**Heuristic Checklist for Technical Description**

Introduction

❏ Brief indication of the nature and scope of the description.

* The reader knows what information is covered and not covered in the technical description.
* The reader knows who the target audience is.
* The reader knows what the target audience is supposed to do with the information (learn, learn to do, later interact with object, mechanism, or process.

❏ Brief statement of why this object, mechanism, or process is significant to the reader.

* The reader knows the value of the description (why he/she is likely being asked to read the description in the context of use)

❏ Overview of the object, mechanism, or process – may include any of the following, as applicable:

* The reader is given historical background information
  + Date when the object/mechanism/process came into existence & who created it
  + Any updates or changes since its original creation.
  + Any new applications of it since its original creation.
  + Any known issues/concerns with it since its original creation or later iterations.
* The reader is given a definition of object, mechanism, or process
  + A sentence definition that explains the type/category and distinguishing characteristics.
* The reader understands the context of use (where it is used, by whom, and for what purposes)

Detailed Description (body sections)

❏Detailed explanation of object, mechanism, or process:

* The description uses appropriate styles of organization (spatial, functional, chronological, partition of the parts of the whole)
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* The description answers the following questions:
* What is the object, mechanism, or process?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* How is it defined (beyond a sentence definition – with an extended definition)?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* What does the object, mechanism, or process do?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* What does the object, mechanism, or process look like (size, shape, texture, compared to others (analogy, negation/what it is not like, etc.)?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* What is the object or mechanism made of (if you are describing an object or mechanism and not a process) – materials, durability, etc.?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* How does the object, mechanism, or process work?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.
* Why should the reader be interested in your object, mechanism, or process?
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.

Conclusion

* A brief closing statement that summarizes the value of knowing more about the object, mechanism, or process. It provides closure to the reading process.
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.

Document Design

* The description uses headings and sub-headings appropriately
* The description uses balance, contrast, proximity, and alignment appropriately
* The description uses white space effectively
* The description uses font appropriately
* The description uses layout effectively
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.

Graphics

* The description includes an overview graphic to illustrate the whole object/mechanism/process
* The description includes smaller graphics to illustrate the parts of the whole – or stages of a process
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.

Prose/Language

* The description uses a level of wording appropriately for the target audience.
* The description defines jargon or terms that may be unfamiliar to novice audiences (of a mixed audience with semi-skilled and experts)
* The description is free from grammatical and mechanical mistakes
  + Yes – explain what works well to meet reader & genre expectations
  + No – explain what doesn’t work well to meet reader & genre expectations AND what revision suggestions you have to improve the draft.