

Technical Communication

Unit 1 User manuals and instructions

1. Basic qualities of technical communication

Definition of Technical Communication:

- 1) the process of making and sharing information and ideas in the workplace
- 2) a set of applications — the documents we write

Characteristics of Technical Communication:

Correct, Accurate, Clear, Appropriate, To the point, Mostly formal, Follows a set pattern.

2. Writing definitions: three types of definitions

(待补充)

3. Guidelines for writing descriptions mechanism and object descriptions elements contained in instructions

To design pages that are clear and attractive, follow these two guidelines:

1) Create an open, airy design

Don't squeeze too much information onto the page.

Build in space for wide margins and effective line spacing, use large type, and chunk the information effectively.

2) Clearly relate the graphics to the text

Present graphics to accompany every step or almost every step.

Create a design that makes it clear which graphics go with each text passage.

4. Drafting A title

Drafting Titles

1) simple and clear

2) Two common forms:

How-to: "How to install the J112 Shock Absorber"

Gerund: "Installing the J112 Shock Absorber"

3) Avoid the noun string: "J112 Shock Absorber Installation Instructions"

awkward and difficult for readers to understand

5. Drafting General Introductions

The general introduction provides the **preliminary information** readers will need to follow in the instructions **safely and easily**.

1) Who should carry out this task?

2) Why should the reader carry out this task?

- 3)When should the reader carry out this task?
- 4)What safety measures or other concerns should the reader understand?
- 5)What items will the reader need?
- 6)How long will the task take?

6.Drafting Step-by-step instructions

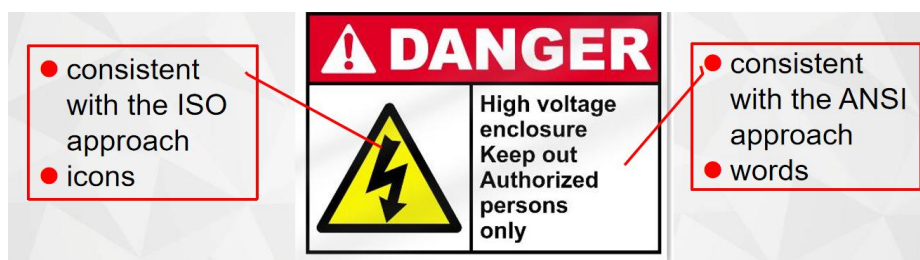
- 1)Number the instructions.
- 2)Present the right amount of information in each step.
- 3)Use the imperative mood:
 - More direct and economical than the indicative mood.
 - Avoid the passive voice.
- 4)Do not confuse steps and feedback statements.
 - A step is an action that the reader is to perform.
 - A feedback statement describes an event that occurs in response to a step.
- 5)Include graphics.
- 6)Do not omit articles (a, an, the) to save space.
 - Omitting articles can make the instructions unclear and hard to read.
 - “Locate midpoint and draw line”

7. Drafting Conclusions

- 1)Instructions often conclude:
 - by stating that the reader has **now completed** the task
 - by describing what the reader **should do next**.
- 2)Some conclusions end with maintenance tips or a troubleshooting guide.
 - A troubleshooting guide, usu. presented as a table, identifies common problems and explains how to solve them.

8.Diagrammatic features

A typical safety label that incorporates both ANSI and ISO standards.It should be prominent and easy to read.



9.Ways to improve the appearance

(待补充)

10.Linguistic features

Be clear and concise, avoid complicated sentences.

Unit 2 Email

1. How communication flows in an organization

In an organization, communication flows in 5 main directions-Downward, Upward, Lateral, Diagonal, External.

1) **Downward Flow of Communication:**

Communication that flows from a higher level in an organization to a lower level is a downward communication.

In other words, communication from superiors to subordinates in a chain of command is a downward communication.

2) **Upward Flow of Communication:**

Communication that flows to a higher level in an organization is called upward communication. It provides feedback on how well the organization is functioning. The subordinates use upward communication to convey their problems and performances to their superiors.

3) **Lateral/Horizontal Communication:**

Communication that takes place at same levels of hierarchy in an organization is called lateral communication, i.e., communication between peers, between managers at same levels or between any horizontally equivalent organizational member.

4) **Diagonal Communication:**

Communication that takes place between a manager and employees of other workgroups is called diagonal communication.

It generally does not appear on organizational chart. For instance - To design a training module a training manager interacts with an Operations personnel to enquire about the way they perform their task.

5) **External Communication:**

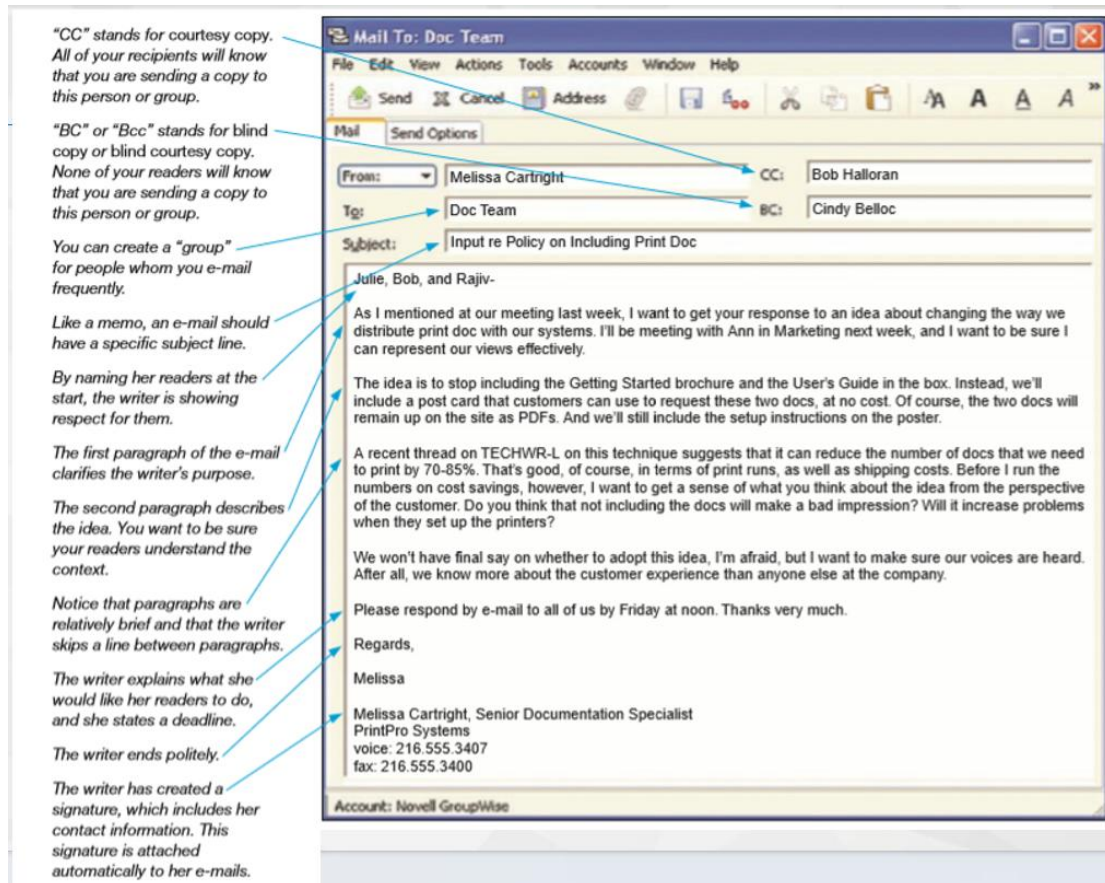
Communication that takes place between a manager and external groups such as - suppliers, vendors, banks, financial institutes etc. For instance - To raise capital the Managing director would interact with the Bank Manager.

2. Format and basic elements of an email

1) Email messages must be kept brief; ideally, under 200 words.

2) Poor spelling and grammar in email messages could lead some readers to question the writer's competence.

3) As far as the structure of email is concerned, there are three parts: **header, message, signature.**



3. Ways to improve the effectiveness

- 1) Write a meaningful subject line.
- 2) Keep the message focussed and readable.
- 3) Use attachments sparingly.
- 4) Identify yourself clearly.
- 5) Be kind. Do not flame.
- 6) Proofread.
- 7) Do not assume privacy.
- 8) Distinguish between formal and informal situations.
- 9) Respond promptly.
- 10) Show respect and restraint.

4. Linguistic features

Be concise and to the point

Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Do not write in CAPITALS

Avoid long sentences

Use active instead of passive voice

Keep the language gender-neutral

Maintain coherence

Write correctly

Use appropriate formality

Use proper structure and layout
Be careful with formatting
Take care with abbreviations and emoticons
Be kind. Do not flame.
Do not overuse Reply All
Do not use email to discuss confidential matters
Avoid using URGENT and IMPORTANT
Don't forward a message to an online discussion forum without the writer's permission

Unit 3 Memo

1.Channels of communication at workplace

- 1)Face-to-face communication
- 2)Communication over telephone
- 3)Communication through email
- 4)Communication through an inter-office memo

2.Audience & purposes/functions

- 1)facilitate communication about various operations
- 2)help arrive at some quick decisions
- 3)help solve problems
- 4)enable the information to flow in 3 types of communication:
vertical (upward & downward), horizontal and diagonal
- 5)help bridge the communication gap among the various sections of an organization
- 6)serve as permanent record of information

3.Components and format of a memo

Standard memos are divided into 5 main segments to organize information and to help achieve the writer's purpose:Heading, Opening, Discussion, Closing, Signature.
[Necessary Attachments, Distribution(optional)]

4.Writing skills

1)Opening:

A memo should start with one or two clear sentences informing the reader of the need and purpose of the communication.

2)Discussion:

develop the arguments that support the ideas
keep the communication brief since very few readers read every line of the memos they receive

5.Subject writing skills

- 1)The subject line, usu. typed in capitals, communicate to the reader(s) the purpose of the memo.

2)Almost every recipient reads the subject line, which gives a clear idea of the topic discussed in the memo.

6.Closing writing skills

- 1)close with a courteous ending that states the actions expected from the reader
- 2)always consider how the reader will benefit from the desired actions and how those actions can be made easier.
- 3)A memo can end with some complimentary remarks or directive statements.

e.g.:

Complimentary Close

- If our results continue to improve at this rate, we will attract more students during the coming years. Congratulations!
- Please accept my compliments for introducing this new computing system in your Division.
- There is no doubt that your conscientious efforts would help us accomplish our task without any difficulty. Keep it up!

Directive Close

- I would like to resolve the issue only after hearing from you. Hence, kindly inform me before 25 August 2014.
- To complete your analysis in time, our Finance Manager would provide the necessary data tomorrow, 23 August 2014. Please bring along with you the registration details of the newly acquired land.

7.Ways to improve the appearance

- 1)Use the standard format or the one prescribed by the organization.
- 2)Include all the necessary segments.
- 3)State **clearly** the **context** and **purpose** in the opening segment.
- 4)Keep in mind your **relationship** with the recipient to choose the **degree of formality**.
- 5)Maintain a **positive tone**.
- 6)State in the **closing segment** what action is expected from the recipient.
- 7)Use features like **highlighting**, bold face, etc. to draw attention.
- 8)Keep the memo **short**.

8.Linguistic features

Optional!

In some companies,a **formal** style is expected;in others,a **handwritten** note or informality in style is the rule.The organization and the individual's relationship with the readers suggests the degree of formality or informality that should be adopted in a memo.

Unit 4 Job application

1.Background knowledge of a résumé

Résumé is suitable for almost all types of organizations.Résumé can be modified according to the skill sets required by a particular job.Personal information such as

age, date of birth, marital status, nationality, and gender are generally not included in a résumé.

2.Type, components, format of a résumé

Type & Format:

1)Chronological résumé

- the most common way of organizing the information in a résumé
- Preferred by most employers
 - a.Emphasizes education and work experience
 - b.Most effective when such experience clearly relates to the new job
 - c.List entries in reverse order, beginning with the most recent experience
 - d.Under each position listed under Work Experience, describe responsibilities handled and accomplishments, emphasizing relevant experience with the skill set required for the job

2)Functional/skill résumé

- features the skills that the candidate has got
- provides examples of the most significant experience that demonstrates these skills
- includes a separate section, usu. called “Skills” or “Skills and Abilities” that emphasizes job skills and knowledge.
- emphasizes individual fields of competence and is hence used by applicants who are just entering the job market, who want to redirect their careers, or who have little continuous career-related experience
- When drafting a functional résumé, follow the Skills category immediately with a chronological Work History and a scaled-down Education section that lists only institutions, degrees, and dates.
- Either of the latter two categories may come first, depending on whether most of the skills and experience were gained in college or on the job.

3)Hybrid/combination résumé

- includes the best features of the chronological and functional résumés.
- not popular or not commonly used as it tends to be very long and also it may turn out to be repetitive in nature.

Components:

- Identifying/personal information
- Career/professional objective (Objectives or summary of qualifications)
- Educational/academic qualifications (Education)
- Work experience/Professional and technical skills (Employment history)
- Extracurricular activities and achievements/special interests, aptitudes, memberships (Interests and activities)
- References

Alice P. Linder	1781 Weber Road Warminster, PA 18974 (215) 555-3999 linderap423@aol.com	
Objective	An internship in molecular research that uses my computer skills	The writer uses a table format for her résumé. Notice that all her headings are contained within the left-hand column.
Education	Harmon College, West Yardley, PA BS in Bioscience and Biotechnology Expected Graduation Date: 6/2012	The writer indicates that she is interested in an internship, not a continuing position.
	<i>Related Course Work</i> General Chemistry I, II, III Biology I, II, III Organic Chemistry I, II Statistical Methods for Research Physics I, II Technical Communication Calculus I, II	The writer's list of courses includes several outside her technical subject area to emphasize the skills she has demonstrated in her career.
Employment Experience	6/2009–present (20 hours per week): Laboratory Assistant Grade 3 <i>GlaxoSmithKline, Upper Merion, PA</i> Analyze molecular data on E&S PS300, Macintosh, and IBM PCs. Write programs in C#, and wrote a user's guide for an instructional computing package. Train and consult with scientists and deliver in-house briefings.	All of the writer's positions show an interest in working with people.
	8/2006–present: Volunteer, Physical Therapy Unit <i>Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA</i> Assist therapists and guide patients with their therapy. Use play therapy to enhance strengthening progress.	The volunteer position says something about the writer's character.
	6/1998–1/2001: Office Manager <i>Anchor Products, Inc., Ambler, PA</i> Managed 12-person office in \$1.2 million company. Also performed general bookkeeping and payroll.	Before attending college, the writer worked as an office manager. Notice how the description of her position suggests that she is a skilled and responsible worker.
Honors	Awarded three \$5,000 tuition scholarships (2008–2010) from the Gould Foundation.	
Additional Information	Member, Harmon Biology Club, Yearbook Staff Raising three school-age children Tuition 100% self-financed	The writer believes that the skills required in raising children are relevant in the workplace. Others might think that because a résumé describes job credentials, this information should be omitted.
References	Available upon request	

Chronological résumé

This is another version of the résumé in Fig. 15.6.

In a skills résumé, you present the skills section at the start. This organization lets you emphasize your professional attributes. Notice that the writer uses specific details—names of software, number of credits, types of documents, kinds of activities—to make her case.

The employment section now contains a list of positions rather than descriptions of what the writer did in each position.

Alice P. Linder	1781 Weber Road Warminster, PA 18974	(215) 555-3999 linderap423@aol.com
Objective	An internship in molecular research that uses my computer skills	
Skills and Abilities	Laboratory Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze molecular data on E&S PS300, Macintosh, and IBM PCs. Write programs in C#. Have taken 12 credits in biology and chemistry labs. Communication Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrote a user's guide for an instructional computing package. Train and consult with scientists and deliver in-house briefings. Management Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed 12-person office in \$1.2 million company. 	
Education	Harmon College, West Yardley, PA BS in Bioscience and Biotechnology Expected Graduation Date: 6/2012 Related Course Work General Chemistry I, II, III Biology I, II, III Organic Chemistry I, II Statistical Methods for Research Physics I, II Technical Communication Calculus I, II	
Employment Experience	6/2009–present (20 hours per week) <i>GlaxoSmithKline, Upper Merion, PA</i> Laboratory Assistant Grade 3 8/2006–present <i>Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA</i> Volunteer, Physical Therapy Unit 6/1998–1/2001 <i>Anchor Products, Inc., Ambler, PA</i> Office Manager	
Honors	Awarded three \$5,000 tuition scholarships (2008–2010) from the Gould Foundation.	
Additional Information	Member, Harmon Biology Club, Yearbook Staff Raising three school-age children Tuition 100% self-financed	
References	Available upon request	

Functional/skill résumé

3. Differences between a résumé and a CV

	Résumé	Curriculum Vitae (CV)
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> education, past employment, skills for the new position the number of conferences attended, number of papers published, a brief summary of projects carried out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all the elements of a résumé but more detailed in terms of the academic credentials a detailed account of all the papers published, papers presented at the conferences, and research projects carried out
Length	usu. 1 page sometimes 2 pages	more than 2 pages up to tens of pages
Target	for any position in an organization	for a position in a research organization
Feature	more skill-oriented	more knowledge-oriented

4. Writing skills

The main purpose of the résumé is to gain the opportunity for an interview.

1) A résumé should appear neat and professional.

Generous margins, Clear type, Balanced appearance, Clear organization.

2) Clear organization

3) Résumés must be informative and attractive.

The résumé must provide clear, specific information, without generalizations or self-congratulation.

The résumé must be free of errors.

4) Make sure that the personal information allows an interested employer to reach you easily.

5. Starting with power verbs

When describing positions, functions, or responsibilities, use the active voice rather than the passive voice.

Strong action verbs used in résumés:

administered	coordinated	evaluated	maintained	provided
advised	corresponded	examined	managed	purchased
analyzed	created	expanded	monitored	recorded
assembled	delivered	hired	obtained	reported
built	developed	identified	operated	researched
collected	devised	implemented	organized	solved
completed	directed	improved	performed	supervised
conducted	discovered	increased	prepared	trained
constructed	edited	instituted	produced	wrote

6. Achievement (résumé) writing skills

1) Most employers want to know about special abilities that will make an individual a more **valuable** employee.

Professional courses undertaken

Community service/volunteer activities

Languages known (written and spoken communication)

Knowledge of handling special equipment

Relevant hobbies

Awards or honors received

2) Include only information that the employer will find **useful**, and that casts the candidate a favorable light.

7. Cover letter(求职信) writing skills

1) Educational/academic qualification

While applying for a job when one is about to graduate, educational qualification and experience are the highest selling points.

2) Work experience/professional skills

- a. When describing work experience, list jobs in **chronological** order, with the present or last one first.
- b. Include any part-time or summer internships or projects done.
- c. Provide **at least a two- to three-line description** for each position.
- d. Be sure to use very **concrete language** to describe the work experience.
- e. For particularly important or relevant jobs, write more, focusing on one or more of the following factors: Skills, Equipment, Money, Documents, Personnel, Clients.

8. Linguistic feature

strong résumés possess the same qualities: They focus on the employer's needs. They are concise. They are honest.

- 1) The résumé must provide **clear, specific information, without generalizations or self-congratulation.**
- 2) The résumé must be **free of errors.**
- 3) The summary of qualifications must be **specific.**