Writing Tips

1. Begin by making an outline of your report, maybe even paragraph by paragraph.
2. double space so I can edit
3. do not rely on a screen version only, write, read/edit, reread, let it sit and reread
4. PROOF READ!!
5. Define municipal solid waste (MSW) at first use. Always define abbreviations at first use.
6. verbs should be parallel: enforcement/permitting is not parallel
7. avoid using extra words
8. Overuse of this, these, the and it: make sure they refer to something:
   “This became evident … vs. The citizen’s concerns became evident
9. If something is “more practical” or “better”, then it must be clear what it is better than
10. watch subject/verb agreement:
    o “recycling program collects” vs. “materials collected for recycling in Raleigh”
    o “MRFs separate” vs. “the pickers in a MRF separate or a magnet separates metal from MSW”
    o “integrated waste management analyzes” vs. “An integrated waste management system was developed based on an analysis of the city’s current and projected solid waste generation pattern.”
    o “waste produces” vs. “The US population produces “
11. Use less words:
    ▪ “in order to” ---- “to … “
    ▪ The MSW stream ---- MSW
    ▪ “This chapter emphasizes techniques as they have been applied to the study of MSW which, as defined by the US EPA (71), includes residential, commercial and non-hazardous industrial waste …”

    The text below is shorter

    “This chapter emphasizes techniques applicable to MSW which is defined to include residential, commercial and non-hazardous industrial waste… (71).”
12. always refer to tables and figures in the text before their presentation
13. If …., then
14. Avoid talking terms:
    o deal with
    o fell through
15. Avoid use of we, you, I
16. don’t abbreviate --- do not abbreviate
17. affect vs. effect - look up the definitions, affect is a verb
The objective of this problem was to compare the moisture content of municipal solid waste (MSW) based on its composition as generated and as discarded after before and after recycling. The overall moisture content of MSW was calculated based on the moisture content of individual waste components given in Table 4-1 of Tchobanoglous et al. (1993). (Note that in a real report there would be a reference section.) The moisture content of MSW, as generated and after removal of recyclables, was calculated to be 18.6% and 20.9%, respectively, on a wet weight basis. These data show that recycling will have a relatively minor impact on waste moisture content.

The objective of this problem was to develop an estimate for the composition of commercial waste. While data on municipal solid waste (MSW) composition are available, these data represent an average of residential, commercial, institutional and non-hazardous industrial non-process waste. Commercial waste composition was estimated by using data presented on a web site developed by the California Integrated Waste Management Board (www.ciwmb.ca.gov). This site contains data on waste generation rates and composition data for a wide variety of commercial establishments including law offices, fast food restaurants, hardware stores, etc. This site also contains data for the mix of commercial establishments present in each county in California and for the entire state. The composition of the commercial waste stream in Raleigh, NC was estimated by using these data and by making assumptions on the size and mixture of commercial establishments in Raleigh. Using these data and assumptions regarding the size and mixture of commercial establishments, the composition of the commercial waste stream in Raleigh, NC was estimated. This estimate suggested that commercial waste composition will be strongly related to the types and numbers of commercial establishments present. For example, while the composition of paper generated in law offices buildings exceeds the overall national average for MSW, the composition of paper generated at restaurants is considerably lower. Thus, overall commercial waste composition is quite sensitive to the assumed size and mixture of commercial establishments.

Recommended Reading: Strunk, William and E. B. White, The Elements of Style, MacMillan Publishing Co., N.Y.