Software Engineering Documentation

The user guide contains everything a user needs to know to successfully use your program. It should be presented in a format which is easy to use, easy to read, easy to understand, easy to refer to. The presentation can be of your choosing but for easy reference it should contain at least three sections:-

- installation of software
- running the program
- if things go wrong.

Let's look at the contents of each section:-

Installation (or how to prepare the software for use on my machine.)

Assume your software is supplied on a compact disc/ or server

- how do I get it on to my machine?
- are there any special hardware requirements/considerations?
- are there any additional files required? - If so
  - where do they come from?
  - where do I put/create them?

Running the program

Assume everything necessary is set up on the users computer system and ready for blast off. This section should provide a guided tour through a run of the program. For example, how to start it, what kind of messages will be displayed on screen, what kind of responses will I be required to enter, what happens if I make typing errors, can I abort the program, how do I exit the program?, how do I interpret the output results.

You may decide to present this as an alphabetic reference, or a tutorial or in some other format. It is up to you.

Interpretation of Error Conditions / Messages

Here you should indicate how to deal with possible error conditions which may occur. This must include a summary of error messages generated by your program, what they mean and how to react to them.

Users like to know about situations which cause loss/corruption of their data and situations which prematurely halts a program run.

Include all the information you would like at your fingertips if you were using someone else's program.