

# Grammar Guidelines for Reports

## Syntax Guidelines for Reports

- Do not say something was calculated in MathCAD. There are a variety of programs that can do similar calculations and we do not care which one you used. Instead, explain how you did your calculations.
- Write about your work using the past tense even if the research is ongoing. When you describe your apparatus use the past tense even if the apparatus still exists.
- Use METRIC units consistently. If you use a component that is specified in English units you can optionally list those units in parentheses. For example, the tubing internal diameter was 6.4 mm (0.25 in).
- Use seconds as the unit of time as much as possible. This reduces conversions errors.
- Make sure every sentence contributes to your report. Watch out for meaningless fluff!
- Write clearly. Avoid using the words "this" or "these".
- Personal pronouns such as "you", "us", or "we" should not be used in a technical report
- Have someone critically proofread your report. The standard of excellence is not "can I guess what the writer probably meant." The standard of excellence is clear, concise, and precise writing that provides all the necessary information describing your project so that an educated reader can understand what you did and how it applies to drinking water treatment.
- Spell check *everything*.
- Provide the technical details. Show the [equations](#) that you used. Provide all the important parameters (dimensions, flow rates, concentrations, etc.) that another researcher would need to duplicate your work
- The biggest mistake of technical writers is to not include enough graphs, pictures, and drawings in their documents. These figures are each worth many words. Use figures that are well labeled to provide information that would be hard to understand if only presented as text.
- Make sure the figures have captions and that you refer to each figure in the text. Don't refer to them as graphs! Refer to them as Figures!
- Make sure your graphs meet the [graphing guidelines](#)
- Use Greek letters rather than their English spelling.

### Common Errors:

|                                     | wrong                   | right                    |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| One space between numbers and units | 5mg                     | 5 mg                     |
| No leading zeros                    | .3 g                    | 0.3 g                    |
| Graph captions                      | Graph 1. blah blah blah | Figure 1. blah blah blah |
| Figure captions                     | above figure            | below figure             |
| Table captions                      | below table             | above table              |