Assignment Type: Fact Sheet

What is it

A Fact Sheet is a document that provides clear and easy to read information on a topic. Often, but not always, the purpose of the fact sheet is to convince the reader to do something, like hand washing often to avoid viruses, or joining an organization that saves the spotted owl, etc. Fact Sheets are normally only one page, or the front and back of one sheet.

Why use it

A Fact Sheet is a more demanding assignment than it first appears to be, and would be relevant to many courses. A fact sheet is an assignment that mirrors "real word" applications and outside the classroom the fact sheet would be distributed to the public and therefore must be well written and polished. Students must learn to search the relevant databases for the discipline, evaluate material, and present it in a concise, readable way.

How to use it

A Fact Sheet makes an excellent assignment that replaces an essay. Use a fact sheet for assignments where you would normally ask the student to explain a concept or a topic in a paper. Consider using peer review for fact sheets.

Considerations

Fact Sheets focus on narrow topics, so they should include only the most important and relevant facts to convince the reader to take action. Providing extraneous information may cause the reader to put the Fact Sheet aside and disregard the information that is provided. Other important points to mention:

- A fact sheet is a self-contained document and should not refer to previous documents.
- Cite references for text, photos, illustrations and charts. For electronic fact sheets, use hyperlinks.
- Find ways to simplify complex ideas. Search for comparisons and everyday analogies that will express complicated processes. Transform jargon into English.
- Write in the present tense and as active as possible.

- Use terms consistently. For instance, if you use the United States of America, do not later use the United States, or America alone.
- If details are given in a table or chart, there is no need to give those details in the narrative (use general terms instead)
- The page should begin with the words "Fact Sheet," followed by a very brief headline that explains the subject of the page.
- Whenever possible use simple graphs and charts, which can give your audience the information with just a glance.

Instruction and Assessment Information

Here are some elements to point out to students:

Before preparing a fact sheet, think about your audience. Your information will be written differently if the audience is experts in the field versus the general public. If your audience is the general public, use words that the average person (someone without professional training in the subject area) can understand. If you must use technical words, explain the meaning.

Keep the most important information at the beginning of your sheet. Let your audience know what the issue is and what action you would like them to do. Otherwise, they may decide to quit reading before they know what you want them to do!

If your sheet requires some sort of action, like calling a doctor immediately if showing signs of symptoms illustrated in your sheet, make it as easy as possible for them to take action. If you want them to make a call, give them the number. If you want a voter to vote for a bill, provide the bill number and title.

Art Style

Audience also has to do with the style of presentation - whether the look is professional, businesslike, casual, or youth-oriented. For example, a fact sheet on Sea Lions will likely have a more youthful color palette, fonts, and fun images.

Textual Hierarchy

- Just as in similar papers, there should be a clear textual hierarchy. The main point (or argument) should be quickly noticed and made obvious. Your information should be organized. Bullets are a good visual tool. A poorly designed paper makes the user read the entire paper to understand what it is about.

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- Choose descriptive titles. An example of poor titling is a fact sheet entitled "Broadband in Rural Areas". The user is unsure what is the direction or objective of the paper - beyond Broadband usage in rural areas.

Images

- Images attract the eye and draw the reader into the design.
- Image choices should complement and relate to the topic. Poor image choices confuse the reader as to the paper's argument.
- Images need to be placed strategically to balance the page.

Readability

- The length of the line of text, called line length, should be a comfortable-to-read width. Avoid line lengths that run the entire width of the page.
- If have more text than will fit on 1 or 2 pages, consider using columns which allow you to fit more text onto the page. Columns also give you more design options to move graphics, photos, and other graphic elements.

Legibility

- Use fonts that the characters can be quickly understood. Some novelty fonts are difficult to discern and slow reading.
- If you are printing your fact sheet, use a font that is easy to read like Times or Minion. The rule of thumb is to only use ono more than three fonts in your document.
- Use bullets when you can.
- Leave lots of white space. White space is the space around the text and makes your document clear, simple, and inviting.
- Label the main information.
- Bold, text boxes, and graphics add emphasis, but don't overdo it.
- It's best to stay away from all caps.
- Limit color to one or two. Too many colors are distracting.

Typical writing errors

Identify all acronyms at first use, then use only the acronym for the rest of the document. For instance, the first time you use the United States of America (USA) write it out and then abbreviate USA when used later in your text.

Level of Bloom's Taxonomy: Sample Learning Objectives

Fact Sheet assignments can be constructed to assess accomplishment of learning outcomes at any level of the cognitive domain on Bloom's Taxonomy. Here are a few examples of objectives from different levels of Bloom's that can be demonstrated by

students through writing and the incorporation of images, charts, illustrations, etc. into their Fact Sheet:

- Summarize information on your chosen health care concern.
- Organize information according to priority.
- Evaluate information on your chosen health care concern.

Resources

Information on Creating Fact Sheets

Lesson on creating fact sheets, links to examples of good and poor fact sheets and gives explanations.

- [Creating an Agricultural Fact Sheet - InTeGrate](#)

Examples of Fact Sheets

Finding examples is easy. Google "fact sheets" and click on images. Here are some examples:

- [Parent Food Safety Guide for Raw Milk](#)
- [The San Francisco-Oakland: Bay Bridge Seismic Safety Projects](#)

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