How to Write an Activity Report

Your project is starting to take shape: you've held a few meetings, doled out tasks to each team member, and perhaps even chosen a leader to keep track of everyone's progress (a good idea). Whatever the nature of your design project, one thing is certain: you will be asked to document what happens along the way. Engineers keep others informed of their progress by writing a series of activity reports. These reports fall under the category of the memorandum—the best ones don't waste a moment of your reader's valuable time. The activity report is a verbal snapshot of your team in action, and like any picture meant to convey information, it should provide the reader with an unobstructed view of its main subject—the status of your project.

Benefits of a Well-Written Activity Report

- Gives evidence of your team's competence, initiative, and responsibility.
- Specifies what's finished, what's unfinished, problems encountered, problems solved, and the amount of time still needed to complete the project.
- Helps team to stay organized and focused on its assigned work.

Consequences of a Badly Written Activity Report

- Team loses credibility (and grade points).
- Misstated or incomplete information jeopardizes the project's timeline.

Note: Some professors may ask you to transmit your reports via e-mail; others may ask you to deliver your reports in person. In either case, keep in mind that your audience is not looking for a run-of-the-mill, casual message. As an engineer with news to relay, you should aspire to a higher degree of clarity, purpose, organization, and error-free language—in other words, your writing should both look and sound "professional." View each memo as a statement of your team's integrity.

Your professor may have a prescribed format for you to follow. If not, the following headings are standard for this type of communication.

TO:

FROM:

DATE:

RE: ACTIVITY REPORT ON _____

Work Completed to Date:

Problems Encountered:

Work Needing Completion:

Assistance Needed:

Timeline Compliance: