

General Tips for Writing a Syllabus¹

- ❑ **Be as brief as possible.** Use short sentences, lists, or outlines. Don't overwhelm your students with lengthy prose – the syllabus should merely serve as a reference document and reminder to students.
- ❑ **Organize the information.** Outlines, tree charts, and various diagrams can help you plan before you actually write the text of your syllabus. A logical structure of the syllabus can help make you sure you have covered every important topic and help ensure that students will be able to identify important information more easily.
- ❑ **Be friendly.** Use everyday words and address the syllabus to the student. For example, use “you,” “we,” and “I,” rather than “the student,” “your professor,” or “the instructor.”
- ❑ **Consider the visual organization** of your information as it appears on the sheet of paper. Graphic design is not only a matter of aesthetic appeal; it has a strong bearing on the readability of any document.
- ❑ **Use headings** so students can easily scan it to find pertinent information.
- ❑ **Highlight important information.** Use capital letters, bold type, or italics. However, use them sparingly, or the purpose will be lost (the student will ignore it). Also, long strings of capitalized text are less legible than using upper and lower case. The logical structure of the syllabus helps ensure that you have covered every important topic and, in the end, helps insure that students will be able to identify important information more easily.
- ❑ **Use plenty of white space.** Don't put too much text on one page.
- ❑ **Be neat.** Avoid messiness, typos, etc. (especially when you don't accept messiness and typos from your students).

¹ This information was taken directly from Florida State University's handbook, which can be viewed online (<http://online.fsu.edu/learningresources/handbook/instructionatfsu/PDF-Chptr3.pdf>).