Progress Reports

Progress reports are essential.

- Often part of scheduled deliverables
- Maintain contact with funding $ource$, industry partners, and colleagues

- Provide precise technical description of work as project develops and/or changes
- Scrutinized for accountability and management practices

In .622, the oral progress report

- Is quite brief
  - 8 minutes presentation & 5 minutes discussion
- Provides a milestone for the team
- Identifies barriers to progress and ways to overcome them
- Keeps faculty and staff up to date

Formats for written and oral progress reports

- Written progress reports can be a short report or even a memo or a lengthy letter.
  - Include project title, funding source (s), contract numbers, funding period, organizational/institutional information, contact information
  - Follow conventions for written documents: headings, page numbers, etc.

- Oral progress reports can be brief or quite lengthy and can range from informal to very formal.
  - In .622, these are brief.
- Some sort of visual organizer helps in an oral report or handouts, posters, etc
  - In .622, a simple PPT. (Try to get it loaded on desktop before class.)
  - Follow conventions for effective oral presentations.

Information organization for the .622 progress report

- Ask yourself "What do people already know?"
  - Don't just recycle old .621 PPT.
  - Compress introduction and HOS, experimental overview and technical approach.
- Emphasize "What's new?"
  - Use most of the time on progress to date and project status.
  - Inform about problems and solutions to them
    - Problems are part of design, but your effort to address them is very important.

Information organization continued

- Have there been design changes? Budget changes?
  - Show the gap between what you planned to do and what you've done.
  - Design changes are sometimes inevitable, but be prepared to explain clearly.
- Give specific statement of overall progress and work to be done.
  - "We will be ready to take data after we complete task x and task y. This will be on or around October 11."
  - NOT "we're in pretty good shape, I guess.

Tips for progress reports

- Review audience analysis
  - Audience agendas for a progress report are different than they were for a proposal.
    - Different concern, different focus
    - Also, progress reports are where people hear about problems.
  - Audience for progress report is mixed.
    - Experts, technicians, laypeople, decision makers
    - Writer/speaker must modify "expert" dialog used within team and with advisor

Tips. . .

- Remember that it is more difficult to absorb information aurally than it is from text.
  - Plan to use a few effective graphics.
  - Think about <u>what audience needs to know</u> rather than everything that you know.
  - Think about pace of report, the way the screens look, font size.
- Have a strong introduction and clear conclusion.
- Remember to practice.
  - Control nerves, spot "rough" spots, edit, check timing

Tips . . . .

- Be prepared for rigorous or challenging questions and discussions.
  - Practice potential answers.
  - Have a few back up slides.
  - Maintain a non-defensive attitude.

- <u>Use</u> the discussion period to ask your own questions.
  - Usually, the key people are all present, so use the time effectively.