

GIS Modeling Writing Tips

...an introduction to grid-based map analysis and modeling

GEOG 3110, University of Denver, Geography, Winter Term 2011
Thursdays 6:00-8:50 pm, GIS Lab, Room 126, Boettcher (West)

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Below is a list of general “report writing tips” that might be useful in class exercises. Hopefully these tips will help the “final” polishing of your reports (and in real life beyond!!!) --Joe

Underlying Principle: Report writing is all about helping the “hurried” reader 1) see the organization of you thinking, as well as 2) clearly identify the major points in your discussion.

...**Report Writing Tip #1:** enumeration is useful in report writing as the reader usually is in a hurry and wants to “see” points in a list.

...**Report Writing Tip #2:** when expanding on an enumerated list you might consider underlining the points to help the hurried reader “see” your organization of the extended discussion/description.

...**Report Writing Tip #3:** avoid long paragraphs with several major points—break large, complex paragraphs into a set smaller ones with each smaller paragraph containing a single idea with descriptive sentences all relating to the one thought. Don’t be “afraid” to have a paragraph with just one sentence.

...**Report Writing Tip #4:** it is a good idea to use two spaces in separating sentences as it makes paragraphs less dense ...makes it easier to “see” breaks in your thoughts—goes with the “tip” to break-up long paragraphs as both are distracting/intimidating to a hurried reader as they make your writing seem overly complex and difficult to decipher. Most professional reports do not indent paragraphs—appears more “essay-like” than report-like. A report is not a literary essay.

...**Report Writing Tip #5:** avoid using personal pronouns (I, we, me, etc.) in a professional report. A report is not a letter (or a text message).

...**Report Writing Tip #6:** “In order to...” is a redundant phase and should be reduced to simply “To...” For example, “In order to empirically evaluate the results ...” is more efficiently/effectively written as “To empirically evaluate the results...” This and two other points of grammar are often used to “differentiate” the Ivy scholar from the inferior educated masses. The other two are 1) the split infinitive (e.g., This thing also is going to be big, not “...is also going to be...”); **don’t stick adjectives or adverbs in the middle of a compound verb**) and extraneous hyperbole (e.g., “That’s a really good map for...” versus “That’s a good map for...”; **avoid using “really”**).

...**Report Writing Tip #7:** need to ALWAYS include a caption with any embedded graphic or table. Also, it is a general rule is that if a figure is not discussed in the text it is not needed—therefore, ALWAYS direct the reader’s attention to the graphic or table with a statement of its significance to the discussion point(s) you are making.

...**Report Writing Tip #8:** ALWAYS have Word’s Spelling and Grammar checkers turned on. When reviewing a document, right click on **Red** (spelling error) and **Green** (grammar error) underlined text and then correct.

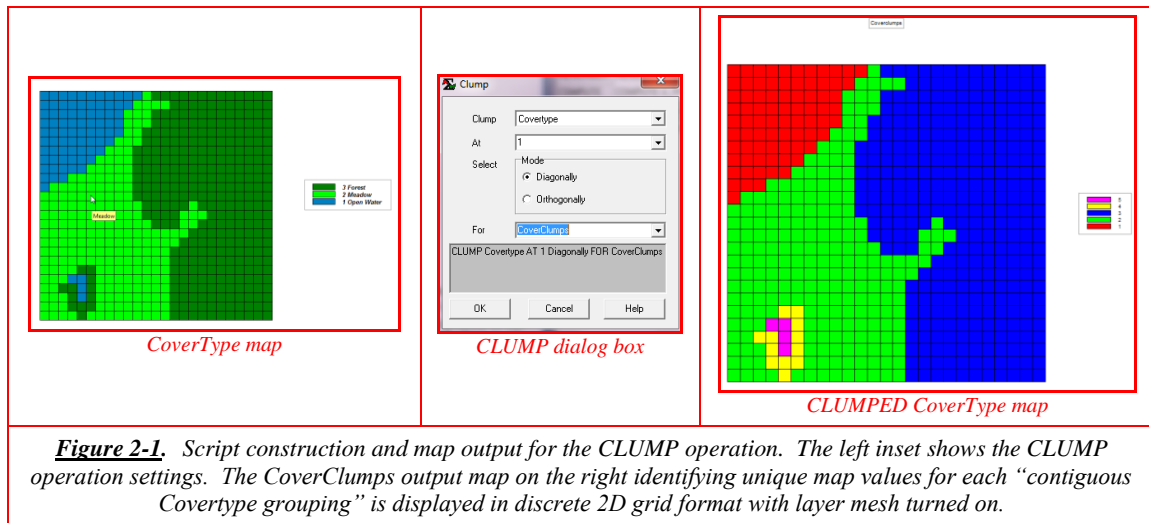
...**Report Writing Tip #9:** it is easiest/best to construct (and review) a report in “Web Layout” as page breaks do not affect the placement of figures (no gaps or “widows”). Once the report is in final form and ready for printing, you can switch to “Print Layout” and cut/paste figures and captions as needed.

...Report Writing Tip #10: be sure to use a consistent font and pitch size throughout the report. Change font only to highlight a special point you are making or if you insert text from another source (include the copied section in quotes).

...Report Writing Tip #11: don't use "justify" text alignment as it can cause spacing problems when a window is resized in "Web Layout" view; the document will not be printed ...it's the "paperless society," right? Also, be consistent with line spacing ...usually single space (or 1.5 space) is best ...avoid double spacing as it takes up too much "screen real estate" when viewing a report.

...Report Writing Tip #12: it is easier (and more professional) to use a table for the multiple screen gabs and figure #/title/caption as everything is "relatively anchored" within the table and pieces won't fly around when resizing the viewing window—

...be sure to keep the table width within page margin limits if you plan to print (also for easier viewing in Web Layout).



*...the easiest (and best) way to center items in the table is to click on each item and choose "Center" from the Paragraph tools; to create upper and lower spacing Select the entire table and the **Table Properties** → **Cell tab** → **Cell Options** → uncheck **Cell Margins** box → specify **.08** as both top and bottom margins.*

