# Unit 5.1 Assignment: Creating and Refining Technical Instructions

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CIS 311: Technical Writing in CIS

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# Connecting a Windows 11 Laptop to an External Monitor

## Purpose

Connect a Windows 11 laptop to an external monitor and configure display settings for extended or duplicated use.

## Intended Audience

Non-technical users on Windows 11. Assumes a standard laptop video port or a dock and a powered external monitor.

## Estimated time

About 10–15 minutes with a direct cable connection. Allow extra time if a dock, adapter, or driver update is required.

## Materials

- Windows 11 laptop
- External monitor and power cord
- Video cable HDMI or DisplayPort or USB-C
- Adapter if the laptop and monitor use different connectors
- Docking station (if available)

## Prerequisites

- Windows 11 PC or laptop
- External monitor and power cable
- A compatible video cable and adapter if needed. Examples include HDMI, DisplayPort, USB-C
- Up-to-date graphics drivers

## Cautions

- Do not force a connector. Align the plug and gently seat it.
- Avoid pulling on cables. Support the connector housing when inserting or removing.
- USB-C ports may support data only. Use a port labeled with a display icon if available.

## Key terms

- **Extend**: Uses all connected screens as one large desktop so windows can move between them.
- **Duplicate**: Shows the same content on each screen.
- **Primary display**: The screen that shows the taskbar, desktop icons, and where new windows open by default.
- **Resolution**: Number of pixels on a screen. Higher values are sharper.
- **Refresh rate**: How many times per second the image updates. Higher values can look smoother.

## Procedure

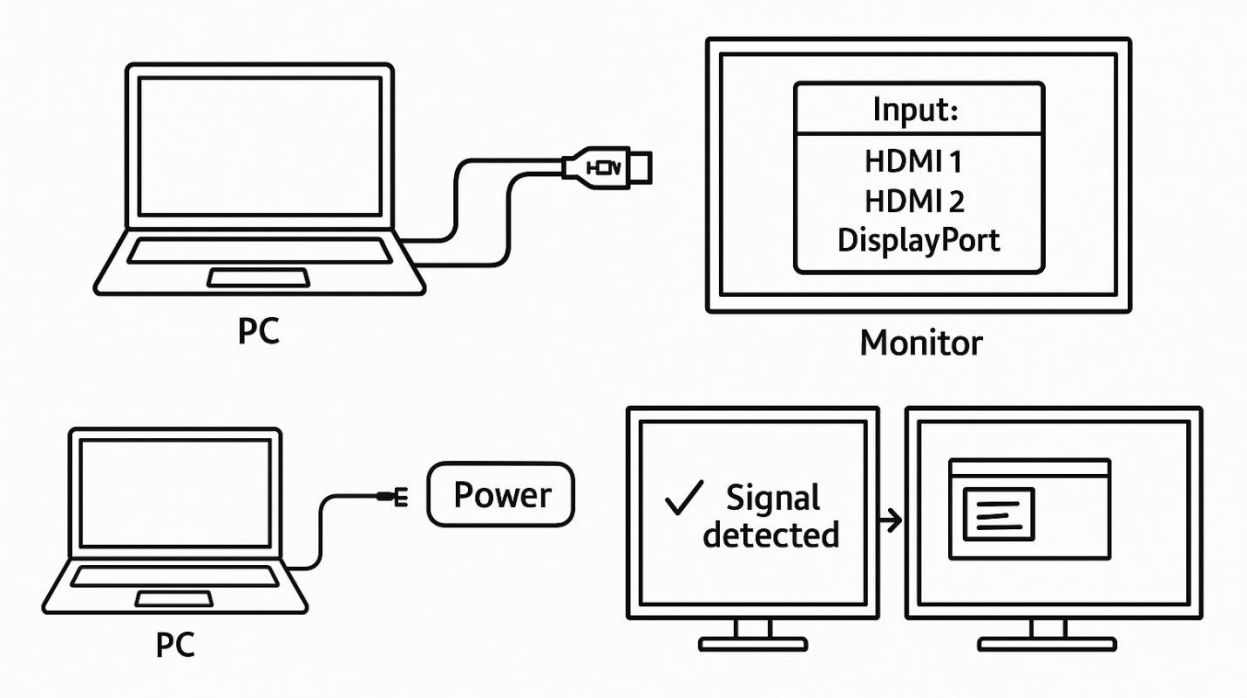
### 1. Prepare the Hardware

1. Place **laptop** and **monitor** in desired locations.
2. Ensure **laptop** and **monitor power cable** is connected plugged into power source.
3. Plug the **video cable** into the **laptop** and the **monitor**.
4. Select the correct **input** on the **monitor** (see Figure 1).

***Note**:* If the monitor has no signal, verify the input source on its on-screen menu. If issues continue, refer to **Troubleshooting** section on page 10.

**Figure 1**

*Cable Connection and Monitor Input Menu*




*Note.* Image created by the author with AI assistance (Open AI, 2025). This figure displays general imagery for display hardware connection and input configuration for steps 1.1-1.4.

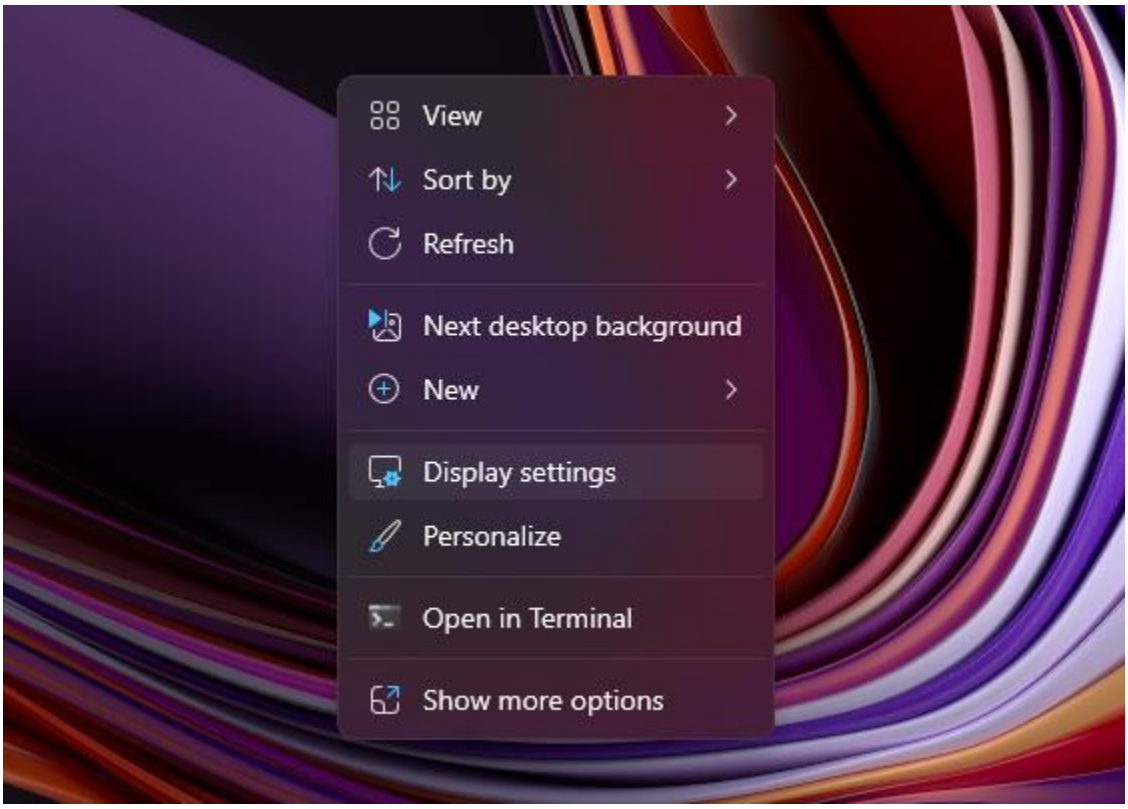
**2. Open Display settings**

1. Right-click the **desktop** on the laptop screen.
2. Select **Display settings** (see Figure 2).

***Alternative methods:*** You can also select **Start** > **Settings** > **System** > **Display** *or* **Windows Key + P** and select **More Display Options** in the prompt within the bottom right corner of the display.

**Figure 2**

*Selecting Display Settings*



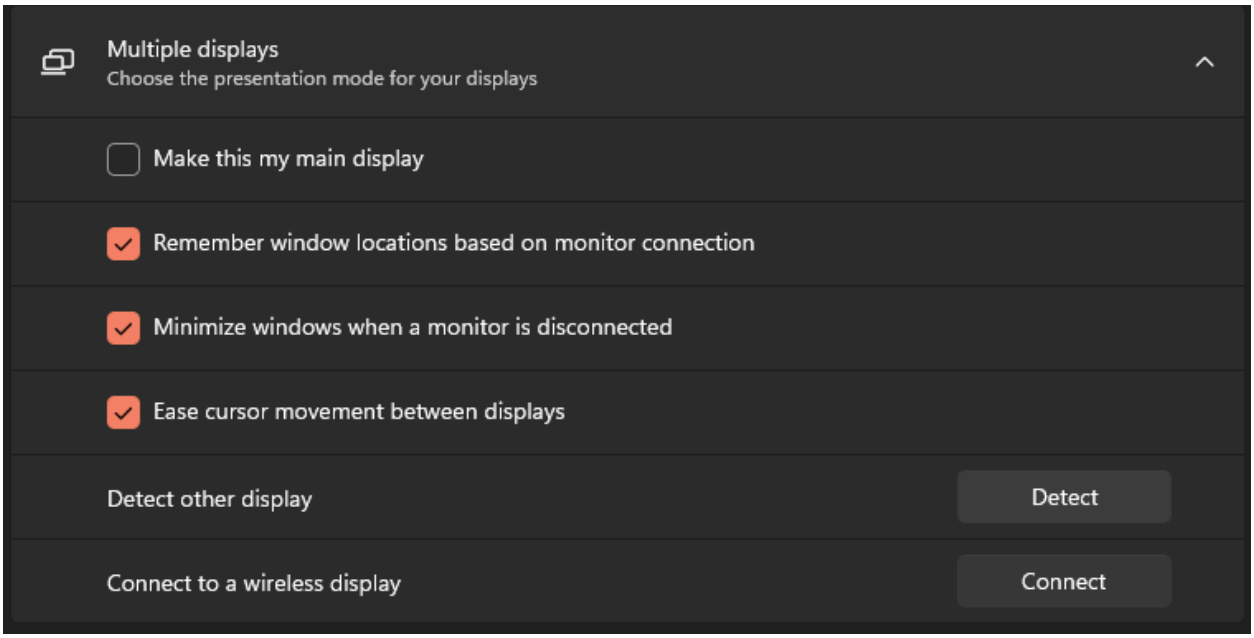

*Note.* This figure shows where the user will select **Display Settings** in step 2.2.

### 3. Detect the monitor

In **Multiple displays**, select **Detect** if the screen does not appear (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3**

*Multiple displays section with **Detect***




*Note.* This figure displays the location of the **Detect** tool.

***Tip:*** (Optional) Making the selections above will provide additional ease-of-use and save layout of displays for later use.

### Expected results

User should see:

a) **Multiple** numbered rectangles such as **1** and **2** (see Figure 4).

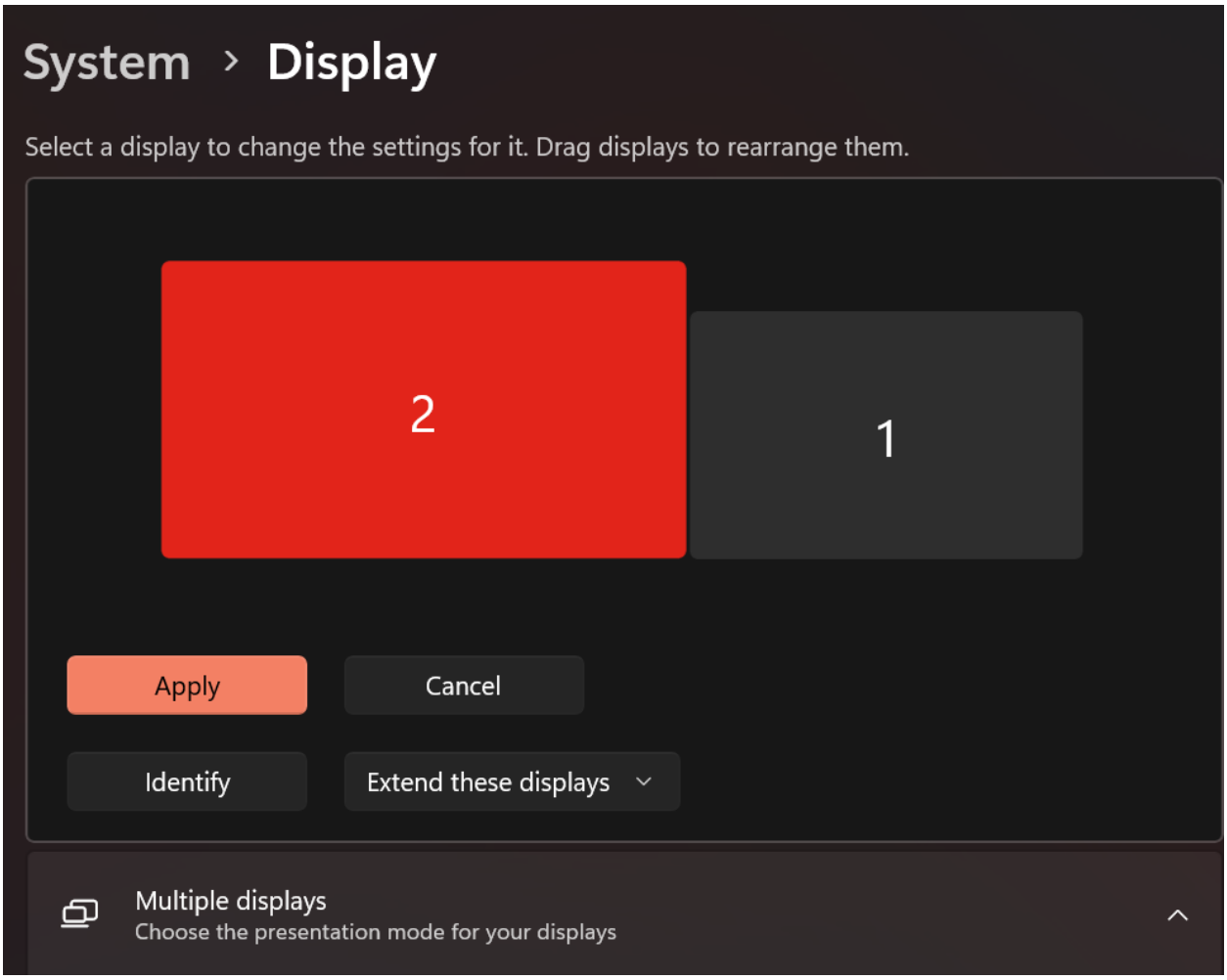
*or*

b) **One** rectangle is displayed with multiple numbers such as **1 | 2** (see Figure 5).

***Note:*** If user is unable to detect external screens, refer to the **Troubleshooting** section on page 10**.**

**Figure 4**

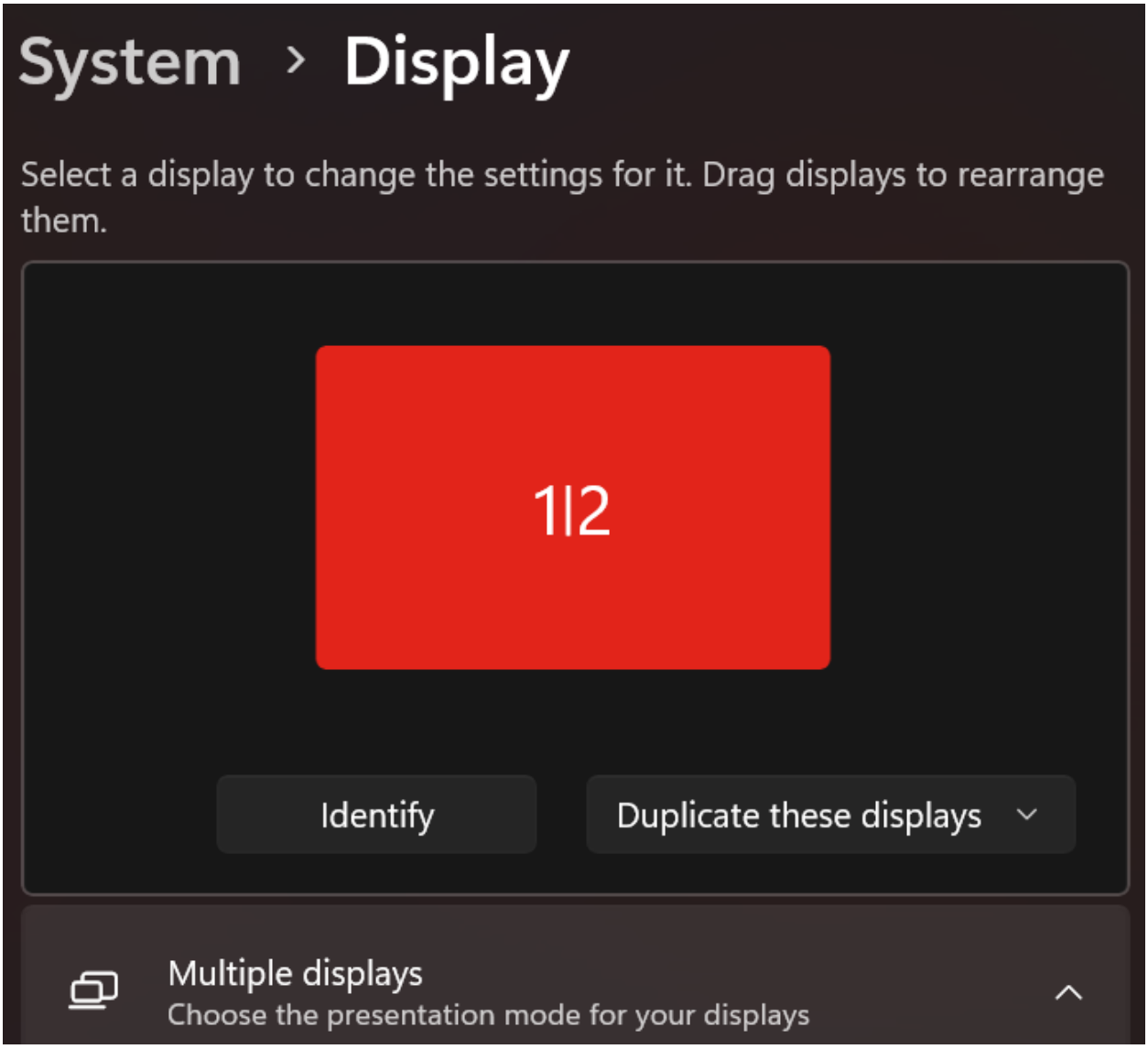
*Multiple displays shown in **Extend** Mode*




*Note.* This figure shows the image of expected result **a** from step **3**.

Figure 5

*Multiple Displays in **Duplicate** Mode*




*Note.* This figure shows the image of expected result **b** from step **3**.

**4. Choose Extend mode**

Open the **Multiple displays** drop-down. Select **Extend these displays**. Select **Keep changes** when prompted.

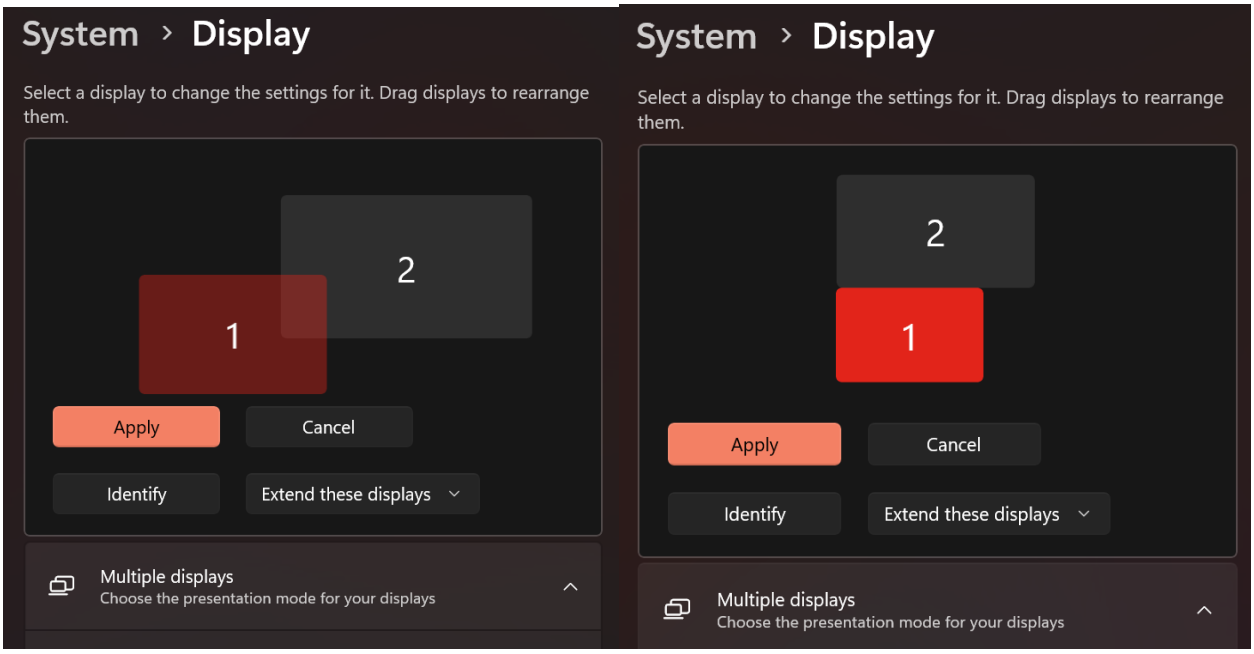
**5. Arrange screens to match your desk**

1. Drag the numbered rectangles to match how the monitors sit on your desk (see Figure 6).
2. Align the edges so the pointer moves smoothly between screens.
3. Select **Apply**.

***Note**:* You can select **Identify** to show each screen's number.

**Figure 6**

*Dragging Numbered Displays to Match Desk.*




*Note.* This figure shows how screens can be rearranged through dragging the number box as mentioned within step **5.1**.

**6. Set the primary display**

1. Select the rectangle for the screen you want as primary.
2. Check **Make this my main display**.

***Note:*** **Main display** will show the taskbar, desktop icons, and new windows by default.

**7. Set resolution for each monitor**

1. With a display selected, open **Scale & layout**.
2. Open **Display resolution**.
3. Choose the **Recommended** value.

***Note:*** Refer to manufacturer guidance for optimal resolution values.

***Tip***: If text looks too small or too large, adjust **Scale** as needed.

**8. Set refresh rate (if available)**

1. Select **Advanced display**
2. Open **Choose a refresh rate**
3. Select a supported value for your monitor and cable.

***Warning****:* Mismatched refresh rates can cause the screen to flicker. Use a certified cable.

**9. Apply and test**

1. Select **Apply** if prompted
2. Drag a window across screens
3. Confirm the pointer moves in the expected direction.

**10. Quick controls (Optional)**

**Windows + P**: switch between **PC screen only**, **Duplicate**, **Extend**, and **Second screen only**.

**Windows + Arrow keys**: snap windows to sides or corners.

## Troubleshooting

**The monitor is not detected:**

1. Check power and cable seating.
2. Try **Detect** in **Multiple displays**.

*If still display is still not detected:*

3. Press **Ctrl + Windows + Shift + B** to reset the graphics driver.
4. Update video drivers through **Settings > Windows Update**.

**Blurry text or wrong size**:

1. Set **Display resolution** to **Recommended** value of product manufacturer.
2. Adjust **Scale** in **Scale & layout**
3. Run **Adjust ClearType text** from the Start menu.

**Flicker or black screen**

1. Reduce the refresh rate in **Advanced display**.
2. Use a higher quality cable.
3. Try a different port on the PC or monitor.

**USB-C dock issues**

1. Ensure the dock supports video.
2. Use the original power supply for the dock.
3. Connect the monitor directly to the PC to isolate the issue.

I asked my wife to follow my draft on a Windows 11 laptop connected to an external monitor through a USB-C dock. She is a non-technical user and provided valuable insights on end-user interpretation. Almost immediately, I witnessed two key items that needed to be edited.

First, she hesitated at the hardware stage because the monitor showed “No signal” and the input source was not obvious. Second, once in Settings, they could not find the Detect control and were unsure what “extend” versus “duplicate” meant. Based on these observations, I added clearly labeled purpose, intended audience, and estimated time sections at the front to set expectations and reduce uncertainty. I front-loaded cautions to prevent cable damage and included a key terms section that defines extend, duplicate, primary display, resolution, and refresh rate in plain language. I also simplified each step to one action, using labeled sub steps and consistent imperative verbs. Upon revision, I aligned UI labels exactly to the Windows 11 wording to avoid guesswork (Kolin, 2022; Microsoft Support, n.d.).

To address the detection issue, I added an expected results checkpoint with screenshots that show what success looks like and where to go next if the external screen does not appear. I also reorganized the sequence so that selecting the correct monitor input appears before opening Display settings, then placed each figure next to its first mention with a specific caption, which follows best practice for visuals and proximity (Kolin, 2022).

The test run also displayed usability gaps that were solved with reader aids. I added a **Troubleshooting** section for no signal, blurry text, flicker, and dock problems. I included quick-access shortcuts so users can recover or verify outcomes without re-reading the full procedure. I tightened wording to remove vague verbs, corrected UI capitalization, and standardized list structure to avoid the common mistakes of inconsistent terminology and nonparallel steps (Okafor, 2025).

Finally, I wrote concise, action-oriented captions, kept figures simple, and noted the need for alt text so the content remains accessible for a wider audience (Kolin, 2022). In short, testing validated where readers got stuck and the revisions turned those pain points into purposeful additions in my revised draft. Respective edits provided clearer entry expectations, single-action steps, terminology support, proximate visuals, and targeted recovery paths. These changes improved clarity and made the instructions easier to follow without the need for outside help, which is the essential goal of workplace directions (Kolin, 2022).

## References

Kolin, P. C. (2022). *Successful writing at work* (12th ed.). Cengage.

Microsoft Support. (n.d.). *How to use multiple monitors in Windows*. https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/windows/how-to-use-multiple-monitors-in-windows-329c6962-5a4d-b481-7baa-bec9671f728a

Okafor, N. P. (2025, February 24). *Common mistakes in technical writing and how to avoid them*. WriteTech Hub. https://writetechhub.org/common-mistakes-in-technical-writing/

OpenAI. (2025). *Images generated by ChatGPT [AI-generated image].* ChatGPT.