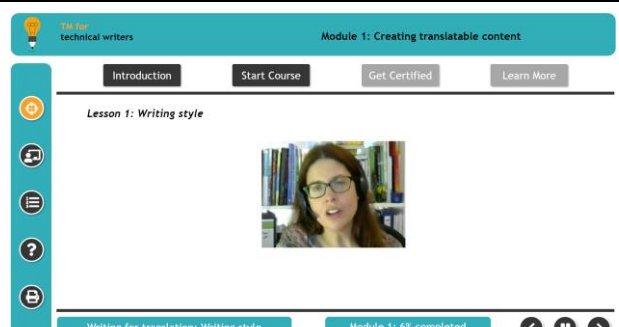




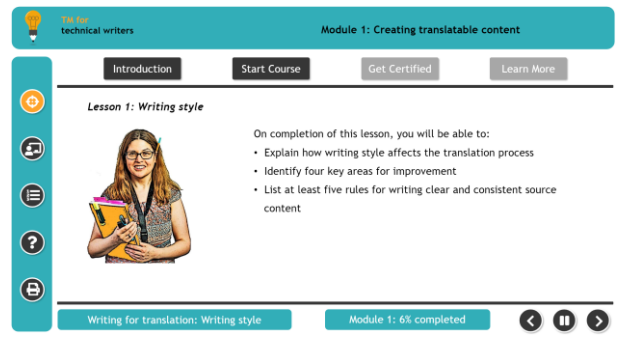
Lesson 1: Writing style

Lesson overview

Screen 1

Welcome	Screen
<p>As technical writers, our goal is always to write clear and correct instructional content.</p> <p>This is often easier said than done though, especially if deadlines are tight or our subject matter experts are busy with other tasks. In this lesson, we'll see why a well-written source text is fundamental to a good translation, and learn how we can improve our content by following some basic guidelines.</p>	

Screen 2

Objectives	Screen
<p>On completion of this lesson, you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain how writing style affects the translation process• Identify four key areas for improvement• List at least five rules for writing clear and consistent source content	





Lesson content

Screen 1

Writing style	Screen
<p>So, why are writing style and structure important?</p> <p>Just like any other reader, translators must be able to understand your instructional material. So, if your text is unclear or inconsistent, this will make it more difficult to translate correctly. But that's not all - if your content is poorly structured, it may not be properly imported by translation memory tools such as Trados Studio. This not only means technical difficulties, it also causes confusion for translators, and increases translation costs.</p> <p>The bottom line is: if a text is easy to read (for humans and machines), it will be easier (and cheaper) to translate.</p>	

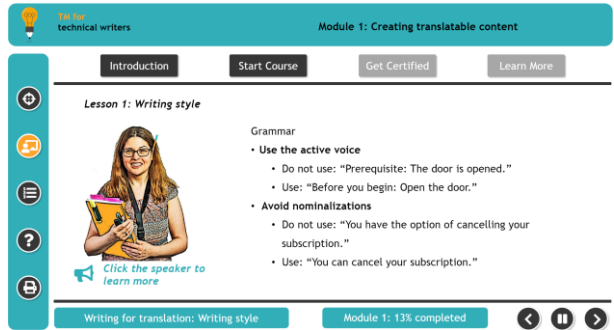
Screen 2

Writing style	Screen
<p>So how can you improve the style and structure of your content?</p> <p>If you want to write good content, then pay attention to four things: grammar, structure, consistency, and terminology. We will take a closer look at terminology in the next lesson, but first, let's talk about grammar.</p>	

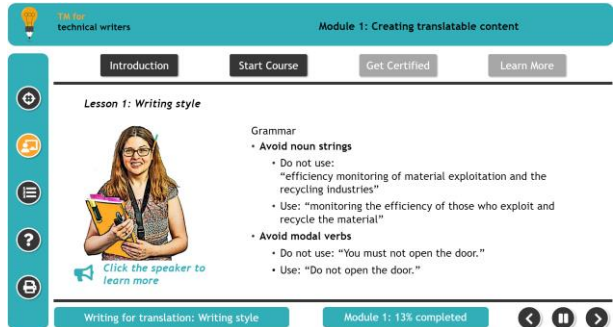




Screen 3

Grammar	Screen
<ul style="list-style-type: none">As you can see in this example, using the active voice is the clearest way to provide instructions.Try to avoid nominalizations. As this example shows, they don't add information - they just add length. Use verbs instead.	

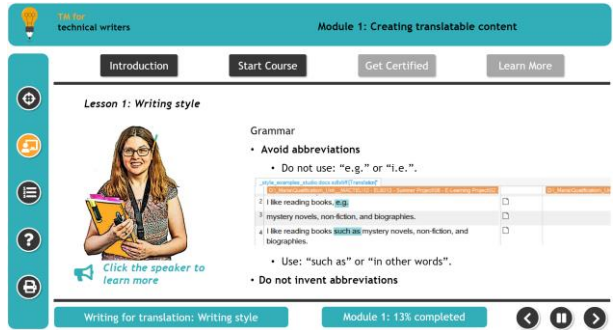
Screen 4

Grammar	Screen
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Here's an example of a noun string from the EU guide on writing for translation. "efficiency monitoring of material exploitation and the recycling industries" might sound impressive, but it is actually hard to tell what it means. So again, use verbs instead.Modal verbs such as "should" and "must" also cause confusion, especially if used with a negative like in this example. Instead, address the reader directly.	

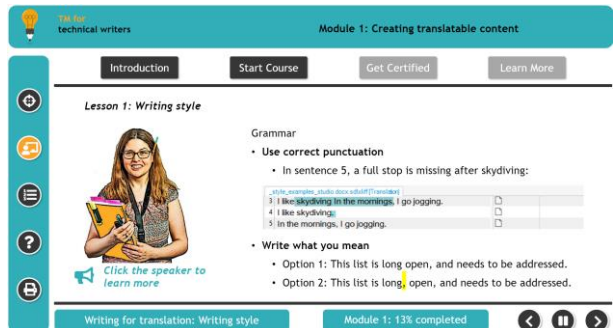




Screen 5

Grammar	Screen
<p>Abbreviations might be convenient for you as writer, but they are a real difficulty for translators.</p> <p>As you can see here in Trados Studio, even a standard abbreviation such as e.g. can cause sentences to be split in two in a translation memory tool, if the tool is not properly configured. This makes handling much more difficult for translators. And whatever you do, do not invent abbreviations. They will not be understood either by the translator or the translation memory tool.</p>	

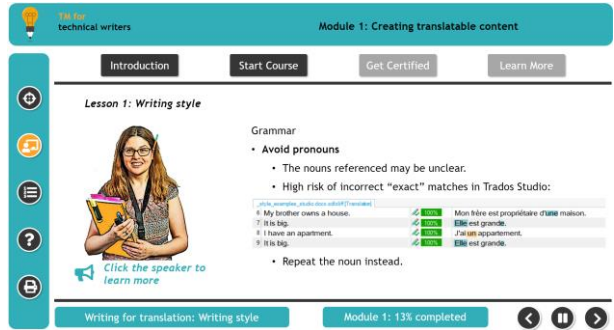
Screen 6

Grammar	Screen
<p>I just mentioned sentences being split incorrectly in translation memory tools.</p> <p>To avoid this problem, use correct punctuation. For example, make sure to end your sentences with a full stop or a hard return. Otherwise, a translation memory tool could assume that the sentence isn't finished yet. Punctuation can also affect meaning. In this example, a small comma makes a big difference.</p>	

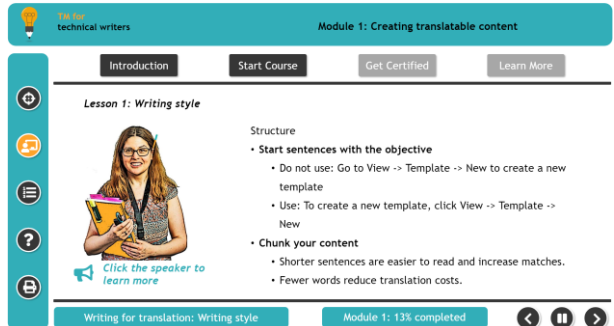




Screen 7

Grammar	Screen
<p>Pronouns are a common difficulty faced by translators.</p> <p>As a technical writer, you are familiar with your subject matter, so the nouns being referenced by your pronouns are obvious to you. This may not be the case though for your translators. Also, many languages require pronouns to follow the gender of the noun. As the LMU university in Munich show in this paper, pronouns and gender agreement is a problem for any machine-based translation tool. These tools do not really understand context - they simply match sentences, word for word. So, if you are using a sentence such as the example here to refer to different nouns of different gender, the translation memory tool will find a match that potentially isn't correct in the context. To ensure clarity, avoid pronouns and repeat the noun instead.</p>	

Screen 8

Structure	Screen
<p>Structuring your content clearly can transform sentences, paragraphs, and even entire documents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As recommended by Google, start with the objective, not the action needed to achieve that objective. This gives all readers - including translators - the necessary context. Chunk your content into manageable pieces. Shorter sentences not only help readers understand your information, they also increase the match rate when using a translation memory tool. Keeping things short and simple also reduces your word count, making translation both cheaper and faster. 	





Screen 9

Structure	Screen
<p>Lists are great for improving clarity. Make sure though that each list item is an independent sentence or phrase. Sentences that are split across lists like this example are obviously difficult to understand. Also, because semantic word order differs from language to language, lists like this are difficult to translate in a translation memory tool where translators have to stick to the sentence order of the source text.</p>	

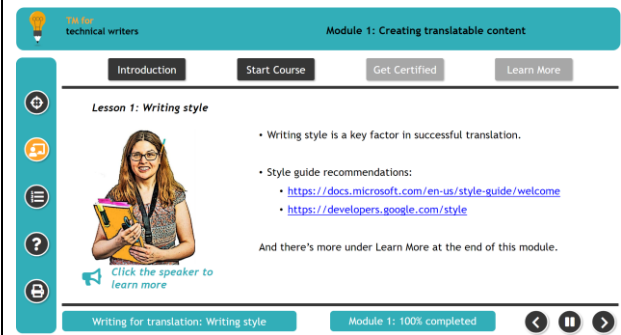
Screen 10

Structure	Screen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use consistent phrasing and terminology. This is easier for readers to follow, and as you can see here in Trados Studio, it increases the amount of internal sentence repetition. This makes translation quicker and less expensive. Use standardized “boiler plate” texts wherever you can. This saves you time and effort as a technical writer, makes a professional impression, and increases repetition between documents, which again, increases the leverage from your translation memory tool. 	





Screen 11

Closing	Screen
<p>So, as you can see, writing style is a key factor in successful translation.</p> <p>Even if your company doesn't have its own style guide to help you draft clear, consistent content, there are lots of resources out there. The Microsoft Style Guide is the gold standard for technical writers, and the Google Developer Documentation Style Guide is also excellent. I've included some additional resources in the Learn More section, which you can take a look at once you complete this module.</p>	

Lesson Summary

Summary	Screen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor writing makes content difficult to read and to process. • Avoid pronouns, abbreviations, modal verbs, nouns strings, and nominalizations. • Use the active voice and proper punctuation. • Start with the objective, not the action. • Chunk your content into manageable pieces. • Use lists properly. • Use consistent phrasing and terminology. 	