



Write Right Proposal, Critique, and eLearning Example, YuleFrog Studios, March 25, 2014

This proposal has been prepared as part of Lab 8 for MIST IST 526.

About YuleFrog Studios

YuleFrog Studios is a Monterey, California-based firm that specializes in writing, editing, photography, web design, and eLearning services. The founder of YuleFrog Studios, Kate Wilcox, is an award-winning writer and photographer with more than 25 years' experience writing for publication and producing high-quality product documentation in the technical communications field. Ms. Wilcox holds degrees in English and Studio Art, and she is currently enrolled in the Master of Science in Instructional Science and Technology (MIST) program at California State University, Monterey Bay (CSUMB). For more information, go to www.yulefrogstudios.com.

About the the Write Right Course and the YuleFrog Critique

YuleFrog Studios has critiqued *Write Right Rapid Refresher for Business Writing* (referred to in this proposal as the Write Right course) to evaluate its strengths, identify its weaknesses, and recommend enhancements. The Write Right course provides web-based tutorials and assessment instruments designed to help students in the School of Business at CSUMB refresh their business writing skills. The typical learner is a technology-aware college student, and Write Right is intended to strengthen existing writing skills, rather than to teach skills that are missing. Students access the tutorials and complete the assessments as needed and at their own pace.

The YuleFrog critique focused on the following three components: the tutorials available to students, the course website, and the assessment instruments used in the course. Each component was rated for ease of use, look and feel, use of language, and level of engagement. All three components had acceptable scores in the *Ease of Use* category. UI controls, such as buttons and links worked as expected, and pages loaded quickly on test systems. In the other categories, however, there are opportunities for improvement. This proposal summarizes the YuleFrog findings and provides an estimate for implementing the recommendations.

Tutorial Critique and Recommendations

For the tutorial critique, YuleFrog Studios focused on Write Right quiz item: **ID# 14: "The firm has [less / fewer] than [20 / twenty] employees"** and a slide in the corresponding tutorial, "**Frequently Misused Words.**" The tutorial for less/fewer is a single slide that states the rules of usage and provides three sets of examples showing correct and incorrect usage: fewer people, fewer new products, and less memory (see [Example 4](#)). The learner reads the rules, then reads the examples. The learner does not otherwise interact with or explore the content.

YuleFrog Studios recommends expanding the tutorial to better incorporate Gagne's events of instruction and to enhance the learning experience (Gagne, 1985):

- Add sound, animation, and graphics to gain the learner's attention
- Increase the number of examples and non-examples to stimulate recall
- Elicit performance from the learner and provide feedback to facilitate learning

In addition, YuleFrog Studios recommends using language that becomes positive when used with the words less and fewer, such as less resistance, less stressful, fewer expenses, and fewer interruptions. This creates a more positive experience for the learner. These enhancements will enable learners to gain a higher level of mastery over the differences between less and fewer and to use the words correctly in their business writing.

To demonstrate these recommendations, YuleFrog Studios has created a two-minute example tutorial that teaches the rules for using less and fewer: <http://itcdland.csUMB.edu/~kwilcox/ist526/labs/lab8/lab8.htm>.

Website Critique and Recommendations

To improve the usability and readability of the website, YuleFrog Studios recommends the following changes:

- 1. Revise and condense introductory text.** The website has three lengthy paragraphs of introductory text that could be reworked to clarify the message (see [Example 1](#)):
 - **Clarify the call to action.** The introductory text describes several ways to use the tutorials and assessment instruments. However, dates appear above each tutorial, such as “January 27 – February 2,” which implies that the tutorials are to be completed at a particular time. Also, the introduction tells students to complete the tutorials and the related assessments, but it doesn’t explain that they should take the first assessment before starting the tutorials and the last one after they complete the course. The call to action should be clarified. Consider listing the actions as steps.
 - **Remove instructions for completing assessments.** The instructions should appear in the assessment module itself, at the point of need, rather than on the home page of the course.
 - **Place descriptive text close to the items it describes.** The introductory text says, “To suggest a topic you would like covered in a business writing tutorial, please click on the ‘Request Tutorial Needed.’” However, there is a paragraph between that sentence and the actual link. Consider consolidating this content and separating it from the instructions for using the tutorial (first and third paragraphs). Also, the link in the sentence should be active instead of being presented as a separate button.
 - **Use terms consistently.** The first paragraph describes the tutorials and assessments as “units.” The second describes them as “books.” Use the same term to describe modules throughout the website.
 - **Correct errors.** In the APA section, the text in the graphic refers to the American Psychology Association (APA) Guidelines. This should be the American Psychological Association (<http://www.apa.org/>).
- 2. Improve the look and feel.** Consider refining the style of text and graphics in the website as follows (see [Example 1](#), [Example 2](#), and [Example 3](#)):
 - **Change the style of text from italic to regular and remove drop caps.** Web designers suggest that italic fonts are less readable online than regular fonts (Hunt, 2010), and YuleFrog Studios recommends changing the font style from italic to regular. Further, YuleFrog Studios recommends removing the large decorative letters that mark the beginning of paragraphs (drop caps) because they slow the reading process.
 - **Change the color palette.** The website currently uses pale greens and grays, which lends an old-computer monochromatic feel to the site. While this might be considered nostalgic, it does not leverage the capabilities of modern computer systems. Further, additional colors might help bring the content to life for computer-savvy learners.
 - **Make graphics more meaningful.** The graphics included next to the introductory text for each module are generic images that don’t match the content of the modules. Further, the titles of the modules are presented as images and in a calligraphic font that does not correlate to standard business writing. Consider improving the graphics and changing the titles to a more business-like font, such as Trebuchet. Also, the Write Right logo appears twice in succession on the website: in the introductory section and also in the Beginning-of-Semester Assessment section. This repetition is unnecessary, and it would be better to use an image more closely related to assessment to identify the test section.

Assessment Critique and Recommendations

The current Write Right assessment instruments include Moodle modules with multiple-choice questions. To complete an assessment, students must read the instructions and examples carefully, and then select answers that show correct grammar and punctuation. This method of testing mirrors what students might do when editing their own work, and the instruments can be considered authentic tools for assessing grammar and punctuation skills. Further, providing test questions on a single web page enables students to see the tests as a whole and quickly grasp the scope of each test. This simplicity is the greatest strength of the current assessment instruments.

During the critique, YuleFrog Studios considered ways to add interactive questions, such as fill-in-the-blank, matching, and drag-and-drop to the current assessment modules. At this time, however, YuleFrog Studios does not recommend replacing the current modules with highly interactive modules. Interactive assessment modules might seem appealing and engaging. However, they can increase the cognitive processing load because students must manipulate interface elements, such as drop-down lists, or perform tasks, such as dragging and dropping objects, when they answer questions. In addition, there is a risk that students might focus more on the interactions than the questions, or that the assessment modules might be assessing students' abilities to manipulate interface elements in addition to their skill with grammar and punctuation.

Most important, many of the popular interaction methods seem less authentic to the task of writing than the current multiple-choice format, so the committee is urged to exercise restraint when considering the addition of complex interactions to the Write Right assessment instruments.

Proposal for Implementing Recommendations

To implement the recommended changes to the website and each of the eLearning modules, YuleFrog Studios presents the following estimates. Activities, such as Development, will be expanded to include milestones such as prototyping and checkpoints between the client and YuleFrog Studios. In addition, all rates are subject to change until the contract is finalized.

Cost Estimate for Website Design			
Activity	Hours Required	Hourly Rate*	Total Cost of Website Design
Planning/Project Management	5	\$ 52	\$ 260
Graphic Design	5	\$ 80	\$ 400
Development	10	\$ 62	\$ 620
Testing (usability and Functional)	5	\$ 62	\$ 310
Totals:	20	n/a	\$1,590

Cost Estimate for eLearning Modules (per module)**			
Activity	Hours Required	Hourly Rate*	Total Cost Per Module
Planning/Project Management	5	\$ 52	\$ 260
Instructional Analysis and Design	5	\$ 90	\$ 450
Development	20	\$ 72	\$1,440
Graphic Design and Animation	10	\$ 80	\$ 800
Testing (usability and functional)	5	\$ 62	\$ 310
Totals	45	n/a	\$3,260

*The hourly rates for the project managers, instructional designers, developers, graphic artists, animators, and testers employed by YuleFrog Studios are based on the prevailing wages and cost of living in the Central California area. YuleFrog Studios employees are seasoned professionals who have an average of five years' experience in their fields.

**The estimates above will be applied to each eLearning module. Each module includes a single tutorial (up to four minutes in length) and a quiz, or practice section, with up to five items.

Next Steps and Contact Information

To discuss this proposal, please contact Kate Wilcox, YuleFrog Studios Toadmaster, at kate@yulefrog.com.

References

Gagne, R. (1965). The conditions of learning. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Hunt, B. Retrieved on March 25, 2014 from <http://webdesignfromscratch.com/basics/readability/>.

Appendix

Example 1: Write Right introductory text



WRITE RIGHT RAPID REFRESHER FOR BUSINESS WRITING

The following units contain both tutorials and assessments to refresh your business writing skills. Review each brief tutorial and then take each associated assessment.

If you are writing a paper and are uncertain about any detail covered in one of these tutorials, simply review the relevant tutorial for a quick reminder.

Topics addressed in the tutorials are based on the most common mistakes made by School of Business capstone students. The questions in the assessments are based on the topics covered in the tutorials, and are structured to help students master skills needed to write as professionals in the workplace. New tutorials are added as needed. To suggest a topic you would like covered in a business writing tutorial, please click on the "Request Tutorial Needed."

For the most comprehensive refresher, begin with Introductory Tutorial: Following APA Guidelines, then progress through each book that follows (unless directed to specific tutorials and assessments by your instructor).

[Request Tutorials Needed](#)

January 20 - January 26



BEGINNING-OF-SEMESTER ASSESSMENT

*The following ASSESSMENT is designed to assess your knowledge of grammar and the mechanics of writing used in professional business writing at the beginning of the semester. Check each correct item for each question and review your answers carefully. To begin, click on the underlined **BEGINNING-OF-SEMESTER ASSESSMENT** immediately below. When you have completed the last question, click on "Submit all and finish" at the end of the assessment.*

[BEGINNING-OF-SEMESTER ASSESSMENT](#)

Example 2: Graphics and Calligraphic Font



Example 3: APA Guidelines

January 27 - February 2



American Psychology Association, (APA) Guidelines

Upon completion of the module students will be able to identify the correct style Business.

Example 4: Existing Tutorial

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 Every Day/Everyday
- 2 Its/It's
- 3 Complement/Compliment
- 4 There/Their/They're
- 5 Less/Fewer**
- 6 Amount/Number
- 7 Who/That
- 8 Feel

5 Less/Fewer

Use *less* only to refer to uncountable objects. Use *fewer* when referring to people or countable objects.

Incorrect: There are less people involved with this product launch than the last.

Correct: There are fewer people involved with this product launch than the last.

Incorrect: There are less new products being launched this year than last.

Correct: There are fewer new products being launched this year than last.

Incorrect: There is fewer memory in my old computer than in my new one.

Correct: There is less memory in my old computer than in my new one.