



Writing About Apparel Design

I. General Purpose and Audience

Apparel designers communicate through writing with a variety of different audiences about product knowledge and satisfying a need or desire. Apparel design majors write professionally for the purpose of both obtaining employment and explaining aspects of their profession. Possible **audiences** include vendors, clients and potential clients, the general public, and other apparel designers. Writing to communicate about design should focus on *showing* rather than *telling*; therefore, descriptive, active language is preferred.

II. Types of Writing

- Analyses, summaries, and evaluations
- Advertisement and catalog copy
- Marketing and Promotions
- Designer and style reports, summaries, critiques (also oral)
- Trend forecasting
- Professional communications such as email and letters
- Case studies with oral and visual presentations
- Textile lab writing
- Research papers
- Business letters, cover letters, resumes
- Website design and social media; online portfolio
- Publications about completed projects
- Internship writing: Proposal, self-assessment, reflection, weekly journal

III. Types of Evidence

Apparel designers depend on a variety of types of evidence to create, justify, define, and explain their choices to multiple stakeholders. The types of evidence used will vary according to the audience being appealed to and the type of writing being done. Description and analysis form two important categories for what is considered evidence in writing about design:

- Description and summary are important features of evidence in design. Designers must be able to convey their vision in words to potential clients as well as translate that vision into technical terms for others with whom they collaborate. They must be able to convey designs with appropriate technical details.
- Analysis involves looking at trends and projections from the perspective of many stakeholders. Elements of the analysis should be based on the perceived trend and focus on the description and the vision.

Therefore, in writing about apparel design, students should be ready to rely on both **quantitative** and **qualitative evidence** as well as understanding the difference between **primary** and **secondary research**. Students should become familiar with the needs of various stakeholders, what kinds of evidence they value, and when to use the appropriate type of evidence to satisfy those audiences.

IV. Writing Conventions

- Be concise and get to the point quickly.
- Be confident and appropriately assertive. (Avoid qualifying terms such as “I hope,” “maybe” or “it seems.”)
- Be aware of your target market before beginning any piece of written communication.
- Use first person for direct communications and third person for analyses and reports.
- Be prepared to adjust tone, style, and level of technical language for genre and audience.
- Expect writing strategies often to overlap. (For example, business or professional writing may be combined with explanations of textile analysis or marketing strategies.)
- Use short focused sentences and paragraphs.
- Organize ideas carefully and separate thoughts and elements accordingly.
- Carefully explicate visual elements as appropriate.
- Use headings to show the organization of a message.
- Be able to cite primary sources of research findings to support design decisions.

V. Vocabulary/ Jargon/ Terms

Vocabulary is highly significant in communicating in Apparel Design. Every aspect of the field uses specific terms to describe textiles, merchandising, computer-generated design, and apparel construction. Some examples:

- Design development

- Evidence-based design (See a need and create a product.)
- Textiles: luster, resiliency, tenacity, hand, etc.
- Programming and Web Design: Adobe, 2D and 3DCad/Cam, EDraw Max, etc.
- Construction: French seams, tacking, interfacing, darts, bound buttonholes, etc.
- Marketing: marker, fall-out, etc.

VI. Documentation Style

As apparel design students may find themselves writing in a variety of different contexts for diverse and varied audiences, they should be flexible in their ability to identify sources of information and give credit where credit is due for ideas and concepts that are not their own. When writing in academics, a writer should *always* check with instructors about what citation style they prefer and use credible sources such as the University Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.appstate.edu/>), the OWL at Purdue (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>) or a hard copy source for formatting and citation guidelines. The professional style is APA. *(Note: providing links instead of proper citations is not acceptable.)*

Source Consulted

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