

**Table 1.** Clarification of gray areas in report writing for ECE 3534.

Language

Active voice or passive voice?	Active voice is preferred, but not natural in every sentence (p. 104*).
Define abbreviations?	Yes, the first time that they are used
Depth – how much?	Refer to posted outlines: <a href="http://www.me.vt.edu/writing/ece3534/">http://www.me.vt.edu/writing/ece3534/</a>
<i>I or we</i> – are they appropriate to use?	Yes, as long as emphasis remains on work (p. 108).
Placement of equations?	Separate from paragraph with white space, but treat as grammatical part of the sentence (p. 141).
Vertical lists in text?	Frowned upon because you are making an argument
<i>You</i> – is it appropriate to use?	No, too informal.

Illustration

Form for figure captions?	10 points, below figure, left justified when more than one line. Caption begins with phrase, but may be followed by a sentence or two to explain unusual details (p. 163).
Form for table headings?	Left justified above table (see example heading on this page). The heading for a table is just one phrase.
Placement of figures and tables?	After paragraph that introduces. Do not break paragraphs to insert illustrations – finish paragraph first.

Format

Format for paragraphs?	Indented. Average length should be 6-10 lines – avoid stacking short paragraphs (1-5 lines) and having paragraphs more than 15 lines.
Format for reference citations?	See <a href="http://www.me.vt.edu/writing/ece3534/">http://www.me.vt.edu/writing/ece3534/</a>
Layout of reports?	Download and follow outlines
Line spacing for reports?	Single spaced
Placement of page numbers?	Bottom centered (handwritten okay for appendices)
Type face and size?	Specified on outlines

Grammar, Punctuation, Usage

Numbers – numerals or written out?	Numerals for measurements (1 V); numbers written out for simple counting, when two words or fewer (p. 140).
Past tense or present tense?	Write about the work in the past tense. Note that some sentences, though, are in present tense: <i>This report presents...</i>
Serial comma ( <i>a, b, and c</i> )?	Yes
Starting sentence with <i>and</i> or <i>but</i> ?	Too informal for formal reports.
Use of contractions ( <i>can't</i> )?	Too informal for formal reports.

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\* Page number in *The Craft of Scientific Writing* (on reserve in the library).