

# Sound Writing Assignment

## Background

In keeping with the plan to focus on different genres and writing techniques, this writing assignment asks you to write a technical essay and to focus on formulating clear and concise explanations.

## Technical Writing

The goal of technical writing is to clearly communicate a select piece of information to the reader in such a way that it can be easily understood. In order to write a good technical essay, you need to understand the topic in full and relay the information in a well defined and structured format.

A technical essay follows the same structural guidelines as we've used in previous essays. Summarize your answer in a [thesis statement](#). Your thesis statement should appear in the introductory paragraph of your essay. The rest of your essay serves to support your thesis. After supporting your thesis statement with the body of your essay, you need to write a conclusion. The conclusion summarizes what you have said with respect to your thesis.

There is an [on-line technical writing textbook](#) with a number of examples that you may find useful. Although none of the examples are similar to this assignment, they do demonstrate the genre.

## Clear and Concise Wording

Technical writing should be clear and concise. Flowery wording and complicated sentence structures lead to unreadable prose. Instead, be direct and forceful, and above all, be clear. The information at [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/word\\_choice.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/word_choice.html) (provided by The University of North Carolina @ Chapel Hill) can help you in that effort; please check it out.

## The Writing Prompt

In this writing assignment, you are Dr. Science, the question-and-answer person for a popular magazine called *Practical Programming*. Readers of your magazine are invited

to submit letters to Dr. Science, who answers them in a “Dear Abby” style in a special section of the magazine. One day you receive the following letter:

Dear Dr. Science:

You’ve got to help me. My girlfriend is into music and computers. In fact, her dream job is to work for Moog Music here in Asheville when she finishes college. This isn’t a problem because I like music and computers too, but I hate it when she thinks that she knows more than I do about something and won’t listen to anything I tell her.

The other night we were playing with a new toy together; it’s a microprocessor called the Arduino. My parents gave it to me for my birthday along with some electrical components---they know that I like build things. I connected the Arduino to a small speaker and ran the example program called “toneMelody,” and speaker began to play music. Well, it sort of played music, it really didn’t sound that great. That’s when the problem started. My girlfriend told me that she knew the music we played wasn’t great, but that it would be if we just got a better speaker. I know that she is wrong, but I don’t want to buy an expensive speaker just to prove it.

Ever since that night, she has been making a big deal out of this and won’t even let me kiss her. I love her, but I don’t think that we can get back together until we settle this argument. I’ve tried to understand exactly how the program toneMelody works, but I can’t because the procedure called tone, which actually plays the notes, is hidden.

You’ve got to help me, Dr. Science; she will listen to you. Please explain to us how “toneMelody” plays music, and tell us if a better speaker is all that’s needed to make the music it plays sound great. But, Dr. Science, you’ve got to explain everything so that we can both understand it because my girlfriend is really dogmatic. She says she won’t even listen to Einstein unless he explains himself clearly.

Sincerely,  
Bobby with the Blues

Can this relationship be saved? Your task is to write an answer to Bobby. Because space in your magazine is limit, try to be concise as well as clear in your reply.

## Due Date

Your essay should be submitted electronically to Moodle. It may be in any one of five file formats: Microsoft Word 2007 or earlier, Open Office (.odt), PDF, RTF, or plain text (.txt). **Your essay is due no later than Monday, Nov 29, at mid-night.**

# Grading

To get a C+ or higher your essay must meet the following criteria:

1. The essay has a thesis statement and that statement is made in the opening paragraph.
2. The essay responds to the writing prompt.
3. The essay is written in the active voice with a minimum of nominalizations.
4. All sentences are complete sentences.
5. The paper is free from basic grammatical errors.

To get a B or an A your essay must meet the following additional requirements:

1. The essay is clear and concise. The arguments presented are well supported.
2. The essay demonstrates a clear understanding of the required technical content.
3. It is a well organized essay with an introduction, development and conclusion. All of the details relate to the thesis that you are supporting.
4. Every paragraph contains a clear topic sentence or there is another kind of organization principle at work.