

Technical Writing

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Outline

- o General Principles of Good Writing.
- o Design and Usability.
- o Documentation Development Process.
- o Writing Procedures.
- o Aspects of the Language.
- o Obstacles to Readability.
- o Writing Reports.
- o Practices in Technical Writing.

Design and Usability

- o Document design
- o What is user-centred design
- o Principles for implementing document and user-centred design
- o Methodology (document development life cycle)
- o Preparing for the Documentation Usability Evaluations

Design and Usability

- Heuristics for Evaluating Documentation Usability
- Usability activities
- Technical writing and usability
- The technical writer as usability consultant
- Preparing for Usability Testing

Design and Usability

- Aim: to produce documentation that is useful to users.
- Our users find the right topics and use them to achieve their goals.
- There are ten Documentation Usability heuristics, or rules of thumb, to design, evaluate, and course-correct technical content.
- These **heuristics** can help developers catch most structural errors, and provide insight into the actual user experience with the documentation.

Design and Usability

- o Document design
- o What is user-centred design
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Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Document design

- o The document is designed for optimal readability and usability.
- o Technical writers use six design strategies to plan and create technical communication:
- o Arrangement, Emphasis, Clarity, Conciseness, Tone, and Ethos.

Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Arrangement

- o The **order** and organization of visual elements.
- o So that readers **can see their structure**—
- o how they cohere in groups,
- o how they **differ from one another**,
- o how they create **layers and hierarchies**.
- o how to use **headings, lists, charts, and images** to increase usability.

Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Emphasis

- Importance that is attached to something; accent or stress that is placed on a word or words
- how a document displays important sections through prominence or intensity.
- how they can show readers important sections, warning, useful tips, etc.
- Through the use of placement, bolding, colour, and type size.

Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Clarity

- o Strategies that “help the receiver **decode the message**, to **understand it quickly and completely**,
- o When considering clarity the technical writer strives to reduce **visual noise**,
- o **Visual noise** such as: **low contrast ratios**, **overly complex charts or graphs**, and **illegible font**, all of which can **hinder reader comprehension**.

Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Conciseness

- o The quality of being **brief** and **comprehensive**.
- o The "visual bulk and intricacy" of the design—for example, **the number of headings and lists, lines and boxes, detail of drawings and data displays, size variations, ornateness, and text spacing.**
- o Technical writers must consider all these design **strategies** to ensure the **audience** can easily use the documents.

Design strategies

- o Arrangement,
- o Emphasis,
- o Clarity,
- o Conciseness,
- o Tone,
- o Ethos.

Tone

- The sound or feel of a document.
- Document type and audience dictates whether the communication should be formal and professional, or light hearted and humorous.
- In addition to language choice, technical writers set the tone of technical communication through the use of spacing, images, typefaces, etc.

Design strategies

- ◊ Arrangement,
- ◊ Emphasis,
- ◊ Clarity,
- ◊ Conciseness,
- ◊ Tone,
- ◊ Ethos.

Ethos

- Characteristic nature of a people or community.
- The degree of **credibility** that **visual language** achieves in a document.
- Technical writers strive to **create professional and error-free documentation to establish credibility** with the audience.