



Washington Center for Information Technology

ASSESSING ASSIGNMENT EFFECTIVENESS

Case Study A: First Level Course in Desktop Publishing

State University

Professor: Catherine Bertelson, PhD

Cathy's students were asked to re-format a restaurant menu using media design tools introduced in the unit. As this was the first assignment not from the textbook, it was not delivered in the familiar textbook step-by-step manner. Students were given a mock up of the menu, which included placement and font guidelines. All other instructions, such as creating and using paragraph styles and printing, were thoroughly discussed during an in-class presentation of the assignment. Cathy made sure that all questions raised by the students about the assignment were addressed completely.

When the assignment was turned in, results were varied. Cathy was frustrated as were the students. The quality of work submitted was not satisfactory and signaled a serious breakdown somewhere. Clearly, the assignment was not working as planned!

Answering the questions listed above helped Cathy focus in on the structure and delivery of her assignment. Here are the criteria she used to discover what went wrong:

1. Effective assignments are designed to directly relate to material covered. Cathy cross checked this assignment with the unit objectives and determined it was well aligned.
2. A good assignment is real-world oriented and has practical application. This assignment, to re-do a menu, fulfilled this criterion as well.
3. Student feedback – what questions are asked? Students may often have a very different perspective from the instructor's. Cathy typically evaluates student questions in relation to the assignment. If it is a simple "rote" exercise, questions tend to focus on clarity or muddiness of instructions. Were the instructions clear? If the exercise is more complicated and requires higher level skills, questions asked provide feedback as to the level of challenge presented. Questions may also indicate the students were not thoroughly prepared for the assignment and re-teaching and/or review is necessary.

Through student feedback and discussion, Cathy determined that students were unprepared to follow an entire set of instructions delivered orally during class discussion. The leap to completely oral instructions from textbook-type step by step instructions was too sudden. As in interim tool, and to "wean" students gradually from the accustomed linear instructions, Cathy developed a handout to accompany the assignment. Areas which caused difficulties for many students were addressed in the revised assignment. The assignment was re-issued and students were given the original mock-up along with the new handout.

This time, results were excellent! The quality of work submitted was better, and fewer problems or questions arose. Students were polled about the effectiveness of the additional handout and comments were favorable.

Cathy's own assignment assessment enabled her to see areas of difficulty, clear them up and help her students be more successful.

BEFORE Assignment Effectiveness Assessment:

Cathy discussed the assignment in class and gave her students the marked up menu to modify according to in-class instructions and the mark up on the menu:

↓ Top margin
Spinnaker Brunch Menu ^{48 pt. ATCCancun}

↓ 135 pt.
 Welcome to the Spinnaker ^{18 pt.}
 → $x = 9p0$ Voted #1 Sunday Brunch People's Choice Award for 2003
 space before pt. ↓ 18 pt. The Spinnaker Brunch will be an experience in culinary arts. ^{14 pt.}

front 3.22 pt. ↓ 252 pt.
 → Appetizers ← space after pt. 12 pt.

	Build Your Own Waffle	Book Artigua ^{12 pt.}	12.00
	Fresh Fruit Display		16.00
	Grilled Vegetable Bruschetta		22.00
	Caesar Salad Station		18.00
	Baked Goods Assorted Bagels, Muffins, and Rolls		10.00

↓
 Entrees ^{393 pt.}

	Eggs Benedict...A Spinnaker Trademark	24.00
	Featured Fluffy Omelet	20.00
	Chicken & Pasta Duet with Garden Fresh Vegetables	22.00
	A Seasonal Seafood Medly	34.00
	Carving Station of Prime Rib	36.00

↓ 543
 Desserts

Our Pastry Chef Janie brings you a delectable choice from her array of chocolate masterpieces

	12.00
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↓ 641 pt.
 Beverages

	Orange Juice, Assorted Juices, Soda, or Iced Tea	4.00
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↓ 719 pt.
 Margins T/B 36 pt. L/R 3p0
 Bon appétit ^{30 pt.} ↓ special symbol

The Spinnaker ^{72 pt. shadow}

AFTER Assignment Effectiveness Assessment:

Because of the varied results from the first assignment, Cathy decided to have her students re-do the same assignment. Along with the marked-up menu above, she provided her students with the following hand-out, designed to clear up all confusion from the original assignment. The results from this re-done assignment were excellent!

Chapter 5 Assignments

 Read Chapter 5

 Complete pages:

 120-121 (save), 131-139 (save along the way).

 Print at step 13 on page 139.

 Complete Spinnaker Brunch menu.

 All placement guides are given; follow them carefully. Guides refer to the top of the textbox or edge of the textbox.

 Based on the placement guides you created, key in the text for the menu. Use your name as the pastry chef; unless of course, you are Janie! Do not worry about formatting at this time. You will create and apply styles to do most of the work for you.

 Create two paragraph styles. One paragraph style is for the heading of items; i.e., Appetizers, and one paragraph style is for the list of specific items. You do not want to have to repeat the formatting from “scratch” each time you key in a new heading or group of menu items.

 Format all other text as needed. If you do not have the typefaces listed, use similar typefaces.

 Include a unique piece of clip art which enhances your menu. Put a drop shadow on it.

 Print the finished menu.

 Print screen shots showing the descriptors of the paragraph styles.

Questions: Ask your neighbor!

Due: October 19, 2004. You should have four prints. ☺