Memo

Date: January 19, 2018

To: Seniors preparing for a career in technical communication

From: Breayona Reed

Re: Want to learn a skill for an up-and-coming field???

As the internet because even more intertwined in our lives, programming is becoming more and more necessary. This is important for technical communicators because it means that companies, such as Google, will need more technical writers to help create their programming documentation. One major type of documentation for programming is an application program interface (API). APIs are a form of technical description, which is used to explain different mechanisms and processes. In the following memo, I will explain how APIs are written and what goes into this type of technical description. I will use five different APIs from w3schools, Apple Swift, and Java API for examples (links found at the end).

Code Definitions

At the beginning of all five APIs I chose there is a definition of the term. That definition differentiates the term from other terms and objects. This is the first part of a technical description. w3schools uses simplistic descriptions and references to practical everyday subjects. Apple Swift and Java API use definitions that differentiate code from other pieces of code. This is because their audiences are different. w3schools is directed towards people that are new to programming or wanting to learn a new programming language. Java API and Apple Swift are directed towards experienced programmers and developers.

Code Descriptions

The next section of a technical description describes the different components. It addresses what the component is and how it is used. Apple Swift and w3schools present this information in paragraph style, while Java API does this in more of a table/list format. This, again, has to do with the target audience. Java APIs are directed toward people who have a vast knowledge of programming.

Outcome Summaries

The next section is formatted the same way as the descriptions, but goes over the various outcomes and scenarios of using the different code components. This section may also contain versions or updates and author information. W3schools has author information but no update or version information. Apple Swift has update information. Java API has different versions. When Java creates new versions, it creates new APIs and the old ones become obsolete to anyone using a different Java version.

When writing a technical description, always keep your audience in mind. All audiences have different needs. This can affect page formatting, organization, content, and language.
If you are interested in finding out more or have any questions, do not hesitate to ask.

Good luck in your future endeavors,

Breayona Reed
Email: breareed@iastate.edu | Phone: (309) 373-5433

w3schools:
http://www.w3schools.com/js/js_variables.asp
http://www.w3schools.com/js/js_arrays.asp
Apple Swift:
https://developer.apple.com/library/ios/documentation/Swift/Conceptual/Swift_Programming_Language/Inheritance.html#//apple_ref/doc/uid/TP40014097-CH17-ID193
Java API:
https://docs.oracle.com/javase/7/docs/api/java/util/ArrayList.html
https://docs.oracle.com/javase/7/docs/api/java/lang/String.html