paper, double-spaced Times New Roman). The best text-based instructions are designed with the task in mind.
- We will then revise our instructions for multimedia. You can also shoot video with your smart phone; you can even make a video by [creating a Power Point and then turning that into a video](#).
- Video instructions must have clear audio, and must be accessible to deaf or hard-of-hearing viewers (close-captioned and/or on-screen text, or be clear enough so that YouTube auto-generates good CCs). Key information should be reinforced with text.
- Videos can be shared to YouTube (as an unlisted video, if you like) or on Sharepoint (double-check the permissions, please) or on Google or Canva, etc. accounts.

Additional information on task selection

- Since your primary audience is your fellow students at NIU, don't select tasks that most students know how to do already (like how to make an X account or a Facebook post).

- **No directions on cooking;** this assignment is not about writing a recipe – unless you can describe to me on your proposal memo how you will avoid following the recipe genre.
- Avoid satirical or fantastical instructions – you can be clever and entertaining, but the task you describe should be something that people can actually accomplish. Tasks like “how to survive a zombie apocalypse” fall into this category.
- Avoid tasks that are too broad or too involved. For example, “how to write a novel” would be too difficult because this task can be accomplished in many ways; same with “how to paint a picture.”
- Avoid complex games and sports – “how to play chess” and “how to play football” will not work for this project because those tasks would take a book-length explanation. You could explain a skill vital to a particular sport (“how to ice skate” instead of “how to play hockey”).
- Avoid tasks that depend on the writing or work of other people; for example, “how to judge poodles at an American Kennel Club show” would rely too much on the AKC standards and rules.
- The best topics for this project are activities that **you** have some interest and experience in. Don’t pick a topic because you think I will like it – pick something that you **enjoy and are familiar with**.

Project Components

Task proposal memo (83.3 points). You will write a memo that:

- Names and describes the task you have selected to create instructions for.
- Explains the reasons behind your decision (is this a hobby of yours, how familiar are you with the task, can this also be used in your job, etc.).
- Briefly lists the steps in the process.
- Explains the why the task you have selected is appropriate for the assignment (that is, how the task is neither too simple nor complex, yet is still rigorous enough for the assignment).
- Describes how you will create visuals for your instructions and how you will create, include text, create any soundtrack / voiceover, and edit your video instructions.

I will approve, approve with modifications, or ask you to select another task based on your memo, so keep in mind this memo needs to persuade me; be sure to follow good memo writing practices.

To be eligible to pass the project, you must submit a task proposal memo. **Instructions made for unapproved tasks will earn an automatic F.**

Paper-Based Instructions (83.3 points). Following the advice given in assigned readings and our analysis of models and examples of instructions, you will compose and design paper-based instructions for your designated task. These instructions must include:

- A list of necessary materials and tools.
- Estimated time needed to complete the task.
- All the steps needed to complete the task.
- Warnings or cautions on potentially hazardous steps in the task if needed.
- Troubleshooting suggestions where needed.
- Photos, drawings, or other visuals to guide the user through the task. You must create these yourself!
- Paper-based instructions must be submitted as PDF.
- Note: you will submit these digitally, but should take printing concerns into account (binding, colors of inks / contrast, etc).

Video / multimedia instructions (83.3 points). Many ways to create video instructions; whatever approach you take, your video should include:

- A list of necessary materials and tools.
 - Estimated time needed to complete the task.
 - All the steps needed to complete the task.
 - Warnings or cautions on potentially hazardous steps in the task if needed.
 - Troubleshooting suggestions where needed.
 - Clear video of the task, including close-ups where needed.
- Videos: it's recommended that videos be uploaded to a video-sharing site such as YouTube or Vimeo; if you wish to keep your video out of circulation, you can upload your video on YouTube as *unlisted* and submit the link. Don't use *private* as I will not be able to view it.
 - Any video files on Sharepoint need to be shared with me - obvious, but people forget.
 - Any videos posted to TikTok need to be visible to viewers without TikTok accounts.
 - In any case, the video must be viewable – it has to function in whatever environment you choose. Plan on uploading your video ahead of the due date to make sure everything is in working order.
 - Regardless of format, **any damaged or otherwise un-viewable files will earn a zero.**

Grading criteria / rubric

The instructions will be graded based on its rhetorical effectiveness and professionalism based on the following criteria:

- The project is appropriate for its audience (fellow college students) while still maintaining an air of professionalism.
- The project follows the principles of professional, clear, correct, and concise writing as we have studied over the course of the semester.
- The project follows the principles of document design as elaborated in the course from assigned readings.
- The project follows genre conventions for successful instructions as reviewed in class.
- The project shows a careful consideration of the professional and ethical implications of writing instructions. For example, any hazardous work involved in the directions is clearly labeled.
- The paper-based instructions are clearly designed with the task in mind – how the task is performed has influenced the layout and design.
- The paper-based instructions do not use the default settings on Word (margin size, Times New Roman/ whatever the default font is in Word).
- The instructions could function appropriately in a professional environment.