

Notes on what I expect for home buyer's projects

Purpose

These projects will add additional material to the course via discovery-based learning. Ideally, after completing the projects everyone in your group will be prepared to make rudimentary assessments of common geologic hazards when shopping for a new home. During the course of the semester you will learn how to protect yourselves from the most common type of natural disaster world wide, the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S., and some other financial hazards you've probably never thought of.

What you need to do

For each topic your group should produce a coherent, well-organized, and well-written document that includes separate introduction, body, and conclusion sections in *750 to 800 words*. Consult the grading rubric to see exactly how you'll be evaluated. Part of the learning experience for this project is working together to present as much *relevant* material as possible in the allotted space. This is an invaluable skill in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

Your papers should be written for Colby students who were not fortunate enough to take GE141. The papers should: (1) introduce the topic by explaining what it is and why it is something to be concerned about, (2) explain how the hazard can be assessed and mitigated, (3) apply this assessment to the four homes assigned for each topic using resources available on the internet, and (4) make a decision about the potential severity of the hazard and any additional steps (if any are needed) you would want to take before purchasing the homes. You may also decide that purchasing the home is not worth the risk.

Your introductions should: (1) introduce the topic and "hook" the reader by demonstrating why it's important and (2) present a clear thesis statement outlining the purpose of the paper. For example:

Snargleguffs are small, pink furry animals much like kittens that appear quite innocuous. However, every year these critters kill hundreds of people and cause billions of dollars of property damage. This is because unsuspecting homeowners don't realize that snargleguffs can destroy the rafters and cause their houses to collapse. This paper investigates the snargleguff threat and uses four examples to demonstrate how this threat can be minimized by careful research and simple, cost-effective preventative measures.

Your conclusion sections should summarize your key findings and results. For short papers such as these, this can be done in a single short paragraph.

Formatting

You are partially graded on formatting. This is to insure that I can return your work as quickly as possible. Please be sure to do the following:

- Include the last and first names (last, first) of all group members at the top of the first page in alphabetical order.
- Papers must be double spaced using an easy-to-read, appropriately sized font such as Arial or Times. For example, this document is printed in 11-point Arial font.
- Papers must be between 750 and 800 words in length (excluding names, title, word count, and references cited list). Include a word count at the top of the first page just below your names.

- All sources must be cited in the text, and a references cited list must appear at the end of your paper. Use the MLA citation format. If you're unfamiliar with this, Google it.

How to accomplish this

The expectations for this project are high. To earn high marks your group will have to meet multiple times. I suggest that each group member first conduct background research on the topic and investigate one home. Following this, you should all meet to exchange and compare results. Inevitably, some group members will have more luck than others, and this first meeting will bring all members of the group up to the same level. Additional research may be needed for some homes after the first meeting. Once the topic has been researched satisfactorily, the group should work together to produce a thesis statement, develop an outline of the paper, and perhaps break out as individuals to write short sections. Following this meeting, one person will have to prepare a rough draft of the paper. There are four projects, so you can each prepare one rough draft during the term. Once a rough draft is prepared, the other group members should take turns editing it. Editing should be done iteratively with each person trying to improve on the pervious attempt. This group editing exercise will *greatly* improve the final product. Additionally, editing someone else's writing will make you all better writers.

Grading rubric for home-buyer's projects

Note: scores between these categories are possible.

1. Is the report properly formatted? Does it meet the length requirements? Are all required elements present? (10 points possible)

10 = Everything is as it should be

9 = Small problem, like 50 words too long

6 = Big problem, like 150 words too short or missing references

5 = Multiple problems

2. Is your research sufficient to answer the question? In other words, would you be able to make an informed decision with your results? (20 points possible)

20 = You're research results are clearly in the top 10% of the class.

18 = You've really hunted around and found enough information to make an informed decision.

16 = Your information provides a good starting point, but you would need more depth to make an informed decision.

14 = You did not address some part of the question(s) OR your information is seriously incomplete.

10 = You did not address some part of the question(s) AND your information is seriously incomplete.

3. Is your writing efficient, coherent, and well organized? Are you using proper sentence structure and grammar? Is the report fully integrated into a single coherent document with separate introduction, body, and conclusions? (20 points possible)

20 = You're writing is clearly in the top 10% of the class.

18 = Nearly perfect sentence structure and grammar; nearly free of typos; writing is efficient, coherent, and well organized; and all parts of the report are integrated into a unified document.

16 = A few minor grammar/typographical errors and/or wording is confusing/awkward/inefficient in some spots and/or there are minor problems with organization.

14 = Multiple grammar/typographical errors and/or wording is confusing/awkward/inefficient in many spots and/or there are major problems with organization.

10 = Multiple grammar/typographical errors and confusing/awkward/inefficient/hard-to-follow in many spots and there are major problems with organization.