

Step Guidelines

The following outlines some recommendations when writing `step` or `cmd`.

When you write steps, follow the guides specified below:

- Write one step per significant action and combine short, simple steps. For example, combine "4. Click OK" and "5. Click Save" into one step: "4. Click OK and click Save".
- Include an imperative sentence in each `<cmd>` element, such as "3. Pour the coffee beans into the grinder". Ensure that a step never contains only an indicative statement such as "3. Now you pour the coffee beans into the grinder".
- Do not use *please* in any instructions. Terms of politeness are superfluous, convey the wrong tone for technical material and are not regarded in the same way in all cultures.
- Even if your task has only one step, add the imperative sentence in a `<cmd>` element as you would if you were writing a task with several tasks. When you transform the DITA source file to an output format such as HTML or PDF, a number will not be added for a task with a single step.

Steps can also be conditional or optional.

- **Conditional-** A conditional step is a step that is only required if some condition is true, for example, "If the espresso machines is not already started, press the Power button. Use a verbal clue such as "if" statement to indicate that a step is conditional. It is important to note that the `<step>` element has no attributes to indicate that it is conditional.
- **Optional-** An optional step is one that doesn't need to be completed for the task to be successful. In this case, rather than manually typing the word "Optional" in the `<cmd>` element, set the `<importance>` attribute of the `<step>` element to optional.