

FYI – This text is a kind of form letter of sorts. It’s designed to deliver a certain set of information to the entire class, information about the most common mistakes in assignments like this one. Mentioning them does not mean I see them in your work – just that I expect to see it in many submissions, and knowing the most common mistakes helps everyone.

The “Informative Report” assignment is asking for a pretty specific list of tasks. Basically, we are to explain how something works, and we are to do this for an audience of non-experts.

The audience for this assignment is chosen for a very specific reason. If we were explaining how a hair dryer dries hair for a room full of adults, we would tend to assume that room already knows a number of important details, so we would tend to skip those details, and this is a mistake. But, when the audience is full of children, as it is in this assignment, then we have to add those details due to the fact the audience has very little experience. This forces us to do a more complete job with the details.

Forgetting or omitting these details is a common error in assignments like this one, but not the most common error. The most common error happens when students mistake this for a “How-to” guide. We’re not asking you to tell us how to use a device; we’re asking how that device does what it does. There’s a big difference between these two things, and many students will make this mistake, and will have to fix it in the revision.

Now, at this point in the term, I have had several opportunities to comment on grammar and formatting mistakes, so I’m going to be doing less of this going forward. For example, if I have asked for a heading a number of times so far, I’m not going to ask any more – I’m simply going to make the deduction and move on. If you have questions about any of these things, be sure to get in touch, but by the time we get to 300-level coursework, it’s probably appropriate for me to stop repeating these corrections and simply expect them to happen on their own.

This is a draft, so I expect these mistakes, and typically don’t punish them too harshly, but uncorrected issues that remain in the final draft are subject to a higher level of scrutiny, so be sure to look for the major issues discussed above when revising.