How to write a Paper
A little Feedback

• Generally good
• Good arguments
  – Consideration of alternatives is weak
• English
  – Some need a lot of work
How to write a Paper

• What is the purpose of the paper?
  – Persuade (“Do it this way.”)
  – Alternatives (“Here are the choices.”)
  – Report (“This is what happened.”)

• Write an outline
  – What points are to be made where

• Write the paper

• Review and edit
Here’s an outline Paper for this class

• Introduction
  – Context: What issue being considered
  – Why is that issue important
  – What is your conclusion

• Background
  – Explain the issue in more detail
  – Explain any important related concepts

• The Body
  – The argument (why your position is correct)
  – Alternatives (and why they’re incorrect)

• Wrapup
  – Your conclusion
  – Review the highlights of the argument
Another outline
Standard System Analysis

• Introduction  
  – What is the problem
• Background
• Alternatives  
  – Explain each alternative solution
• Evaluation Criteria  
  – How do we evaluate alternatives
• Evaluation  
  – Consider each alternative w.r.t. the criteria
• Conclusion  
  – Which alternative is chosen
Another Outline
Technical Proposal

• Introduction
  – Why the customer should hire you

• Background
  – Show your understanding of the problem to the customer

• Solution Overview
  – Discuss the overall structure of your solution
  – Reiterate the Introduction (why customer should hire you)

• Proposed Solution
  – Describe your proposed approach in detail
Considering alternatives

• What is the alternative?
  – Describe it

• Why is your proposed approach better?
  – Consider the following:
    • The alternative is close but misses the mark
    • The alternative is wrong
      – Why? Some possibilities: Fails to account for …, impractical, world doesn’t work that way
    • Extreme approach in the absence of knowledge
      – “You are proposing a radical solution to a problem that we don’t (yet) know exists.”
Technique: Ghosting

• Context
  – You are writing a technical proposal
  – You believe you know what your competitor is going to propose
  – You want to explain to the buyer why your solution is better than your competitors

• Wrong!
  – Don’t say that your competitor will propose … and why that’s bad
  – If you are wrong, you will look foolish
Ghosting

• Ghosting
  – Say something like: Here is a reasonable looking alternative. However, we considered that approach and discarded it because … .

• Ghosting (Version 2)
  – Here are the alternative approaches we considered. The one we have chosen is best because … .

• Why is it called Ghosting?
  – Because you are trying to haunt your competitor.
Good English

• Practice, practice
• Proofread
• Here are some fun books:
  – *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire* (grammar) and *The New Well-Tempered Sentence* (punctuation) by Karen Elizabeth Gordon
  – *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynne Truss
• Anecdote
  – “The easiest writers for editors to work with are the A’s and the F’s.”