

Technical Writing Skills

Workplace Communication - Planning the Task

Learning Outcome

- Describe how to plan the writing task
- Define the purpose of the writing task.
- Identify the audience.

Planning the Task

Before you write, you should decide what kind of message you want to convey.

Rule #1: Ask yourself whether you are trying to:

- Tell somebody about something that has happened or is happening. **INFORM**
- Tell somebody to do something or how to do something. **INSTRUCT**
- Suggest to somebody how they should do something, or the best course to take. **ADVISE**
- Find out something. **QUESTION**

Planning the Task

Discussion

What kind of writing style would you use to **inform** or **instruct**?

Would you use the same style to **advise**?

What should you be careful of when writing to **question**?

Planning the Task

Rule #2: Ask yourself what results you expect from the receiver.

If you expect the reader to take some form of action or give you information, state exactly what you want the reader to do.

Set Expectations

Planning the Task

Discussion

What are potential problems in the request below?

How can you improve the message?

“I want you to contact Mr. Johnson shortly and let me know what his plans are.”

Planning the Task

Rule #3: Identify the receiver.

Identifying what kind of person will read your message will help you decide how much you need to explain and the kinds of words you can use.

Discussion

How would a nurse describe a patient's symptoms to a) a doctor, b) the patient's family?

In what work situations might you have to communicate with a person not familiar with technical terms?

Planning the Task

Rule #4: Decide on the content.

Brainstorm the contents by answering: Who?, What?, Where?, When?, Why? and How?

Decide what information is relevant to your audience.

Organize relevant information.