**Topic-Based Writing: Handouts**

**What is a topic?**

* **A topic is a unit of information with a title and some form of content. It is short enough to be specific to a single subject or answer a single question, but long enough to make sense on its own and be authored as a unit.**
* **A topic is a complete topic when it has:**
  + A well-defined heading.
  + Context that makes the topic relevant.
  + Additional information to understand that context.
  + Details about what to do.
  + Examples to help readers understand the topic.

**If you write in complete topics, you can get consistently good results for reuse and global use.**

**Types of topics**

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| **Topic type** | **Description** |
| **Concepts** | * Concept topics answer "What is..." questions. * Provide conceptual, descriptive or background information |
| **Tasks** | * Are the essential building blocks. * Task topics answer "How do I…?" questions. * Focus on what the user wants or needs to do. |
| **Reference topics** | * Describe regular features of a subject or product. * Provide details a user needs to complete technical tasks. * Often appear as lists and tables. |

**Topic-based authoring and forming a narrative**

* **List and organize the tasks**
  1. What does the user need to do?
  2. Identify relationships between the tasks.
* **Add and organize the concepts**
  1. What does the user need to understand before performing the tasks?
  2. Identify relationships between concepts and tasks.
* **Add the reference topics**
  1. What does the user need to refer to when performing the tasks?
  2. Organize the reference topics and identify relationships between all of your topics.