Progress Reports
Progress reports are essential.

- Often part of scheduled deliverables
- Maintain contact with funding sources, industry partners, and colleagues
- Provide precise technical description of work as project develops and/or changes
- Scrutinized for accountability and management practices
In .622, the oral progress report

- Is quite brief
  - 8 minutes presentation & 5 minutes discussion
- Provides a milestone for the team
- Identifies barriers to progress and ways to overcome them
- Keeps faculty and staff up to date
Formats for written and oral progress reports

• Written progress reports can be a short report or even a memo or a lengthy letter.
  – Include project title, funding source(s), contract numbers, funding period, organizational/institutional information, contact information
  – Follow conventions for written documents: headings, page numbers, etc.
• Oral progress reports can be brief or quite lengthy and can range from informal to very formal.
  – In .622, these are brief.

• Some sort of visual organizer helps in an oral report or handouts, posters, etc
  – In .622, a simple PPT. (Try to get it loaded on desktop before class.)
  – Follow conventions for effective oral presentations.
Information organization for the .622 progress report

• Ask yourself “What do people already know?”
  – Don’t just recycle old .621 PPT.
  – Compress introduction and HOS, experimental overview and technical approach.

• Emphasize “What’s new?”
  – Use most of the time on progress to date and project status.
  – Inform about problems and solutions to them
    • Problems are part of design, but your effort to address them is very important.
Information organization continued

• Have there been design changes? Budget changes?
  – Show the gap between what you planned to do and what you’ve done.
  – Design changes are sometimes inevitable, but be prepared to explain clearly.
• Give specific statement of overall progress and work to be done.
  – “We will be ready to take data after we complete task x and task y. This will be on or around October 11.”
  – NOT “we’re in pretty good shape, I guess.”
Tips for progress reports

• Review audience analysis
  – Audience agendas for a progress report are different than they were for a proposal.
    • Different concern, different focus
    • Also, progress reports are where people hear about problems.
  – Audience for progress report is mixed.
    • Experts, technicians, laypeople, decision makers
    • Writer/speaker must modify “expert” dialog used within team and with advisor
Tips. . .

• Remember that it is more difficult to absorb information aurally than it is from text.
  – Plan to use a few effective graphics.
  – Think about what audience needs to know rather than everything that you know.
  – Think about pace of report, the way the screens look, font size.
• Have a strong introduction and clear conclusion.
• Remember to practice.
  – Control nerves, spot “rough” spots, edit, check timing
Tips . . . .

• Be prepared for rigorous or challenging questions and discussions.
  – Practice potential answers.
  – Have a few back up slides.
  – Maintain a non-defensive attitude.

• Use the discussion period to ask your own questions.
  – Usually, the key people are all present, so use the time effectively.