



A Guide to Technical Writing

What is Technical Writing?

This is a specialized form of writing in which you, the writer, take complex technical information, data, or procedures and make them concise, practical, and understandable for the reader so that they can take the appropriate actions. Technical writing is commonly used in industries such as engineering, computer science, chemistry, finance, medicine, biotechnology, and aeronautics. Some examples of technical writing include scientific or medical lab reports, business plans and proposals, user manuals, case studies, textbooks, product descriptions, job descriptions, e-learning content, and websites, among others.

Considering Your Target Audience

- 1) Who are the readers? Are they experts in the subject, or beginners? How much do they already know? Will they understand technical or specialized terms?
- 2) What information do they want and need to know in order to achieve their task or make a decision?
- 3) What do they NOT need to know? What information is unnecessary to include?

Considering Your Organization

Effective organization is essential to helping the reader understand the material. The information must be presented in a structured and logical manner. One way to help may be the use of headings or sub-headings, which allows the reader to easily find the information they are seeking. Headings should be concise and descriptive, giving readers a preview of what information is to follow.

Considering Your Tone and Language

Because technical writing can be full of complex terms and details, it is important to focus on clarity, while also maintaining a professional tone. This is why knowing your audience is important. If they are not familiar with the subject, try to use simple, everyday language that can be easily understood by everyone.

Considering Your Format and Design

Technical documents often include graphics, including charts, graphs, diagrams, or other pictures in order to make the information more accessible and interesting. As you work on the layout of your document, look for places where a graphic may help support the reader in understanding. (Note: If being asked to write a document for a professor or employer, get approval for graphics first.)

Don't Forget to Revise, Edit, and Cite!

Revising and editing are essential in order to ensure that your readers understand the material. Additionally, work that is full of grammatical and spelling errors will make you look sloppy and your work appear questionable. Go through your document and make sure the content is clear and organized in a way that makes sense and achieves your purpose. Then look for and correct any errors in spelling, grammar, or word usage. Additionally, if you utilized any outside sources, make sure you are citing them in the appropriate format (MLA, APA, etc.).

References

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