A few of problems I've consistently seen in the past on recommendation reports.

1.   "The summary says the comparisons provided "a clear distinction between the texts", but that was followed by a list that says they are pretty much equal." Both have good examples, end of chapter problems, and graphics.

       That is a statement I see many times when I grade the reports. Some of the criteria will be a wash between the two books (or both will be terrible). That is ok. The recommended text does not have to be outstanding in every criteria; it may even not be best in all categories. Actually, if it is outstanding in everything and the other choice is bad, a committee will wonder if you as the evaluator did a fair evaluation or picked a bad comparison choice. That is also a reason why when you write formal recommendation reports, you should define the criteria before doing any analysis (in this case, define what makes a good textbook before looking at them). Doing the reverse is a fast track to coming up criteria that make your preferred solution look good and not necessarily fitting the situation needs.

2.   Perform an analysis and then write the report to reflect your analysis. Some conclusions seem more focused on picking the one the writer liked best rather than the one that is best by the criteria. That also comes out when you don't have any measurable factors in the criteria. Then your analysis ends up being "I liked this better than that."

3.   Not defining how criteria will this be measured? How will you determine how well a book fits these criteria? Most criteria justifications give a good reason why to use the criteria, but never explain how the books will be judged.

4.   Not writing a supporting document. Remember no supporting document equals minus 1 grade.

5.   Do not write a single long paragraph and then insert a new heading. Paragraph rules don't changed in technical writing. Don't put too much in a paragraph.

       If the paragraph is long, read it over and see if you could use a list so the reader can find the important points

6.   Don't mixing the evaluation of the books in one paragraph. It's hard for a reader to keep straight which book is being discussed. It must be easy for a reader to go back later and refind information.

7.   Paragraphs change format. This is a problem with not using styles properly. Different paragraphs end up being formatted differently. This makes your report look unprofessional.

8.   The introduction starts with stating the purpose of the report. Why was the report written? It does not start with a long paragraph on the importance of a good textbook. If

the audience already knows and accepts the idea, then it doesn't belong in the introduction.

9.   The longest section of the report is the analysis.   The readers care about the analysis and the results, not the criteria that were used. I often see reports that spend five pages on the criteria and then do the analysis in two.

10.   The executive summary should have

    a) headings
    b) analysis summary is longer than the criteria description
    c) provides a recommendation
    d) must be easy to parse. Can the reader easily refind something

11.   The report evaluation form was not used. A high percentage of the comments I make are actually a cut & paste from the evaluation form. It gives many of the details that I expect on the report. Most of the next problems appear in the evaluation form.

    a) Not using styles. Styles are required.   That also means each formatting change requires a new style. You should NEVER format text like you have done before this class.
    b) Table of contents must be created automatically with Word. Never type it in.
    c) Don't wrap text around a figure.
    d) Fully justified paragraphs are harder to read. And Word does not do a good job of handling the justification.