

Technical Writing Skills

What are “technical documents”? And why you benefit from learning how to write them better?

They come in all forms and sizes: market research, studies, project tracking reports, job descriptions, even an inter-office memo explaining a change in policy. Any kind of objective, informative writing counts as a technical piece.

Why you? Because there’s so much riding on your ability to write this kind of document.

If the writing you and your staff do is confusing and hard to follow, readers stop reading (no matter how much time or research went into it). But when your writing is clear and to-the-point, your internal and external clients will look forward to reading documents you’ve authored.

Key Learning Points

Your staff will discover a powerful, proven writing system designed specifically for technical assignments. And you’ll learn specific skills to help you:

- Sort information, organize your thoughts and cut to the core of a complex issue
- Write in language that matches your readers’ level of experience and understanding

- Summarize difficult data and intricate details in a crisp, concise overview
- Create strong transitions that keep your readers moving from one point to the next
- Create illustrations, charts, graphs — even multi-media visuals — that support your writing and help clear up confusing material
- Use design principles that grab attention and guide your readers where you want them to go

Who will benefit most ...

- Marketing, finance and budget analysts
- Managers, supervisors and team leaders
- Corporate communications personnel
- Operations and I/S people
- Scientists, engineers, technical specialists
- Researchers, lab techs and students
- Computer programmers, service and sales people

As a result of this training ...

- Use the skills you learn at this course, and you’ll notice a significant difference in the ways people respond to your writing
- Your thoughts will be better organized — enabling readers to make better-informed decisions
- You’ll make your point quickly and clearly, saving valuable time for everyone
- Your names on a document will translate to “Read me now” in the minds of the people you’re writing to.

Technical Writing Skills

Program Agenda

Setting a clear course, so your writing stays on target

- “Clustering” ... “mind-mapping” ... and other handy techniques for sorting and structuring technical information
- How to size up your readers’ knowledge base and experience level
- Two questions you should answer before you begin to write
- What tone should you take? Factors to help you decide
- When to use the memo-length, short or formal formats for your reports

Ways to organize your thoughts and outline your document

- “Formulas” for structuring several types of technical documents
- When to put information in an appendix
- Two reasons to add an executive summary — and when to write an abstract instead
- Four elements you should always include in abstracts and summaries

How to write a first draft, painlessly

- Proven ways to bust through writer’s block
- Writing descriptions that detail physical characteristics or give measurable “specs”
- How to write tight technical reports
- How to write a condensed overview that helps people decide whether to read your entire document, or not.

Ways to measure your message to see if you met your objectives

- Questions to help you judge your first draft
- When it’s OK to use industry jargon ... and when to write in layman’s language
- Exercise: Look at some technical writing samples, and see if you can pinpoint where the message gets muddled ... and how to clear it up

How to find what’s not working, and fix it

- Specific words to avoid in technical writing (they undermine your objectivity)
- How to strengthen transitions, so readers move more easily from point to point
- Exercise: Practice writing instructions for completing a simple task ... then revise them so they’re even easier to follow

Designing documents that grab attention and keep your readers interested

- How to use headings, subheads and captions to help your readers find their way around your writing
- Simple ways to add “visual relief” to text-heavy documents
- Tips on using pie charts, bar graphs, line graphs, and flow charts
- How to use diagrams and “schematics” to illustrate physical elements (and relationships between them)
- The finer points of page layout: White space, margins, line spacing, justification, borders, bullet lists, symbols and “dingbats”
- Adding emphasis with fonts, callouts, boxes and shading