



User Documentation:

Do We Even Need
This Stuff?



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User Experience (UX) Writer & Designer

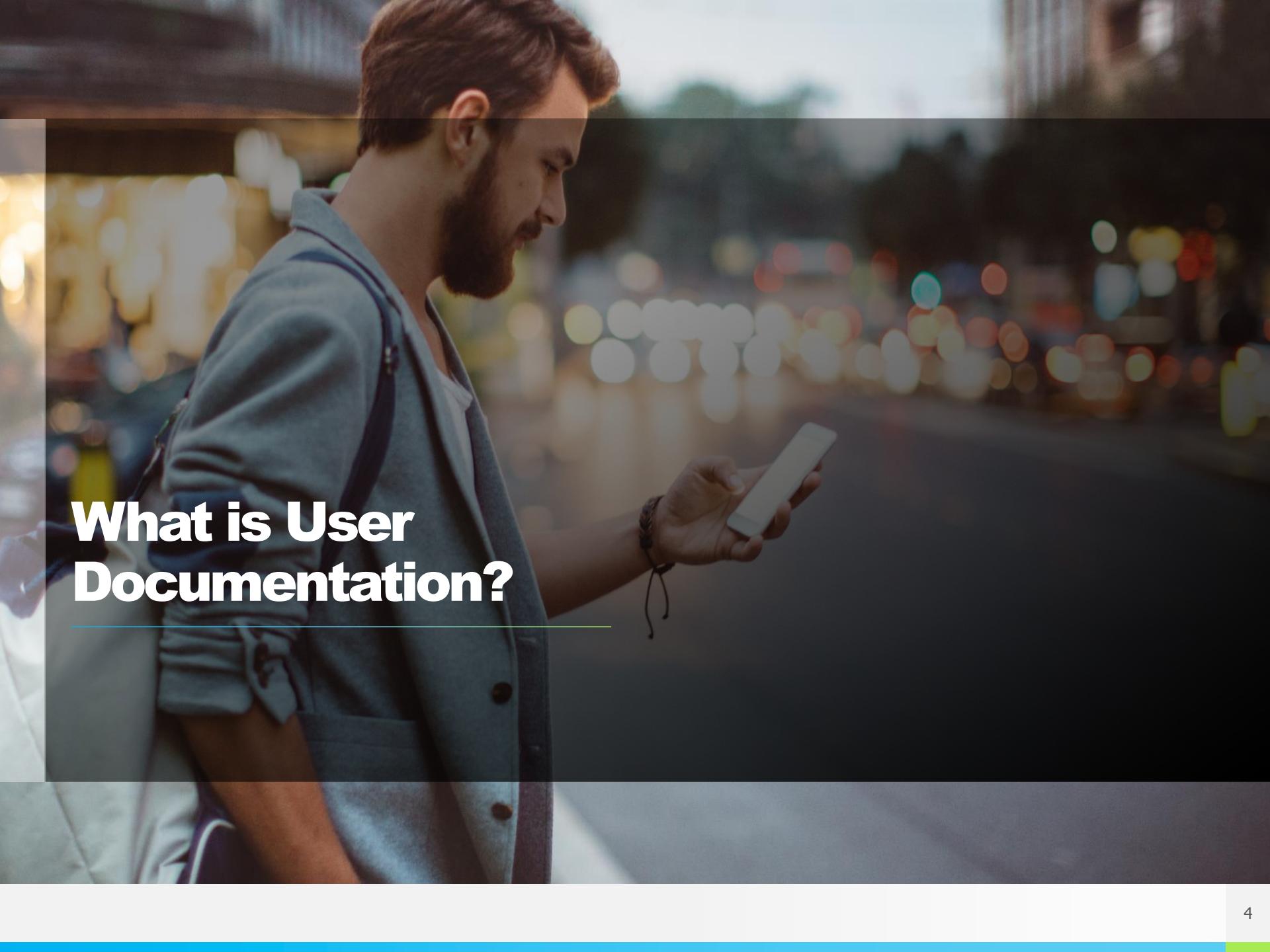


Genwest

A few assumptions about you...

You build things.

You want your users to be able to use those things effectively and efficiently.



What is User Documentation?

What is User Documentation? (slide 2 of 5)

Any tool provided to help the user understand...

What the
Product Is

What the User
Can Do With It

How to Do
Those Things

How it
Impacts Them

What is User Documentation? (slide 3 of 5)

(This is a pretty broad definition.)

What is User Documentation? (slide 4 of 5)

We've been doing this for a while.

The first known “technical manual” in English was written by Chaucer in 1326 when he described to a young boy how to use an astrolabe (a guide to the stars).



What is User Documentation? (slide 5 of 5)

User documentation can take many, many forms.

As technology advances, we'll see more and more forms of user documentation.

Is It Actually Used? (slide 1 of 6)

Anyone who has created products has run into the unfortunate situation of users asking questions that are answered—clearly and concisely—in the user documentation.

Which leads us to ask...

Do Users Even Read This Stuff?

Is It Actually Used? (slide 2 of 6)

“

A handful of research studies have previously been carried out to determine whether users are indeed reluctant to consult the documentation that is delivered with a product, and these are surprisingly unanimous in their findings. ... However, they invariably conclude that—at least for complex and unfamiliar products—the documentation is consulted; even if it is not read, marked, learned, and inwardly digested in its entirety.

”

[“Nobody reads the documentation”: true or not?](#)

Brigit van Loggem

Open Universiteit, Heerlen, the Netherlands, September 2014

Is It Actually Used? (slide 3 of 6)

% "Yes"	N	Consultation of	Reference
82.9	44	the printed documentation for complex equipment such as VCRs	P. Wright, Creighton, and Threlfall, 1982
96.0	201	instruction manuals	Schriver, 1997
99.0	400	the printed manual for a major word processing program	Smart, DeTienne, and Whiting, 1998; Smart, Whiting, and DeTienne, 2001
65.0	400	the online Help for a major word processing program	Smart et al., 1998; Smart et al., 2001
95.5	224	the printed manual for an accounting software package	Vromen and Overduin, 2000
58.9	36	the manual of the vehicle that they drive most often	Mehlenbacher, Wogalter, and Laughery, 2002
92.0	201	the manual that comes with a product they buy	Jansen and Baljon, 2002
59.0	107	the printed manual for any piece of software	Martin, Ivory, Megraw, and Slabosky, 2005
57.0	107	the online Help for any piece of software	Martin et al., 2005
91.2	70 (older adults)	product manuals for technological products	Tsai, Rogers, and Lee, 2012

Is It Actually Used? (slide 4 of 6)

“

Time and again it is found that **ease of access** and **convenience** are the strongest determinants for the choice of an information source, with **online browsing** as the single most popular method for seeking information (e.g., Connaway, Dickey, and Radford, 2011; Fast and Campbell, 2004; Julien and Michels, 2004; Kim and Sin, 2011).

”

“Nobody reads the documentation”: true or not?

Brigit van Loggem
Open Universiteit, Heerlen, the Netherlands, September 2014

Is It Actually Used? (slide 5 of 6)

Yes, users do rely on documentation.

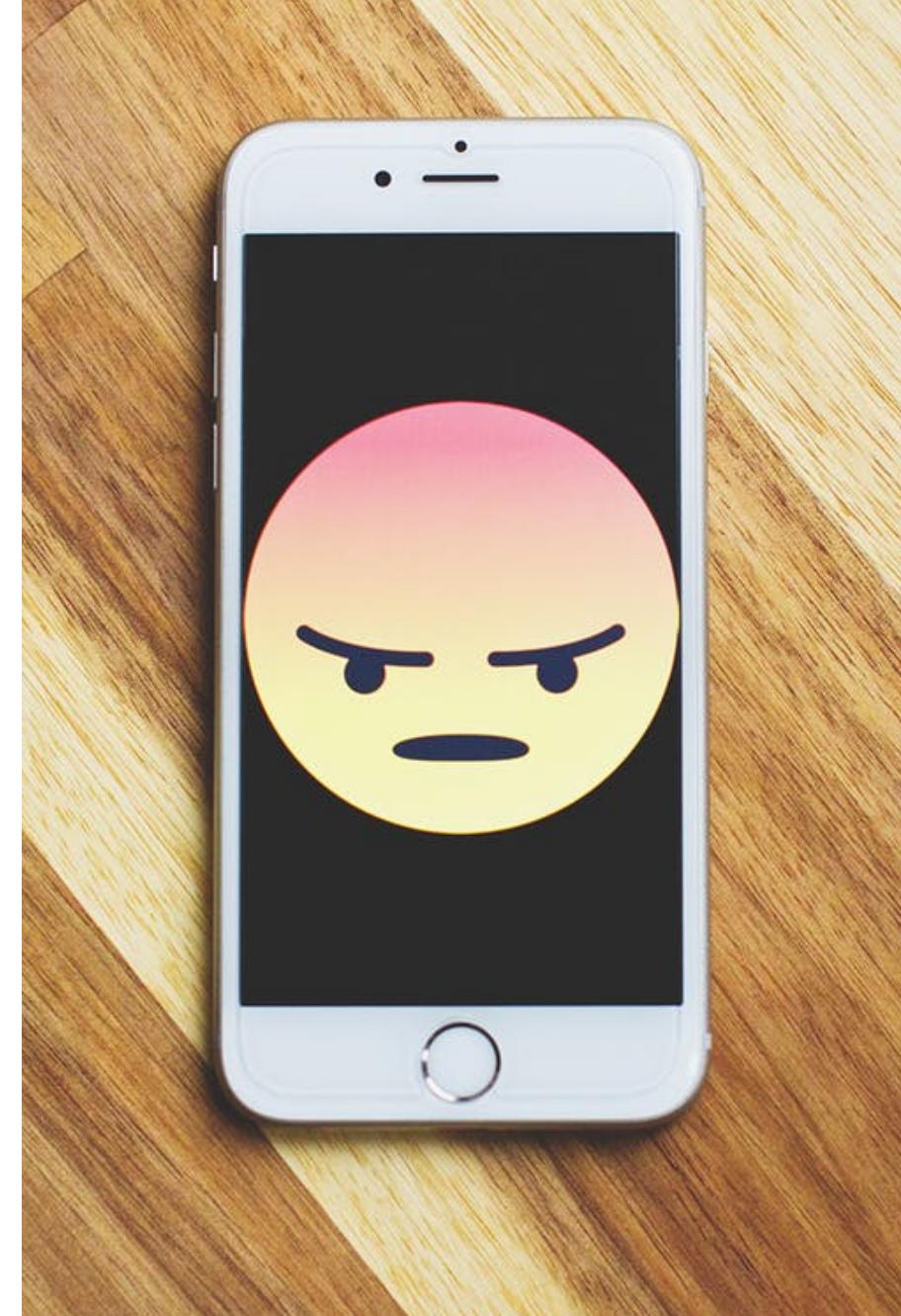
(But it has to be easy and convenient, and probably available online.)

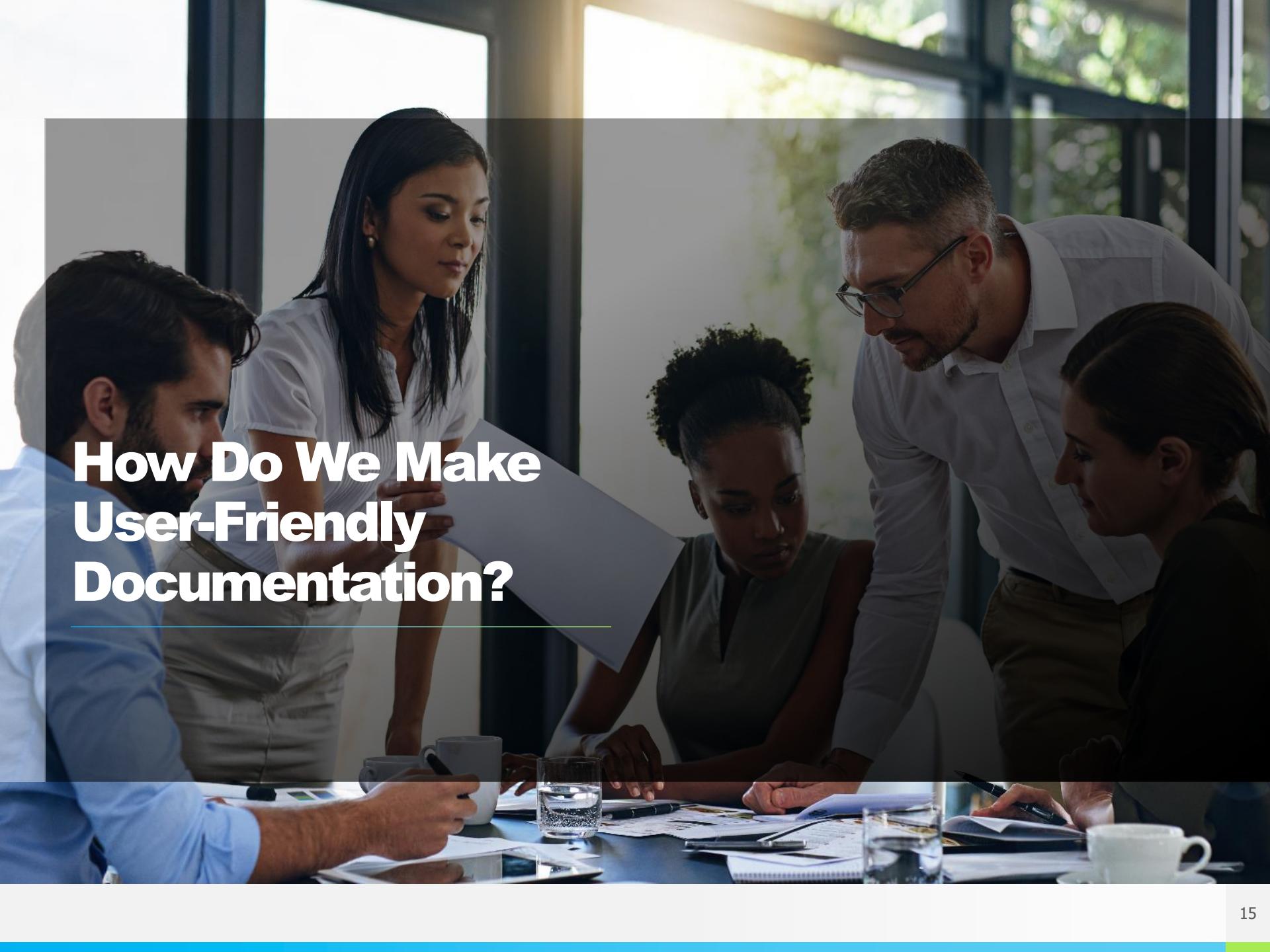
Is It Actually Used? (slide 6 of 6)

Even if users read your documentation, if your documentation isn't **user-friendly**, it won't solve their problem.

Poorly-created documentation might cause people to **abandon your tool** or **lose trust in your agency**.

Creating user-friendly documentation takes time, but it takes far more time to build back trust.



A photograph of a diverse group of professionals in a meeting. Five people are visible: a man in a blue shirt on the left, a woman in a white shirt behind him, a woman in a grey top in the center, a man in a white shirt with glasses leaning over her, and a woman in a dark suit on the right. They are all looking down at papers on a table, engaged in discussion. The background shows large windows overlooking greenery.

How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation?

How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation?

(slide 2 of 8)

Approach the creation of your documentation as you would the creation of any other tool. First, determine the objective of a specific piece of documentation.

Is your goal to...

- **Introduce**—Tell the user what the program does or what problem it solves for them
- **Teach**—Teach the user how to do certain tasks
- **Reference**—Provide reference information
- **Connect**—Provide the user with ways to learn more
- **Satisfy**—Fulfill developer or legal requirements

Informative

Actionable

Informative

Either

Either

How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation? (slide 5 of 8)

Sometimes a specific piece of documentation can serve more than one purpose.



U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

[!\[\]\(16aeb3237f754b7599789ef654002ff2_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(4bedab4577924086e5ae6352aa0c2ad0_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(5462a62144ec6ad15b20b37b7ca1cfd9_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(d31fb64dbb514a38bb02cd3a863f2d7f_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(76c209a6b463cb2a110b76c84ef51303_img.jpg\)](#)

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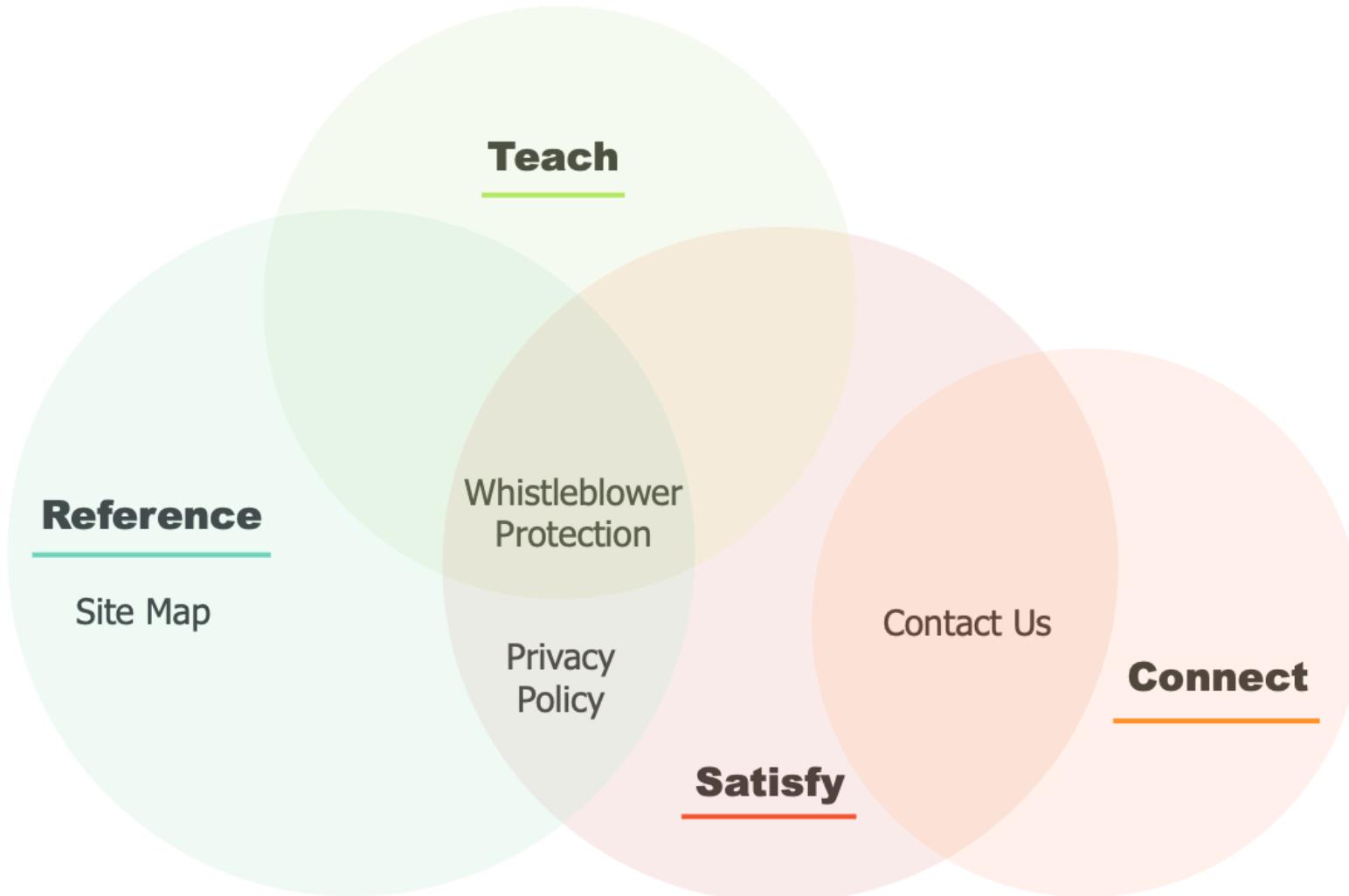
*Email Address

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How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation?

(slide 6 of 8)



How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation? (slide 7 of 8)

Decide if your documentation is meant to be **informative** or **actionable**. Try to avoid overlap between the two, since it dilutes the purpose of your documentation.

Actionable documentation works best when it...

- Uses short sentences
- Uses second-person language (Say “Open your welcome packet” instead of “Applicants should open their welcome packet”)
- Incorporates steps, lists, or bullets
- Starts sentences with clear verbs
- Puts reference information elsewhere

How Do We Make User-Friendly Documentation? (slide 8 of 8)

Although some types of documentation lend themselves more readily to certain forms (for example, actionable documentation might take the form of a tutorial or Quickstart guide), technically all types are **form-agnostic**.

Once you know the purpose of your documentation, it's up to you to determine the right form, and when and where to present it.

Some common forms of user documentation include...

Welcome Screen (slide 1 of 2)

This is an opportunity to introduce your program, provide a high-level overview, or explain the first steps to begin using the program.

The screenshot shows the Google Data Studio interface. A modal window titled "Welcome to Google Data Studio" is open, containing three numbered steps: 1. Welcome, 2. Terms, and 3. Preferences. Step 1 is highlighted with a blue circle. Below the steps is a heading "Welcome to Google Data Studio" and a descriptive text: "Turn your data into informative dashboards and reports that are easy to read, easy to share, and fully customizable. Data Studio allows you to tell great data stories to support better business decisions." A large blue "GET STARTED" button is centered below this text. To the left of the modal, a sidebar lists various options: Pages, Interact with a report, Copy and edit a report (which is selected and highlighted in blue), Edit and add charts, Date range and filter properties, Connect to your data, You want charts? We got charts!, Share reports and data sources, Track reports with Google Analytics, Let anyone see their data in your reports, and Next steps. The number "4" is overlaid on the sidebar area. To the right of the modal, a dashboard preview shows two cards: "Google Analytics Data" and "World Population Data 2008 - 2014". The number "5" is overlaid on the dashboard area. At the bottom of the modal, there is a note: "Can only add data sources to which you have access." and "If the new data source you add has a".

Welcome Screen (slide 2 of 2)

To indent a message or quote with several sentences or paragraphs, start with >>>

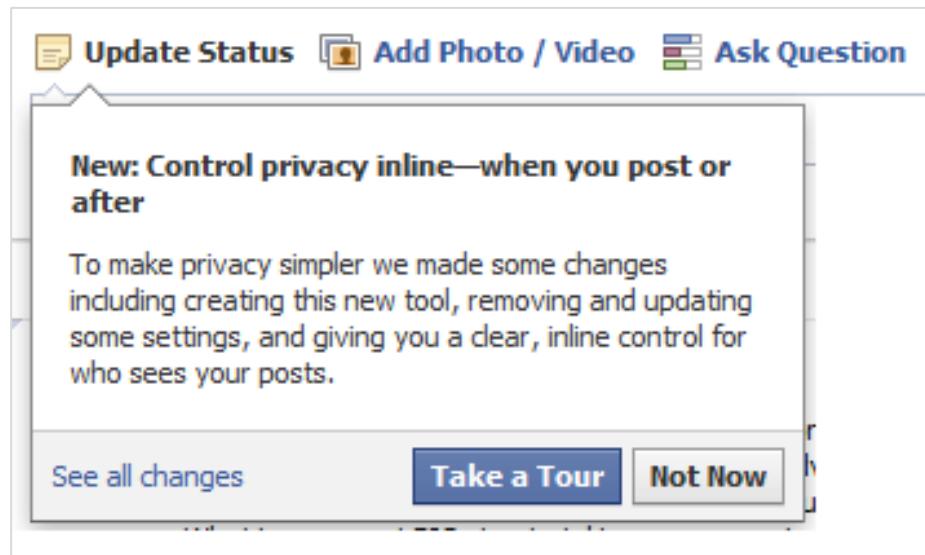
- Your friends at Slack

Trouble? Run the self help test.

Product Tour (slide 1 of 3)

If you'd like to highlight certain features of your program or show users how to navigate the product, consider adding a product tour.

- This should be short and sweet—no more than a few steps.
- Always let users opt out.



Product Tour (slide 2 of 3)

The screenshot shows the Slack desktop application interface. At the top, it says "Slack". On the left sidebar, there's a user profile for "MindtheProduct" with a notification bell icon. Below that is a list of channels: "# freshcontent", "# general", "# mtpcon", "# producttank", and "# random". Under "CHANNELS (39)", there are 39 more channels listed. At the bottom of the sidebar, it says "DIRECT MESSAGES (2538)" and lists "slackbot". A large green modal window is open in the center. It features the Slack logo at the top. The main text in the modal reads: "These are your channels. Channels are chat rooms created by people in your Slack team. You've been added to some channels already. Channels can be public or private, and you can join any public channel in MindtheProduct." Below this text is a "Got it!" button. To the left of the modal, there's a small arrow pointing towards the "general" channel in the sidebar.

Slack

MindtheProduct pulkit-from-chameleon

CHANNELS (39)

freshcontent
general
mtpcon
producttank
random

DIRECT MESSAGES (2538) +

slackbot

slack

These are your channels

Channels are chat rooms created by people in your Slack team. You've been added to some channels already. Channels can be public or private, and you can join any public channel in MindtheProduct.

Done? [Click here to skip](#)

Got it!

Welcome!

Slack is a messaging app for teams.

Got the hang of Slack already? [Skip the tutorial.](#)

Product Tour (slide 3 of 3)

New Message

Kristen Faiferlick - NOAA Affiliate

Subject

--

Kristen Faiferlick
UX and Technical Writer (Genwest Systems)
[NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration](#)
Emergency Response Division
Seattle, WA
206-526-6321

Screen Shot 2019-05-09 at 9.06.45 PM.png (141K)

Sans Serif Boomerang this ?

Did you know?

You can request a read receipt and track clicks on links in your message. We will notify you when someone reads your email or clicks a link.

To get started, click the "Request read receipt and track clicks" button below.

Nifty!

Interactive Tour (slide 1 of 2)

You can make your product tour an interactive tour by letting users actually TRY the feature.

Welcome to Mailbox

There are five zones in Mailbox, and you swipe messages to move between them.

New Mail

Get Started

Swipe Right to Archive

Archive lives to the right of Mailbox.
Try archiving the message below.

Lizzy Armour Breakfast? 8:34 AM
Hey I was thinking about heading in a little early this morning and grabbing some breakfast before our

Jetsetter Every Morgans Hotel, Plus St Lucia... 7:59 AM
New York Chicago San Francisco Las Vegas Mexico Caribbean Paris Sales in the spotlight

Chase Online Banking Your Statement is Now Available 7:45 AM
Login to your Chase online banking account to view your statement for November...

Samantha & Me coffee table? Nov 7
Yes, since he's local he offered a discount, so I think we're going to go meet up with him later on this...

Great Job!

You can quickly access your archive from the navigation bar and in the "All Mail" folder in Gmail

Next

Lizzy Armour Breakfast? 8:34 AM
Hey I was thinking about heading in a little early this morning and grabbing some breakfast before our

Chase Online Banking Your Statement is Now Available 7:45 AM
Login to your Chase online banking account to view your statement for November...

Samantha & Me coffee table? Nov 7
Yes, since he's local he offered a discount, so I think we're going to go meet up with him later on this...

MUJI ONLINE MUJI: Order #10089069 Nov 7
Hello Taylor Brooks Thank you for your order from MUJI USA ONLINE STORE...

Interactive Tour (slide 2 of 2)

Welcome to Data Studio! (Start here)

Pages

Interact with a report

Copy and edit a report

Edit and add charts

Date range and filter properties

Connect to your data

You want charts? We got charts!

Share reports and data sources

Track reports with Google Analytics

Let anyone see their data in your reports

Next steps

Change pages

To change pages, use the menu on the left, or press the right and left arrow keys.

To minimize the page menu, click

To expand the page menu, click

BACK NEXT

create a Data Studio report

2 Set the date and filter your data

Change the time frame using the date range control. The checkboxes in a filter controls let you refine the data according to the dimension values you select.

Dec 12, 2018 - Jan 10, 2019

Sessions 64,387

Try changing the date to show the last 7 days instead.

the data points...

Sessions

Dec 24, 2018 Dec 30, 2018 Jan 5, 2019

Source Sessions

Source	Sessions
1. google	24,880
2. (direct)	11,887
3. mall.googleplex.com	8,396
	3,702
	2,842

Click on a column header to sort the table by that column.

1 - 10 / 461

User Type

New Visitor

Returning Visitor

Top 5 mobile devices

Device	Percentage
iPhone	47.8%
iPad	36.9%
Pixel 2 XL	7.8%
Pixel 3 XL	4.2%
others	1.3%

What percentage of returning users were iPhone users?

Embedded Help (slide 1 of 3)

Give users just-in-time guidance that they can access as they use the program at their own pace.

The screenshot shows the WebGNOME software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for New, Edit, Save, and Help, along with Run, Export, and other utility buttons. A specific 'Help' button is highlighted with a callout bubble pointing to the 'Get Help on Setup View' option. Below the navigation bar, the main title 'Configure Your Scenario' is displayed, followed by a question mark icon indicating help availability. The interface is divided into several sections:

- Model Settings**: Contains fields for 'Incident Name' (set to 'Model'), 'Start Time' (set to '2019/6/18 15:00:00'), and 'Duration' (set to '1 Day(s) 0 Hour(s)'). It also includes a checkbox for 'Include the Minimum Regret (Uncertainty) solution.'
- Point Wind**: A section with a '+' button.
- Water**: A section with a '+' button.
- Weatherers**: A section listing 'Evaporation', 'NaturalDispersion', and 'Emulsification' with corresponding checkboxes.
- Map**: A section with a '+' button, showing 'Type: Infinite Ocean'.
- Horizontal Diffusion**: A section with a '+' button.
- Currents**: A section with a '+' button.
- Spill**: A section with a '+' button.
- Gridded Winds**: A section with a '+' button.

Embedded Help (slide 2 of 3)

Give users just-in-time guidance that they can access as they use the program at their own pace.

The screenshot shows the WebGNOME software interface. At the top, there's a toolbar with icons for New, Edit, Save, Help, Run, Export, and various system settings. The main window has a title bar "Configure Your Scenario". On the left, there's a "Model Settings" panel with fields for "Incident Name" (set to "Model"), "Start Time" (set to "2019/6/1"), "Duration" (set to "1 Day(s)"), and a checkbox for "Include the Minimum Regret (U)" which is unchecked. To the right of this panel is a "Setup View Help" section. It contains text explaining the purpose of Setup View, how individual panels interact with model input, and what objects can be added (Map, Spill, Wind, Current, Horizontal Diffusion). It also notes that if oil is specified as a substance, water properties need to be specified. Below this is an "Advanced Settings" section with a note about modifying parameters via a dropdown list. On the far right, there's a vertical sidebar with components listed: "Water" (with a plus sign), "Map" (with a plus sign), "Type: Infinite Ocean", "Horizontal Diffusion" (with a plus sign), and "Gridded Winds" (with a plus sign).

WebGNOME

+ New ▾ Edit

Save Help ▾ Run ▶ Export ▾

Configure Your Scenario

Model Settings

Incident Name Model

Start Time 2019/6/1

Duration 1 Day(s)

Include the Minimum Regret (U)

Setup View Help

Use Setup View to configure and edit a scenario to model. Individual panels are used to interact with different types of model input. Individual panels include buttons to add (+), edit (✎), and delete (>Delete) components.

Panels may contain multiple objects that can be edited individually. For example, multiple currents or winds can be added to the model and turned on/off as desired. Objects added in each panel will appear in a list at the bottom of the panel.

Although it's possible to set up the model in various ways, a typical simulation will include:

- A Map
- A Spill
- A Wind (either Point or Gridded)
- A Current
- Horizontal Diffusion

If an oil is specified as the substance that is spilled, information in the Water panel will also need to be specified as the weathering of the oil will depend on some water properties.

Advanced Settings

When adding or editing a model object, a pull down list of Advanced Settings appears at the bottom of the form. Although typically modified parameters appear within the form, additional control over model parameters can be accessed via this list. Note, that it is VERY possible to change parameters through this list in such a way that the model will not be able to run (very little validation is done on parameters that

Water

Map

Type: Infinite Ocean

Horizontal Diffusion

Gridded Winds

Embedded Help (slide 3 of 3)

Give users just-in-time guidance that they can access as they use the program at their own pace.

Add a debit or credit card

Card number

Name on card

Expiration date 01 2019

Use this card across all of Amazon [What's this?](#)

Amazon accepts all major credit and debit cards:

Add your card **Cancel**

Tutorials (slide 1 of 2)

If you know that your users want to digest information outside the program, or will be looking for resources in other places (like Youtube), consider a tutorial that they can download or access outside of the program.

The image shows a YouTube video thumbnail. At the top left is the YouTube logo. To its right is a search bar with the word "Search". In the top right corner is the official seal of the United States Office of Personnel Management. The main title of the video, "HOW TO APPLY FOR FEDERAL JOBS", is displayed in large, bold, capital letters. Below the title is the USAJOBS logo, which consists of the word "USAJOBS" in red with a registered trademark symbol, and the website address "www.usajobs.gov" in smaller text. A man in a dark suit and tie is standing on the right side of the thumbnail. Below the video title, it says "How to Apply for Federal Jobs" and "35,991 views". At the bottom right are standard YouTube interaction icons for "LIKE", "DISLIKE", "SHARE", "SAVE", and three dots for more options.

Tutorials (slide 2 of 2)

Introduction



Welcome to the self-paced **Military Voter** training. This training provides information to help you successfully register to vote, request your absentee ballot and successfully cast your ballot.

This training covers two areas:

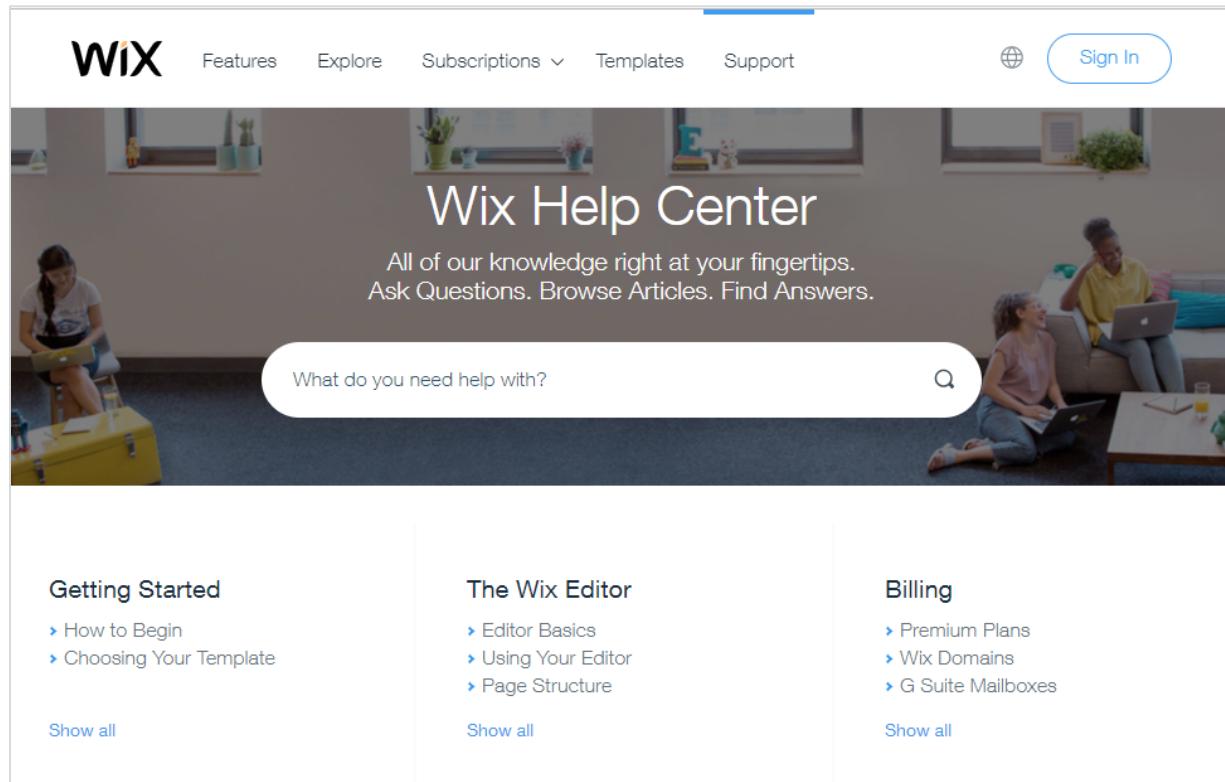
1. Background information on *UOCAVA*
2. Available resources for military voters



Support Articles (slide 1 of 3)

Support articles are usually a series of articles or pages that the user can search through to find help on a specific topic.

The individual articles are generally actionable and together, form a help or knowledge base or support center.



The screenshot shows the Wix Help Center homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with the Wix logo, 'Features', 'Explore', 'Subscriptions', 'Templates', 'Support' (which is underlined), and a 'Sign In' button. Below the navigation is a banner featuring a woman sitting on a yellow box using a laptop. To her right, another woman is sitting on a couch with a laptop. The banner text reads 'Wix Help Center' and 'All of our knowledge right at your fingertips. Ask Questions. Browse Articles. Find Answers.' A search bar with the placeholder 'What do you need help with?' and a magnifying glass icon is positioned below the banner. The main content area is divided into three sections: 'Getting Started' (with links to 'How to Begin' and 'Choosing Your Template'), 'The Wix Editor' (with links to 'Editor Basics', 'Using Your Editor', and 'Page Structure'), and 'Billing' (with links to 'Premium Plans', 'Wix Domains', and 'G Suite Mailboxes'). Each section has a 'Show all' link at the bottom.

Support Articles (slide 2 of 3)

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)

usagov

Search All Government

1-844-USA-GOV1

All Topics and Services About the U.S. Benefits, Grants, Loans Government Agencies and Elected Officials Jobs and Unemployment Money and Taxes Travel and Immigration

Español

< Passports and International Travel

Getting or Renewing a U.S. Passport

International Travel Issues
Issues with Family Outside the U.S.
Travel Complaints
U.S. Passport Fees, Facilities or Problems

Getting or Renewing a U.S. Passport

How to apply, renew, or quickly get a passport. Also, learn how to get a passport for a child, check the status of your application, and how much it costs to get a passport.

On This Page

- [Infographic: How to Get or Renew a U.S. Passport](#)
- [Apply for a U.S. Passport](#)
- [Renew a U. S. Passport](#)
- [Get a Passport Quickly](#)
- [Infographic: 8 Steps to Apply for a Child's Passport](#)
- [Passports for Minors Under the Age of 18](#)
- [Check the Status of Your Passport](#)
- [Passport Fees](#)

Support Articles (slide 3 of 3)

An official website of the United States government [Here's how you know](#)

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Talk to the **Veterans Crisis Line** now >

Search Contact Us Sign In

VA Benefits and Health Care About VA Find a VA Location

Access and manage your VA benefits and health care

Health care

- [Refill and track your prescriptions](#)
- [Send a secure message to your health care team](#)
- [Schedule and view your appointments](#)
- [View your lab and test results](#)
- [Apply now for VA health care](#)

Disability

- [Check your claim or appeal status](#)
- [View your payment history](#)
- [Upload evidence to support your claim](#)
- [File for a VA disability increase](#)
- [File a claim for compensation](#)

Education

Records

Checklists

Checklists can be a good way to prompt users to take additional steps or explore additional features.

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface. On the left, there is a vertical sidebar with six icons: a green circle with a white plus sign, a green circle with a white document and plus sign, a green circle with a white magnifying glass, a red star, a green square with a white document icon, and a green square with a white clipboard icon. To the right of the sidebar, the main content area has a header "1 note" and a "Options" dropdown menu with a "GETTING STARTED" section. The "GETTING STARTED" section contains the title "Let's start with the basics" and the sub-instruction "Make some different kinds of notes, then sync to your devices." Below this is a large green progress bar. The main content area lists four numbered steps: 1. Create your first note (with a checked checkbox), Capture your thoughts; 2. Set a reminder, Never forget again; 3. Save web articles, Keep what interests you; 4. Sync to your phone and computer, Have it everywhere.

1 note Options ▾

GETTING STARTED ×

Let's start with the basics

Make some different kinds of notes, then sync to your devices.

1 Create your first note
Capture your thoughts

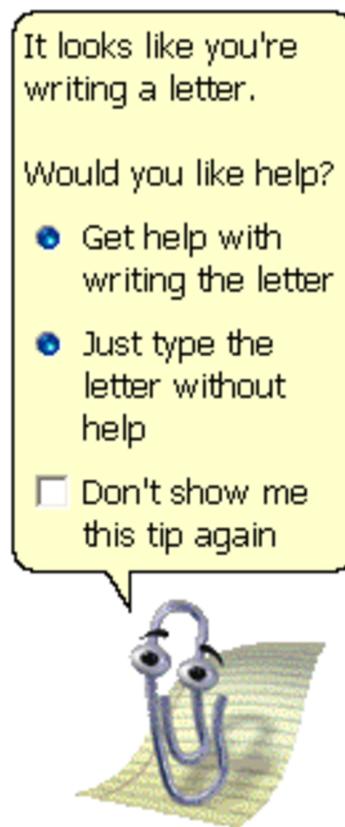
2 Set a reminder
Never forget again

3 Save web articles
Keep what interests you

4 Sync to your phone and computer
Have it everywhere

Bots and “Helpers”

Bots usually serve to help direct users to the right resource within a help center, or to collect more information before passing the user to human support or sales.



Hey Zack ! I'm Max. What brings you here today?

I have a question

I'm looking to buy

Awesome ! How many people are on your team?

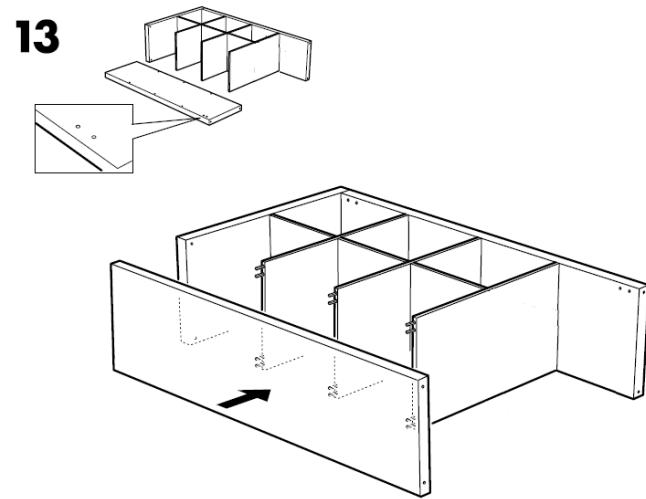
125

25+

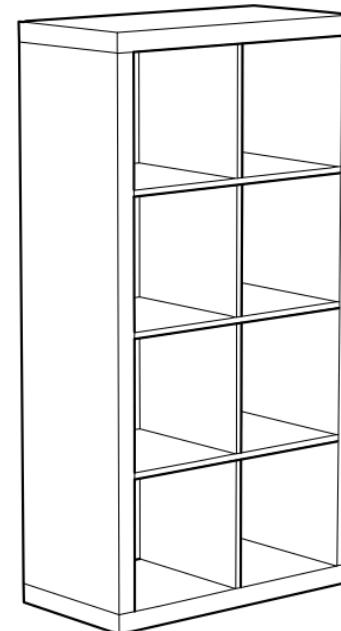
Jack Carson joined the chat.

Printed Materials (slide 1 of 2)

If your product is a physical object, printed materials may be appropriate. These materials can be short-and-sweet, like assembly diagrams, or extensive, like printed user manuals.

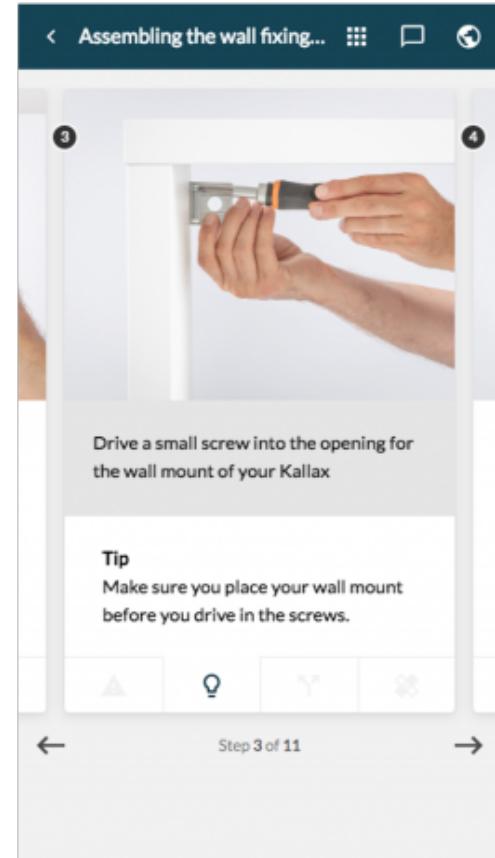
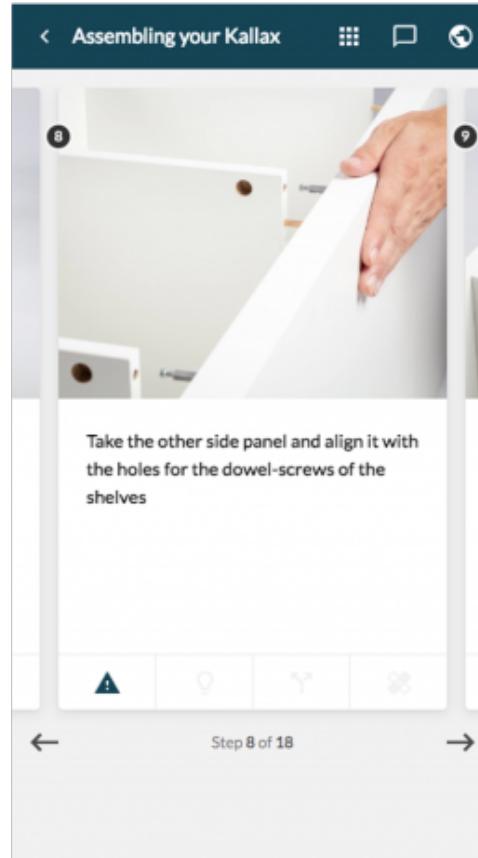
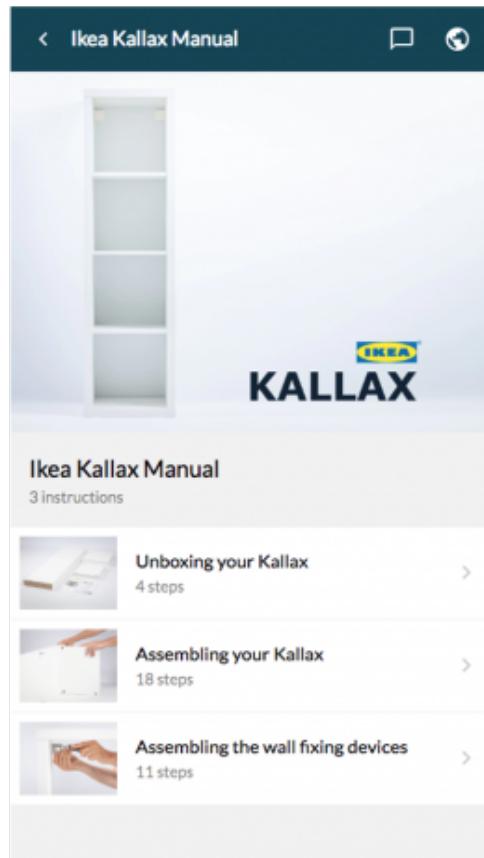


KALLAX



Printed Materials (slide 2 of 2)

(Of course, if your instructions aren't clear, users will look elsewhere.)



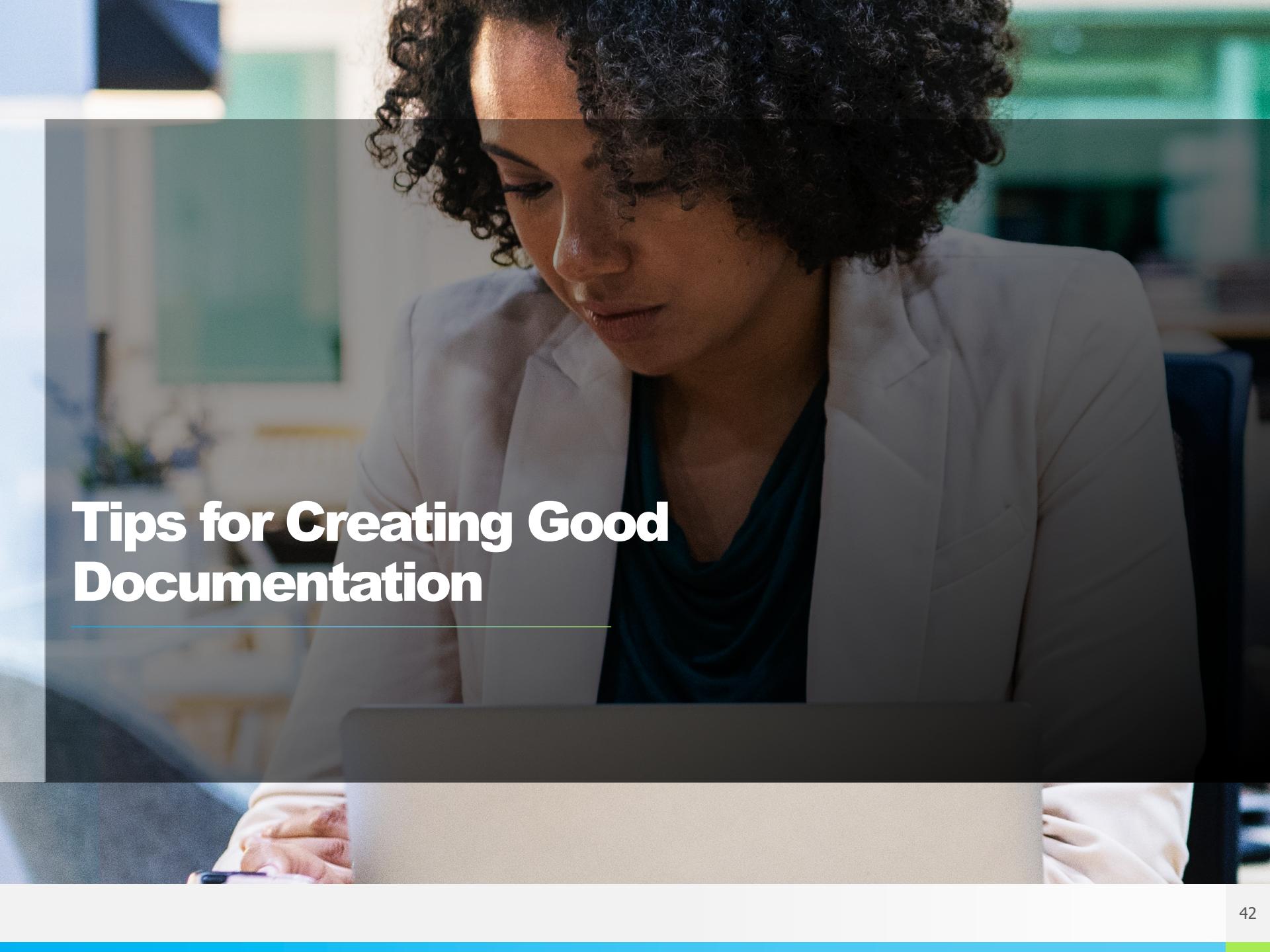
And really, anything else you can imagine.

Vlogs, story maps, webinars, audio files, pages
in the website footer, and more.

What possibilities will AR and VR open for us?

So, which form should I choose?

- Know your users. Leverage research and data you gained when you created the original product.
- Talk to your outreach, marketing, sales, or support teams (if you have them) to see how users like to get information.
- Look at Google Analytics to see what questions people have and what resources they're using to find answers.
- If you don't have this data or can't get it, make an educated guess and test the documentation with users.

A professional woman with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up. She is wearing a light-colored blazer over a dark, draped-neck top. Her gaze is directed downwards towards a laptop computer she is holding. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an office or classroom environment.

Tips for Creating Good Documentation

Tips for Creating Good Documentation (slide 2 of 5)

For actionable documentation, provide “just-in-time” support.

- Idea borrowed from Behavioral Economics, practiced heavily in financial literacy training
- Humans place their most immediate needs first, and aren't going read something or act on it when they have other more immediate needs.
- Give them what they need right as they need it, not a moment earlier.

Tips for Creating Good Documentation (slide 3 of 5)

**Don't force your users to change their habits.
They won't.**

Tips for Creating Good Documentation (slide 4 of 5)

Incorporate graphics.

The graphic is divided into two main sections: a green left section and a blue right section. The green section features the text 'NYC Recycles Even More' in large white letters, followed by a subtitle 'We can now accept your yogurt containers, plastic cups, and more rigid plastics!' in smaller white text. Below the text are illustrations of recyclable items: a cereal box labeled 'CEREAL', an open pizza box labeled 'PIZZA', a newspaper labeled 'Newspaper', a stack of books, and a single sheet of paper labeled 'Mixed Paper'. The blue section also features the 'NYC Recycles Even More' text and subtitle. Below the text are illustrations of recyclable items: a metal pan and lid labeled 'Metal', several glass bottles and jars labeled 'Glass', a plastic bottle of water and a plastic cup with a straw labeled 'Plastic', and three cartons (milk, juice, and water) labeled 'Cartons'. A white plastic shopping basket is positioned above the plastic items.

NYC Recycles Even More

We can now accept your yogurt containers, plastic cups, and more rigid plastics!

Cardboard Mixed Paper

Metal Glass Plastic Cartons

Tips for Creating Good Documentation (slide 5 of 5)

How to Get or Renew a U.S. Passport

RENEW a passport by mail

You can renew your passport only if it's undamaged and all of the following apply:

- It was issued less than 15 years ago.
- You were 16 or older when you got it.
- It's in your current name (or you can legally document the name change).

What you'll need to provide

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Form DS-82	Your eligible passport book	Proof of name change if your name is different than the one on your old passport (marriage certificate or court order)	Color passport photo	Fee payment (check or money order)

Apply for a NEW passport in person

For any of the following:

- It's your first passport.
- Your last passport was damaged or lost.
- Your last passport was issued more than 15 years ago.
- Your name has changed and you have no supporting legal documents.
- It's for a child under age 16.



To get a new passport, you must go to a local passport acceptance facility. Some passport acceptance facilities require appointments. Many provide passport photos for a fee.

Passport acceptance facilities can be post offices, libraries, or county courts.

What you'll need to provide

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Form DS-11	Proof of U.S. citizenship (such as a birth or naturalization certificate)	Government-issued photo ID (such as a driver's license or military ID)	Color passport photo	Fee payment (check or money order)

Additional requirements for a child's passport

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Proof of relationship to child
Both parents and the child must appear in person or submit a consent form signed by an absent parent.

How long does it take to get or renew a passport?

Processing times change seasonally. Always check travel.state.gov for current estimates. Typically:

- Routine service - 4-6 weeks (by mail or in person)
- Expedited service - 2-3 weeks (by mail or in person)
- Expedited service at agency locations - 8 business days, based on either of the following needs:
 1. Immediate life or death emergency
 2. Traveling within two weeks

Requirements for expedited service at passport agency locations

- ✓ You must show proof of emergency or upcoming travel in person at one of 26 regional passport agencies.
- ✓ You must have an appointment. Schedule one online at passportappointment.travel.state.gov or call the National Passport Information Center at 1-877-487-2778.

Passport Book vs. Passport Card

Passport Book <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Required for all international air travel• Valid for all travel destinations• Valid for travel by air, land, or sea 	Passport Card <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Valid for international travel by land or sea to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Bermuda only• Costs less than the passport book• Wallet size 
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To learn more, visit travel.state.gov/passports
1-877-487-2778 / 1-888-874-7793 (TTY/TTD) 24/7

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Test Your Documentation

Treat it like a feature in your program—one that you'd test and iterate the same as any other feature.

This is hard. Documentation often comes last, and it never feels like there's enough time.

Common Pitfalls (What Documentation Should NOT Be)

- An excuse for difficult-to-use tools ("We'll just explain that in the help articles.")
- A dumping ground ("We can add an FAQ about that.")
- Something you create and forget. Every time you update your tool, you need to update your documentation.
- Beyond your technical limitations
- A chance to go into insane detail about the technical elements (unless your tool is highly technical and you know your users need this)
- Inaccessible (learn about Section 508 compliance)

Summary

- Know the purpose of what you're creating. What exactly is it trying to accomplish?
- If it's supposed to be actionable, it's extra important to be clear and concise.
- Leverage a Human Centered Design approach to your product as well as your documentation.
- Know your users and their needs. Meet them where they're at.
- Test your documentation, the same way you'd test your product.
- Start small. You can't do everything at once (and shouldn't try).

Resources

- [Section 508 \(accessibility\) Information](#)
- [Plain Language Guidelines](#)
- Behavioral Economics: *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, by Richard H. and Cass R. Sunstein
- Other interesting articles on user documentation (this is not an endorsement of any product or company):
 - [Plan.io blog post on technical documentation](#)
 - [TryChameleon blog post on technical documentation](#)
 - [Divio blog post on technical documentation](#)



Thank You

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