aka the “status report” or “interim report,” a progress report is an interim summary and evaluation of the work accomplished to date on a project.
This entails asking several questions that help you analyze what writers call the “rhetorical situation.”
Who are my stakeholders (i.e., who is my audience)?

Who will be in attendance?
Who might listen to, read, or use this report?
What is my purpose?

Questions to Consider:

Why do my stakeholders (audience) want the report? What information do they need to know? What do I want to happen as a result of this report?
LIKELY STAKEHOLDERS
OF PROGRESS REPORTS

management
project leaders
clients
coworkers
advisory boards
political councils
...

...
COMMON PURPOSES OF PROGRESS REPORTS

to describe, at a high level, what your project entails and requires of you
to describe and/or justify the decisions you have made to date
to show how far you have come with a project
to show that you are capable of completing the project satisfactorily
A progress report is an INFORMATIVE DOCUMENT with a STRONG PERSUASIVE ASPECT. As presenters or authors, you should aim to ethically present your work and future plans as evidence that you are capable of completing the project.
IN OTHER WORDS, AIM TO **ETHICALLY** PRESENT YOUR WORK AND FUTURE PLANS AS EVIDENCE OF YOUR TEAM’S CAPABILITIES
QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Context: How will my progress report be used?

What information will my listeners/readers look for, how will they use it, and how will they find it?
What problem are you addressing?

Why is it important?

What is your project?
PROGRESS REPORTS NEED TO BE IMPECCABLY ORGANIZED

The information should be easy to grasp.

The information should be easy to find.
This isn't a story, so you shouldn't tell it like it's one.
CHRONOLOGICAL VS. TOPICAL ORGANIZATION
“First we researched semiconductors, then we began a preliminary project design, and then we stopped that in order to research some points that we hadn’t thought about before. After the second round of research, we went back and tested a second aspect of the project design and, while this was going on, we took up the preliminary design again, but we didn’t finish it. Instead we conducted some experiments with a multimeter, and this got us thinking that perhaps we should revise the preliminary design…”

How would one find information they need quickly in this type of organization?
How would one grasp your progress on the project easily?
Considers what your **stakeholders** want to know:

What have you accomplished to date?

What remains to be done?

What will you accomplish by the end of the project?
Considers what your stakeholders want to know:

**Sufficient Context**

What have you accomplished to date?

What remains to be done?

What will you accomplish by the end of the project?
descriptive abstract
introduction to establish context
high-level task list
completed tasks list
remaining tasks list (includes Gantt chart)
assessment & changes
conclusion
written report sections

Descriptive abstract
An outline written in paragraph form; takes the place of the foreword and summary.
LET’S PRACTICE
WRITE A DESCRIPTIVE ABSTRACT FOR A PROGRESS REPORT USING THE REPORT OUTLINE

Try starting with, “This is a progress report for the [toy name] prototype...”

- descriptive abstract
- introduction to establish context
- high-level task list
- completed tasks list
- remaining tasks list (includes Gantt chart)
- assessment & changes
- conclusion
introduction to establish context
brief descriptions of the problem (opportunity), your toy concept, and the prototype you are in the process of designing and constructing
3 task lists: high-level, completed, and remaining

high-level: list of tasks necessary to complete the prototype with projected completion dates for each task

completed: descriptions of how and when you completed the tasks

remaining: what’s left and when you hope to finish it, with a comprehensive, up-to-date Gantt chart
LET’S PRACTICE

UP UNTIL NOW, WE HAD A VERY SIMPLE
GANTT CHART—NOW WE’LL COMPLICATE IT
Figure 1. Hornblower Prototype Development Plan. Outlined boxes indicate the planned timeline for the named tasks; boxes are filled according to the percentage they have been completed to date (e.g., a box for a task that is 50% complete will be 50% filled with color).
Figure 1. Homblower Prototype Development Plan.Outlined boxes indicate the planned timeline for the named tasks; boxes are filled according to the percentage they have been completed to date (e.g., a box for a task that is 50% complete will be 50% filled with color).
Figure 1. Homblower Prototype Development Plan. Outlined boxes indicate the planned timeline for the named tasks; boxes are filled according to the percentage they have been completed to date (e.g., a box for a task that is 50% complete will be 50% filled with color).
Figure 1. Hamblobe Prototype Development Plan. Each task listed may involve research, testing, debugging, and revision. Outlined boxes indicate the planned timeline for the named tasks; boxes are filled according to the percentage they have been completed to date (e.g., a box for a task that is 50% complete will be 50% filled with color).
The categories are the high-level tasks, and the sub-tasks are all of the specific engineering tasks you need to accomplish within that category. Since research and testing are iterative, they are assumed so we will leave them out. Your Gantt Chart may take up to half a page if it is within the report; if it is longer, place it in the appendix (attachments) and refer to it in the report. Be sure it is up to date (this one is not).
COMPLICATE IT

WITH YOUR TEAM, LIST OUT ALL OF THE HIGH-LEVEL TASKS AND INDIVIDUAL TASKS WITHIN THAT CATEGORY YOU CAN THINK OF
WRITE IT UP

NOW WRITE A DESCRIPTION FOR ONE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL TASKS THAT MIGHT GO IN YOUR PROGRESS REPORT

Try starting with, “This high-level task involves …”
assessment & changes
assess how well your final project will meet the criteria and describe changes you have made since your presentation proposal
WRITTEN REPORT

CONCLUSION

assess your overall progress, forecast your completion date, and provide a contact who can answer questions.
SAMPLE REPORT

NOT PERFECT, BUT SOME GOOD CHARACTERISTICS
To: Dr. T.A. Edmum
Professor of Mechanical Engineering
The University of Michigan.

From: Rob Smith, Robert Smithson, Roberta Moye
Team Enterprise

Subject: Progress in design and development of Walker-Stick, a novel assistive device

Date: 23 October 2015

Abstract

Our team is working to design and prototype “Walker-Stick,” a low-cost, lightweight device to assist elderly and infirm people in walking comfortably. This report outlines the progress made on the project to date and includes details about our assessment of the project and future plans for development.

Introduction

We were given the task of creating a product design that might prove marketable as a novelty, and we were given permission on 8 October 2015 to go ahead with our project. Our team was divided into four groups: planning, production, marketing, and design. Each group was responsible for a different aspect of the project. The planning group worked on creating a detailed plan for the project, including a schedule and budget. The production group was responsible for designing and creating the prototype. The marketing group was responsible for creating a marketing plan, while the design group was responsible for creating a prototype.

This product consists of two short, plastic pipes, each with two cups to accept the feet of a conventional walker (or walking frame), and a compliant section between them on which the user will stand. To use it, the user will stand on the cross-bar, support him or her weight at the front by resting the hands on it, and then leaning forward, will stabilize lower limbs. The figure below illustrates the device:

![Figure of the project]

Clearly shown are the frame, the runners and the safety cushions mounted across the lower part of the structure.

Flaw: No letterhead
A descriptive subject line.
Contains descriptive abstract (but it does not need to be offset from the margins).

Flaw: Headings are equidistant.
Contains a figure of the project (but the figure does not have a label).
High-Level Task List contains a good number of tasks: not too many, not too few. Tasks are grouped according to type (but the reports may not be necessary to include). Tasks are described briefly. Formatting is consistent. Intended completion date is included (but this report omits the start dates).
Tasks Completed list:
* Flaw: Headings are stacked.
  Task names match up with initial list of tasks.
  Actions/progress are described. (Include design options considered in your discussion.)
  Completion dates are easy to locate.

Remaining Tasks list:
Projected completion dates are easy to locate.
Producing final design:

After reviewing the results of our tests, we will produce a final design. Projected completion date: 1 December 2015.

Conducting market research:

We have made an arrangement with an information specialist at the firm of School of Business to help us in some research into markets for our device. The specialist cannot meet with us, however, until November 22, so we must push the completion date for this task back by three days.

Preparing for presentation of the device:

This time is subject to a fixed date, therefore we will have the presentation ready on the due date of 8 December 2015.

Drafting final report:

This time is subject to a fixed date, therefore we will have the information ready on the due date of 10 December 2015. We will submit a draft of the report.

The Gantt chart below shows our progress:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Start</th>
<th>Finish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td>1 November</td>
<td>20 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design 2</td>
<td>21 December</td>
<td>31 January</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As the Gantt chart shows, we are currently on track to finish the project by the due date of 15 December 2015.

Conclusion:

At the current pace, the project is on time. We expect it to continue on time despite the difficulties in booking an appointment with the information expert at the Ross School of Business; we have taken this into account and are prepared for it. Therefore, we remain confident that the prototype will be built and the final report filed by the due date of 15 December 2015.

If you need further information, please contact Beth Smith at Beth@smith.com.
Acknowledgments

Some of the information in this lecture has been adapted from the lecture Dr. Erik Hildinger gave in previous years in E100-250. Other information within this lecture has been adapted from the following sources:
