ClickHelp

Technical Writing: Readability and Text Metrics

Contents

Introduction

The main goal of a technical writer is to create user-friendly documentation. In order to do this, you should figure out the level of knowledge of your target audience on the subject in question. When creating documentation for professionals, you need to really go in-depth. If you are writing for novice users, make sure to cover all the key moments and leave out more complicated stuff that a novice reader won't need and will just find confusing. But how to be sure that your documentation will be clear for your target audience? Here is where readability and text metrics step in.

In this ebook[1], we will tell you what metrics exist nowadays, how you can use them in your technical writing process, describe top text metrics to consider for user documentation and many more.

Of course, metrics are a great source of high-quality content. Here is where another question arises - how to get them and understand which one you need? ClickHelp makes everything to ease tech writers' life, so readability and text metrics are available in our tool - you can create documentation and check its readability level instantly in one help authoring tool. Keep reading to learn more about how it's implemented in ClickHelp!

[1] **Disclaimer:** This e-book is designed for information purposes only. The publisher and the author(s) is not engaged to render any type of psychological, legal, or any other kind of professional advice. The content of each article is the sole expression and opinion of its author(s) and publisher. No warranties or guarantees are expressed or implied with this e-book. Neither the publisher nor the individual author(s) shall be liable for any physical, psychological, emotional, financial, or commercial issues, including, but not limited to, special, incidental, consequential or other issues. You are responsible for your own choices, actions, and results that might arise due to the use or misuse of this e-book.

Metrics in Technical Writing

Metrics are the easiest way for managers to analyze work processes, make conclusions and see whether everything is going according to plan. If it is not, some changes need to take place. Metrics also help controlling employee performance and efficiency of the current processes.

Technical writing requires metrics just like any part of product development. We are going to provide you with insights on how to implement different metrics in your documentation writing process and explain how to make metrics work for your benefit. Metrics often end up being some annoying thing that kind of has to be done, but no one ever sees any real positive effects.

Why Metrics Are Important in Tech Writing

When you work in support, it is quite clear what can be measured. The number of cases answered/resolved, how many messages it takes on average to resolve a case, levels of customer satisfaction - these are all quite obvious metrics by improving which you can change things for the better.

As for a tech writing team, it is not so obvious what should be measured. If we try measuring word count, for example, it can hardly take us anywhere in terms of documentation quality. Should tech writers measure anything at all? Yes. And, we will try to explain our point further. The first instant effect one gets from measuring something is the focus. If you need to report about your work results to your manager by the end of the week, you'll have no choice but to work on your metrics. This means that figuring out the right things to measure is very important. So, let's delve into this.

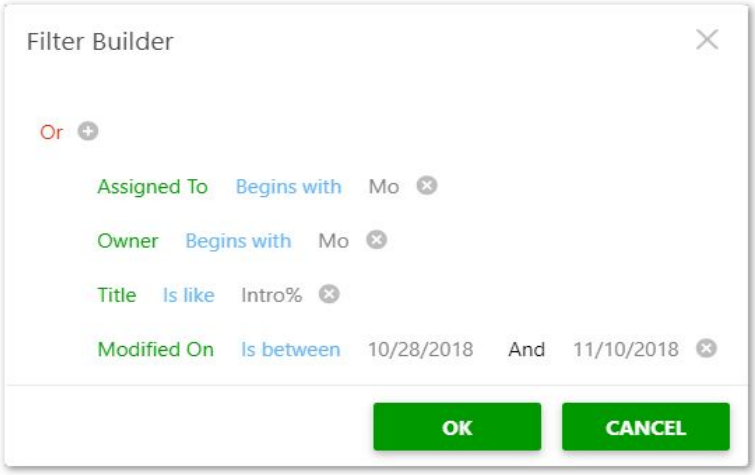
Top Metrics for Tech Writing Teams

Customer satisfaction is a complex concept, really. A nicely developed product is just one piece of the puzzle. Tech support and user manuals contribute to customer satisfaction, as well. To measure how happy customers are with your technical documentation, you can use a rating system for help topics and, also, enable commenting for your online documentation portal. Reviewing this data will help you improve the weakest help articles, and raise case deflection.

Measuring the number of finished topics per person per a set period of time helps project managers control performance efficiency. One can argue that some help topics are way more complicated than others and require in-depth research, so, how can you compare these things? It is true, but this can be solved by making these periods longer, for example, because the average topic length will be

more or less the same on a bigger scale for team members with a similar role.

For project managers, having all statistics like drafts, topics under review, finished topics on one screen can help a lot with time estimation and further planning. Help authoring tools like ClickHelp provide such statistics out-of-the-box alongside with many options for filtering this data (by status, by owner, by assignee, by date). Your can check out data for any particular project or the whole documentation portal. And, here's more - in ClickHelp, you can create custom filters for your specific needs using Filter Builder:

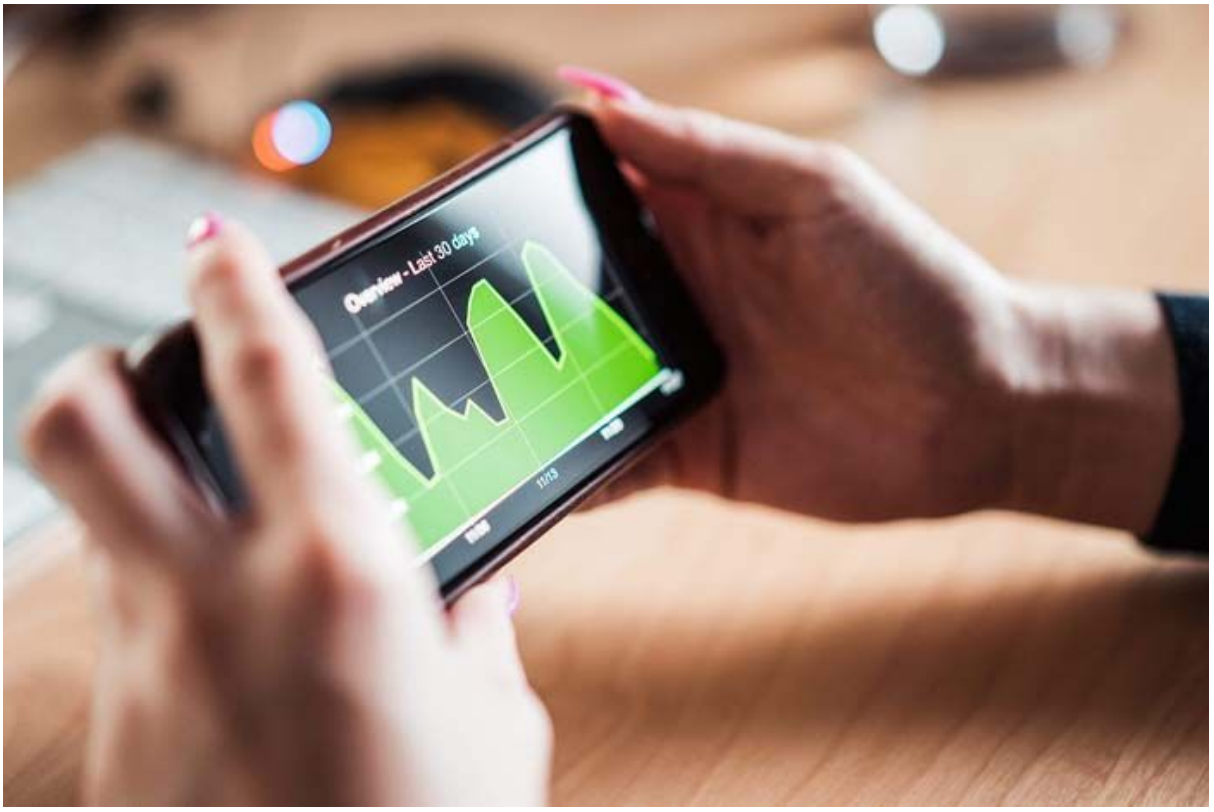


Thanks to this, managing big projects can become easier.

Conclusion

Analyzing metrics can be a real waste of time when there's no solid purpose behind this. First, one should define the goals, and then look for the right means, never vice versa. Modern online documentation tools for technical writers can provide you with the latter, just make sure that your goals are set correctly, and the positive change will happen.

Metrics in Technical Writing (Part 2)



Technical writing requires tools for measurement and analysis like any other work process. Although, it is quite difficult to decide what metrics to use considering specifics of this field.
We began discussing this topic a while ago and figured out the main aims of using metrics - you can either measure a documentation team's productivity or the quality of your final product.

Here, we are going to look into the second aspect - how to assess the quality of the final output with Google Analytics, one of the most powerful tools out there. And, more importantly, what to do with the retrieved data.

Using Google Analytics for Online Documentation

Google Analytics is a free tool by Google that offers an impressive amount of settings and options to get all the essential metrics a website owner would ask for. The same way it will work for an online documentation portal.

What metrics can potentially interest a technical writer? First and foremost - the amount of views per page. This is how you can see what questions bother your users the most. Or, e.g. you can check how much time a person spends on a page on average. Let's talk about these metrics and their interpretations in detail. We advise using this information when making changes to your documentation plan.

- Allocate more resources to work with the most viewed help topics. This should be your primary concern.
- Find areas of expansion for your documentation project. You might want to add new topics and get into more detail about the functionality that users find more interesting or challenging.
- Combine Google Analytics with other approaches. For example, adding the feature of rating or commenting topics can help you get the right idea about what should be done with a topic. Your red flags are high views and low rating/negative comments. Re-work these topics first.
- Help topics with just a few views can be put on hold for now in terms of upgrade and revision.

- Pay attention to the time users spend reading your topics. If you notice that user stay on some topic pages for too long, look into them when you have time - these topics might be too complicated and require restructuring or adding more visuals for easier understanding.
- With Google Analytics, you can track how users get to various pages and make the corresponding changes in topics navigation to direct users.
- Identifying the target audience has always been important in technical writing. With modern UX trends, this is becoming even more significant. Google Analytics can help with that - you can learn the geolocation, age, interests of your readers.
- Tracking bounce rate can, again, point to certain topics that require special attention. Consider this - a topic has high bounce rate and a lot of views. This is a direct sign that something is off. Most probably, people expect to see something different in this topic.
- For those of you who have paid traffic campaigns, checking traffic sources is also important. This data can tell you a lot about your campaign's efficiency.
- You can use Google Analytics as your A/B testing platform. Technical documentation intersects with UX in many ways now, so A/B testing is gaining popularity among tech writers.

With that said, you can see that the free version of Google Analytics offers a lot, and we only mentioned the most obvious ways to measure your online user manuals' quality. Once you get your hands on this app, play around with it, try different things - you might get a lot of use out of it.

ClickHelp online documentation tool was created with all these potential bonuses in mind, so we added Google Analytics integration, and configuring it is just a breeze! Three clicks, and you can start working with this freemium web analytics service.

Conclusion

You can't really improve anything without thorough analysis. Luckily, such free tools like Google Analytics can provide you with a lot of metrics that can be used to improve your technical documentation. Don't expect to see some immediate results from using the metrics, though. It will require time for you to try out different metrics, see which are working for you, adjust them. The best result will be increased customer satisfaction that means you have done your work right.

Top 5 Text Metrics to Consider for User Documentation

We have been mentioning readability in this book quite a lot recently. No wonder, with modern trends like UX writing, this has become a real point of concern for many technical writing teams.

Luckily, readability is not that abstract, it can actually be broken down into pretty specific elements. Here, we are going to talk about five text metrics that need to be considered for creating better user manuals that can be understood easier.

Terms and Neologisms

Technical documentation is prone to contain too many terms, newly-coined words and abbreviations. This can hinder readers from

full understanding of the text. Besides, this is one of the reasons why users don't like technical documentation - interpreting all the unknown words and concepts takes too much time.

Terms and neologisms in user manuals can hardly be avoided, as technical documentation is based on very specific fields and subject matters. But, there are some ways to make it easier for all the unprepared readers.

All terms and new words should be explained in simple language. To help readers deal with difficult words in online documentation, you can:

- create links and cross-references inside user manuals
- add hidden parts of text with in-depth explanations
- create web help bubbles
- make up a glossary for reference

Word Length

It is quite clear that shorter words are easier to understand. If we also consider that on average 1 in 10 people has some degree of dyslexia that, among other things, can cause issues with reading, word length starts to matter even more.

There are two interconnected concepts here - length and frequency of use. Historically, they are kind of related. And, no wonder, we are sure that most of you would rather choose the word "start" than "embarkation" which are synonymous in certain contexts. So, in practice, this means that technical writers should control the length and frequency of the words they use - any restrictions are impossible here, of course, but, in general, to create nicer user manuals, one should start looking for more simple synonyms to awkward lengthy words.

Sentence Length

Here's another metric related to length - sentence length. The rule of thumb is one sentence - one idea. However, some notions are hard to explain in one sentence, and that is alright, we'll talk about paragraph division further, too.

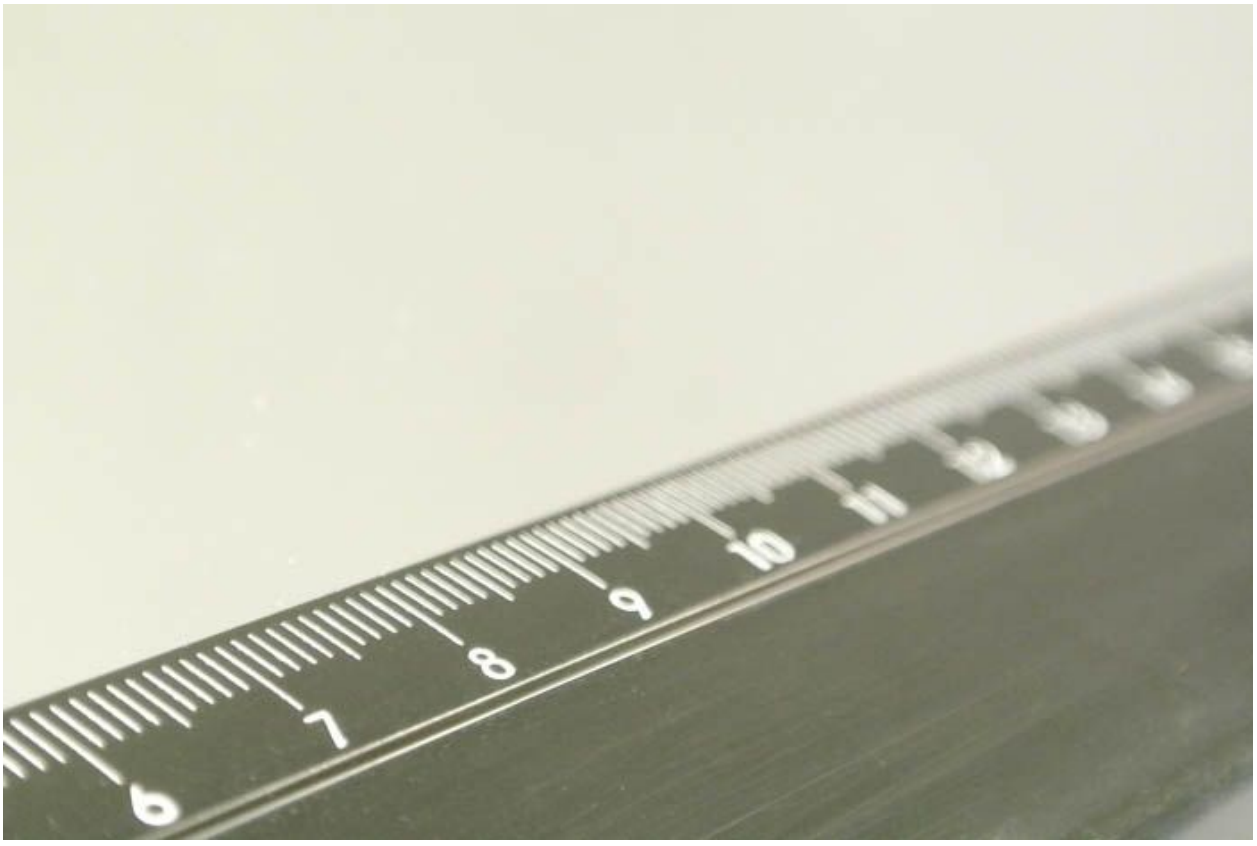
For readability purposes, sentence length should be around 20 words, while some scientific papers and documents contain sentences with 60+ words. What is quite interesting, in literature, some writers manipulate sentence length consciously, to increase readers' attention. Short sentences are intertwined with long ones to create a "rhythm", where the shorter ones grab your attention and the longer ones help to hold it.

In technical writing, sentence length should help deliver a message clearly. So, our general advice is to try making sentences with around

20 words your default option. If you can squeeze your idea into even fewer words without losing its clarity - great, go with that.

Paragraph Division

Even Leonardo da Vinci, the greatest technical illustrator took advantage of paragraph division. Trully, paragraphs can help a reader get through the most complex help topic.



Basically, each paragraph should present and support one theme. This ensures that a reader can look through a text and get the main

thoughts without reading the text thoroughly. Plus, getting information in chunks simply feels more comfortable and gives a breather to our brain to process it bit by bit.

So, don't underestimate paragraphs and make sure that they constitute the backbone of your help topics.

Grammar Constructions

Sentences should be not only relatively short but also simple, as well. For example, abusing passive constructions can make your text feel much heavier. Active voice is more preferable.

It is difficult to say why people tend to use passive a lot, maybe because it adds some scientific feel and seriousness to writing... But, that's a common misconception that technical documentation should be all sciency. On the contrary, technical communicators have been trying for a while now to make user manuals lighter and more appealing. And, getting rid of complicated grammar constructions is a sure way to do so.

Conclusion

The text is the core of technical writing. It can be viewed from many angles: grammar, style, logic, punctuation, readability, even its looks in terms of font and color. All components are important here, so, this post is meant to cover at least some small part of all the possible approaches.

How to Measure the Effectiveness of the Documentation

Technical writing and communication involves communicating complex information to specific audiences with clarity and accuracy. The key word here is communication, which is a term for two-way interactions. But in case of technical writing, the addressee side is shrouded in mystery.

Technical writers often have a very vague idea of the end-users, their level of competence and their needs, because they lack knowledge and feedback from their audience. But a clear understanding of the target audience knowledge is essential for adjusting the writing for the needs of the particular audience and communicating the message in the proper manner.

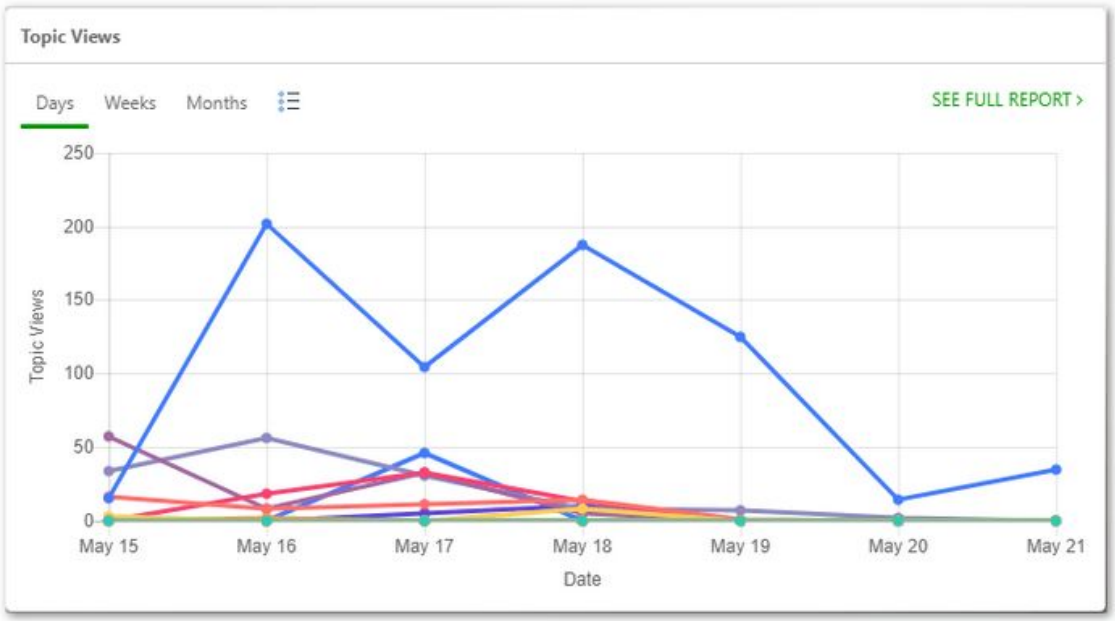
In this part, we'll focus on ways to gather metrics that may further be used for improving the quality of the documentation and level of user satisfaction.

Use Web Analytics

Web analytics is a powerful instrument that allows measuring the user experience. You may use Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, or some other web analytics service, to collect the most basic but still useful information about your target audience. It'll provide you with the following metrics:

- Time spent on a particular page.
- The number of viewed pages per visit.
- The number of page visits, and more.

For example, ClickHelp technical writing tool has built-in statistics feature that allows monitoring the viewing statistics of a particular topic or the whole project.

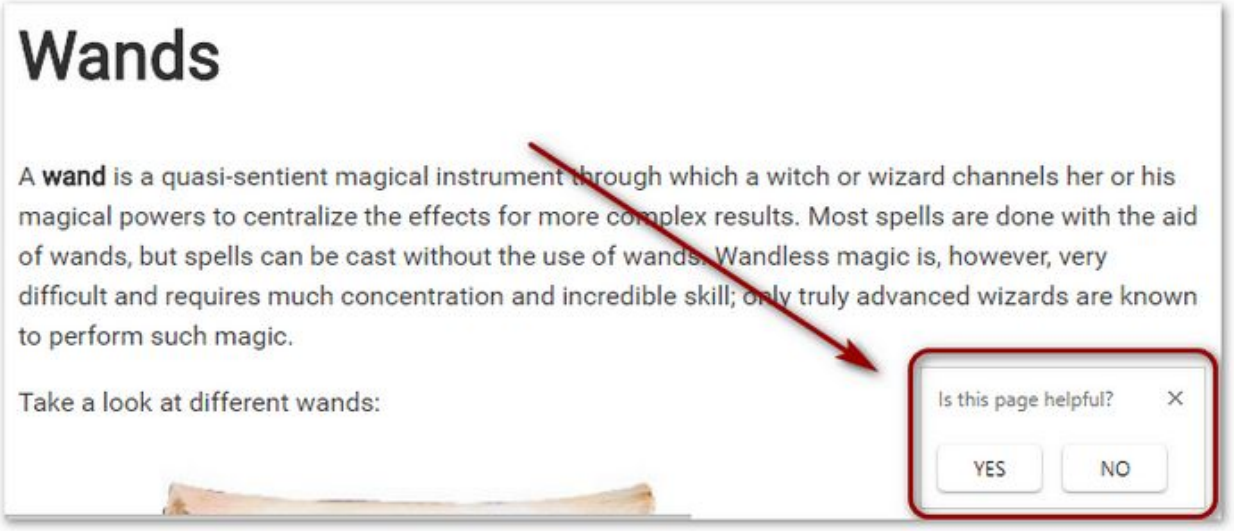


Using metrics of web analytics you can make certain conclusions on how to adjust the documentation and make it suit your audience's need. For example, you may learn which topics are the most viewed and how much time users spend on these pages. So in case a topic is popular but users spend too much time there, enough to read it several times, this may mean that this topic needs to be improved: you may want to rewrite it using plain language, add screenshots and gifs, use less jargon, make it more clear and concise and so on.

Use Surveys and Interviews

Another way to learn more about the shortcomings of the user documentation is to directly ask the end-users if they had a positive experience with a particular piece of documentation. In order to do that, you need a built-in feedback mechanism on every help topic page of the documentation.

We advise you to use a simple response mechanism like thumb-up and thumb-down buttons. For example, ClickHelp contains ratings report feature that gathers statistics according to the data of the following widget.



More detailed insights can be gathered through fill-in forms that pop up when users punch the thumb-down button. This way you may learn more about whether a particular topic met users' needs. You may also use a pop-up with a short interview that appears when users are attempting to leave the page.

Do Usability Tests

Unfortunately, only a small percentage of users usually provide feedback and even less leave their comments in case of negative experience. It means that conclusions based on the surveys are not always representative. So option #3 is to do a usability testing.

According to Jakob Nielsen, you only need 5 random participants to conduct a usability study and receive reliable results. In order to gather even more representative statistics, you need to find five participants representing different types of documentation users:

developers, new users, novice users, expert users and so on depending on the type of the documented product.

Instead of gathering lots of participants for one study, try doing several usability tests with a small number of participants. A variety of tests conducted with a small group of people proves much more useful than doing one study with a large number of people. This way you're going to gather more data and feedback and your company is going to achieve more for the same amount of money invested.

Analyze Support Tickets and Use Forums

Another way to measure whether the documentation is effective is to research support tickets and forum threads. Unfortunately, neither of these sources is informative and reliable enough to make it the primary source of user feedback.

Users contacting support usually don't describe their experience with the documentation: whether they consulted the docs, what they were looking for and whether they've found the solution. But when they do, it allows you to find out if a particular topic contains all the necessary information about the subject matter or it should be expanded. If the topic contains the necessary solution, but the user is unable to find it, then you need to consider improving the particular topic or the whole structure of the documentation.

When analyzing the information from the support tickets and user forums, you need to keep in mind that these sources of user feedback provide a one-sided picture. When users are satisfied with their experience with the docs they do not contact the support team or share their experience on the forums.

Conclusion

Unlike other types of writing, technical writing communicates with different types of audience that depends on the documented product, its functionality, the peculiarities of the niche it belongs to. Web metrics, surveys, interviews, usability tests, support tickets, and user forums together provide a set of metrics, that allows measuring the effectiveness of technical documentation and its particular topics and sections. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the mentioned sources allows you to find opportunities to improve the quality of the docs and the level of user satisfaction.

How to Review Technical Documentation

Now let's talk about reviewing technical documentation. This topic is discussed in the techcomm community a lot since it is the cornerstone of a good help writing workflow.

Before analyzing approaches to reviewing, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that having a convenient environment tailored to reviewers' needs is the first step you should take to improve the review process. So, it all starts with the technical writing software you are using. Make sure it allows setting up an effective process.

Sending files for review via email is an obsolete workflow that often causes confusion and some technical documents can even be lost along the way. Luckily, modern help authoring tools are here to save the day. For example, ClickHelp has a special reviewer role available,

this feature alone can bring quick improvements. But there's more: in ClickHelp, you can instantly add and manage review notes and to-do lists. We recently enhanced this functionality as part of the ClickHelp Aurora Polaris update.

Key Documentation Review Stages

Tom Johnson from Idratherbewriting singles out five review stages on his blog:

- Review with the doc team
- Review with the product team
- Review with the field engineers and support group
- Review with legal
- Review with beta partners

If content goes through these five stages it should be stripped of all major bugs for sure. Each stage has a different team responsible for content review and they all are essentially looking for issues in different areas. This way, technical writers can get maximum coverage. The overlapping areas do not feel like a waste of time either, on the contrary, this just means more thorough checking.

We overall agree with Tom's approach, however, we would like to shift focus a little towards post-publishing stages of a technical documentation lifecycle.

The idea that before user manuals are published, they should be as bug-free and precise as possible seems legit. Nevertheless, in agile

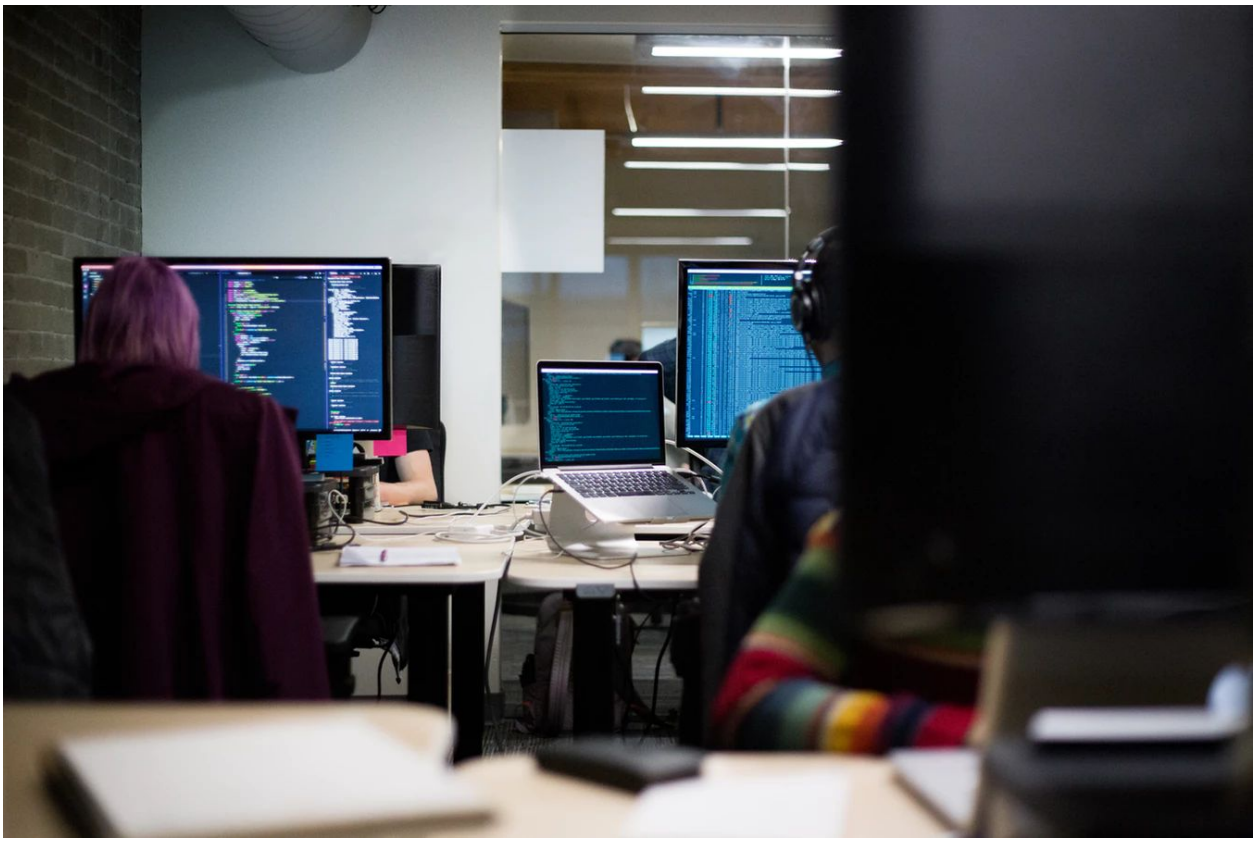
software development things need to be happening fast, which can lead to quality loss. Let's not forget about the fact that a documentation team's workload heavily depends on devs and QA. So, short notice changes in documentation plans are something one needs to be prepared for.

When technical documentation is published, things get real as your clients become your reviewers. To succeed at this stage, make sure to follow up on every issue reported by the clients as soon as possible. Another critical aspect of this process would be effective collaboration with the support team. Support team members reference technical documents all the time, and they are the first to receive user complaints, as well. So, this cross-team communication channel needs to be open and allow quick back-and-forth data exchange.

Conclusion

A smooth and robust review process is critical for technical writing teams as the content quality depends on it directly. Every team has a unique review process that meets their requirements. Hopefully, with this article, we made this complicated topic a bit simpler and you will be able to use some tricks in your workflow.

How it’s Realized in ClickHelp



Now, let’s see how it’s implemented in ClickHelp and how it can ease your technical writing process.

Easy Review Process with ClickHelp

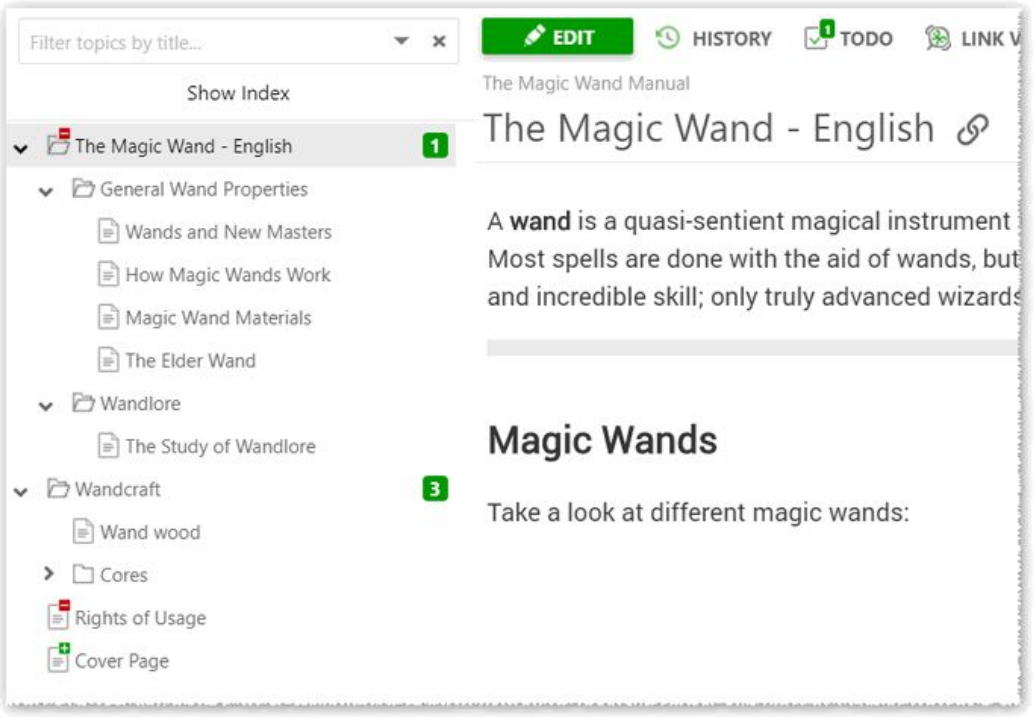
Reviewing is a crucial part of technical writing. And, with this thought in mind, the ClickHelp team did their best to make this feature even better in the March product update.

Reviewers bring a fresh perspective to your help topics and show ways of fixing and improving them. When a technical writer finishes a help topic, you probably wouldn't call it a complete fixer-upper, it is still in progress for a reviewer. Read further to find out how easy and intuitive reviewing has become in our online documentation tool.

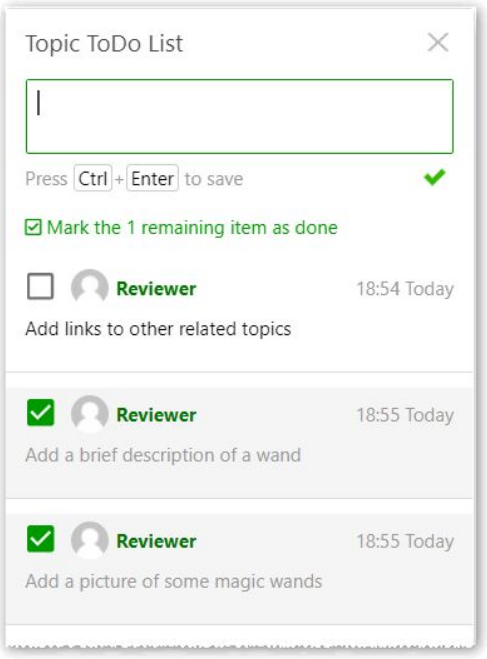
ToDo Lists

When you see a green square with a number next to a topic title in the TOC, this means that some ToDo items exist for this topic. There is also an email notification, but, we believe that adding such an indication directly to the TOC makes it so much easier to track the progress.

The number in the green square displays how many unfinished items are left for the topic:

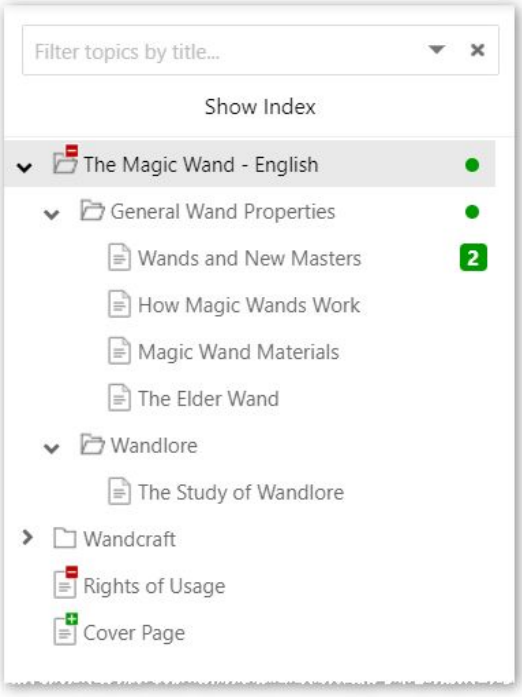


Should you open the topic and click 'TODO' at the top of the page, you will see the 'Topic ToDo List' panel in the left part of your screen. Such lists usually include some things you need to add or change in the topic in question:



As you can see in the screenshot above, two items are marked as done, so, the technical writer working on this help topic needs to fix just one last thing, mark the item as done, and the document will be ready for another review iteration.

For your convenience, if a child topic has unresolved ToDo items, the parent gets a green circle next to it in the TOC:



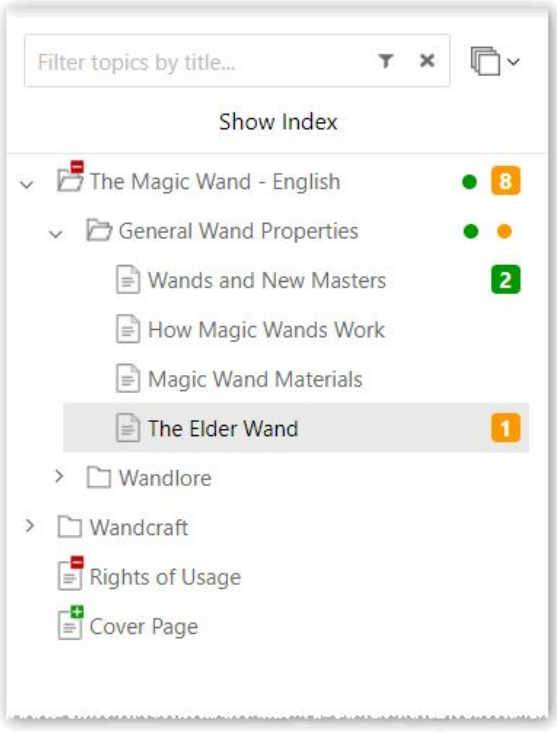
ToDo lists are often used to make up a plan for a new topic, as well, so no details will go missing.

Review Comments

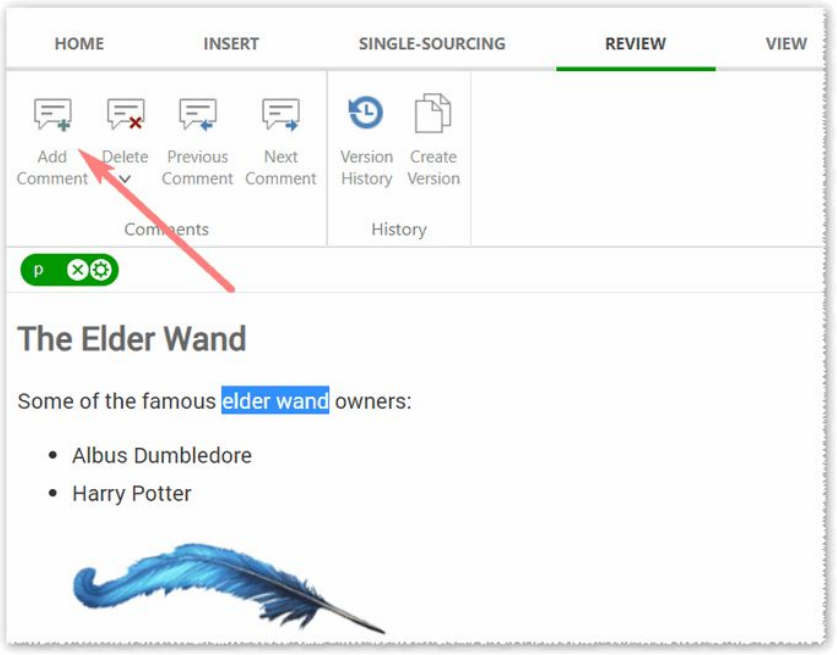
One of the most demanded features gets an update in the new ClickHelp release - we have drastically improved in-text review comments.

When a review comment is added, an email notification is sent. It includes explicit information about the comment. Email notifications are also sent when review comments are deleted or resolved.

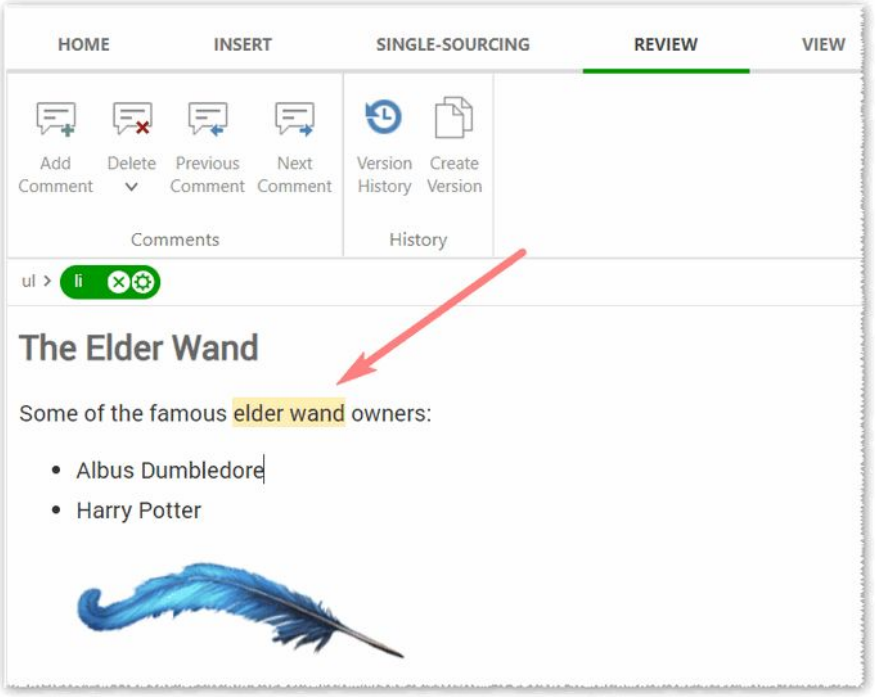
To check if a topic has some unresolved comments, look for orange squares with numbers next to topic titles in the TOC. These indicators work just like the ones for ToDo lists.



On a reviewer's part, things are as simple as this: a reviewer selects some text they have comments for, and, on the 'Review' tab, they need to click 'Add Comment'.



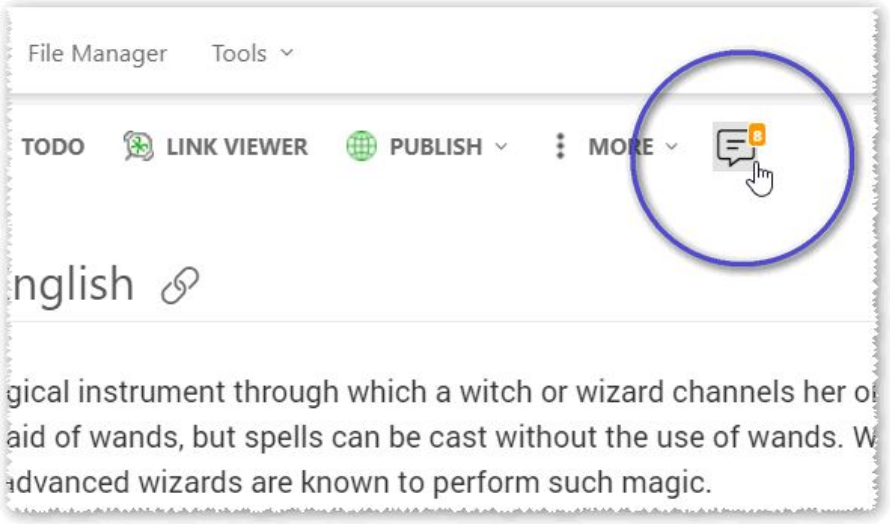
As soon as the comment is submitted, the text requiring correction will be marked with yellow in the topic.



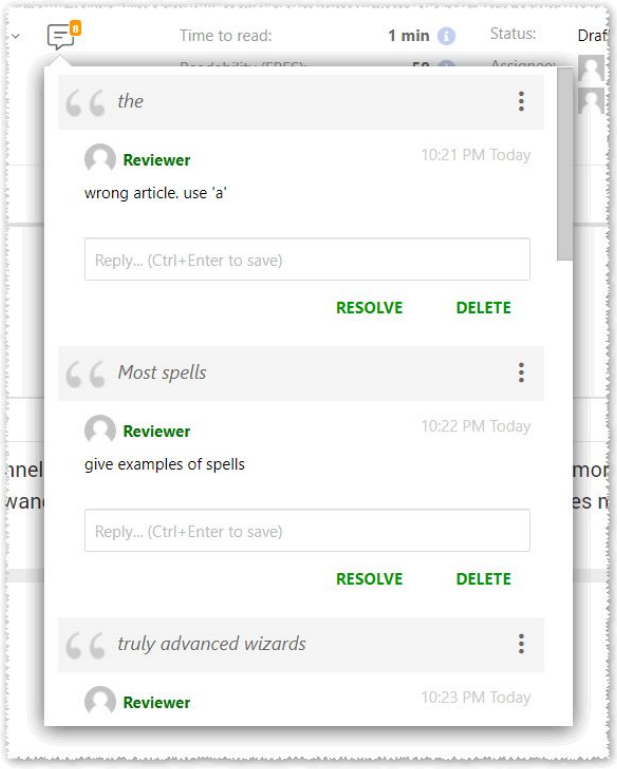
To see the comment, just click the text and a popup with the comment will appear.

Now, you can reply to the comment, mark it as resolved or delete it. The corresponding notifications will be sent to the topic owner.

You can see the whole list of review comments by clicking the corresponding button in the header - you don't need to go into the editing mode for that.



This is how a list of comments looks:



Another great improvement is the fact that you can now share links to review comment. This feature makes the workflow smooth and swift.

Also, we've made it possible for you to see all resolved/deleted comments. By default, they are hidden on the comment list but can be turned on.

The latest release opens up the possibility of tracking Project Readiness by review comments. The ClickHelp users will be able to see how many unresolved review comments are left to work on for projects, topics, authors and reviewers on a single screen.

Workflow Improvements

We have implemented a couple of new features enhancing the review workflow. One of the most prominent improvements here is

the ability to change the topic owner/assignee without unlocking the topic. Plus, since the March ClickHelp release, you will be able to do that for several topics at the same time.

But there's more - email notifications can now be configured on the profile level! This provides more customization options so the workflow can be shaped for each user individually.

Conclusion

We have been listening carefully to our clients, taking notes all the way to deliver these functionality updates. The review process has become much more visual and easier to use. With the new updated process we have rolled out, you can start creating better user manuals right now!

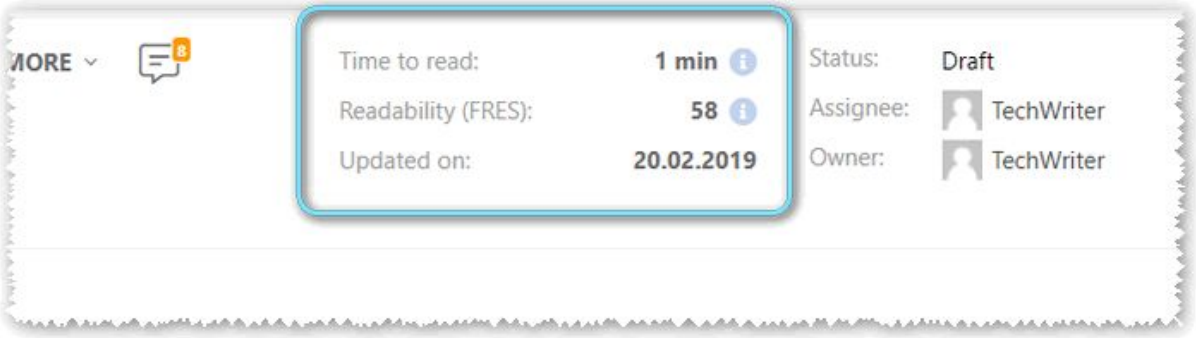
Readability and Text Metrics

You sure have a general idea about how readable your user manuals are. But, does this idea have any real scientific proof? Well, ClickHelp is going to help you with that via our new awesome readability formulae available since the March product update.

We have developed a precise and intricate mechanism to evaluate the readability of your technical documentation using various metrics. Analyzing some metrics gives you a shortcut to understanding your readers better and adjusting your team's writing style to their needs while others allow gaining more control over the team's efficiency.

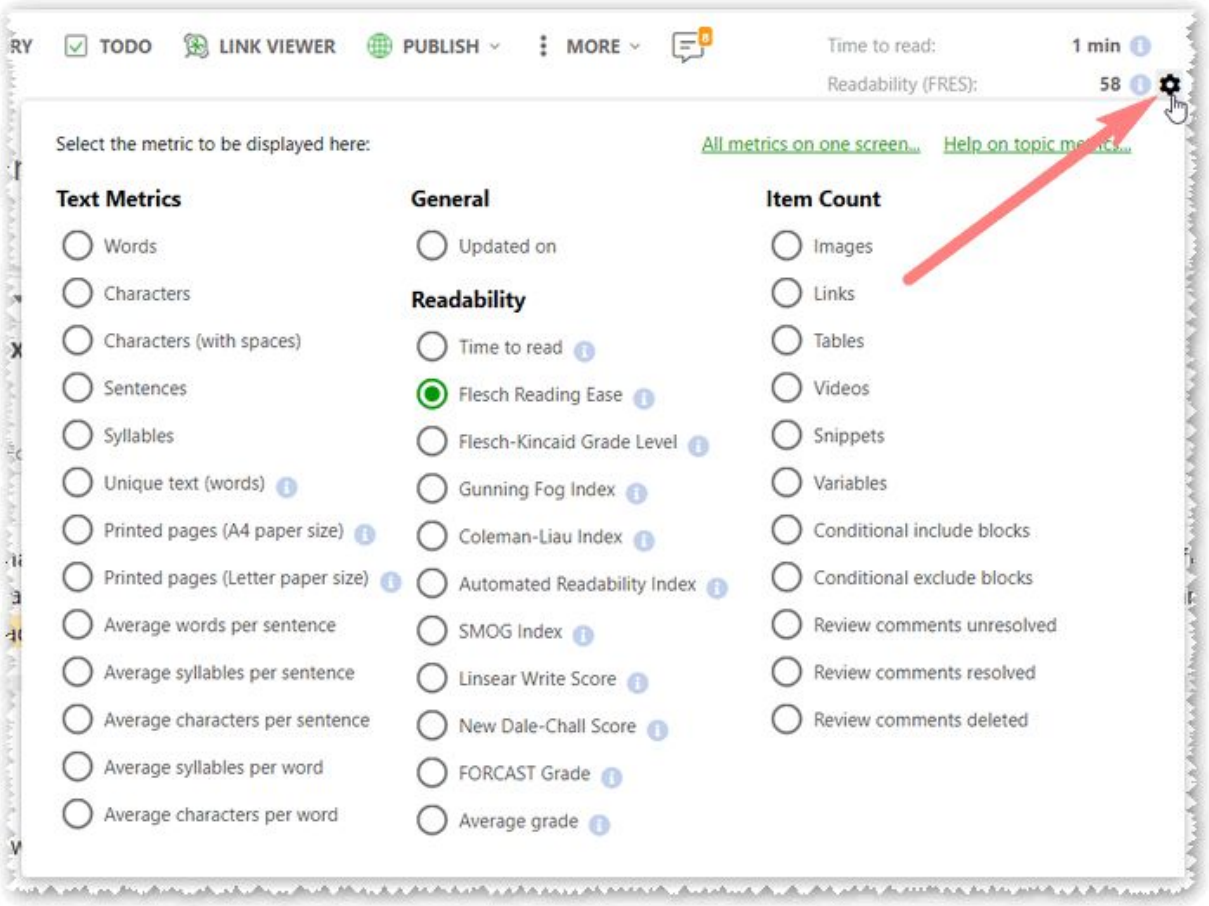
The new metrics that have become available in ClickHelp allow a very deep and detailed analysis of text.

You can find some of them right at the top of the WYSIWYG editor:



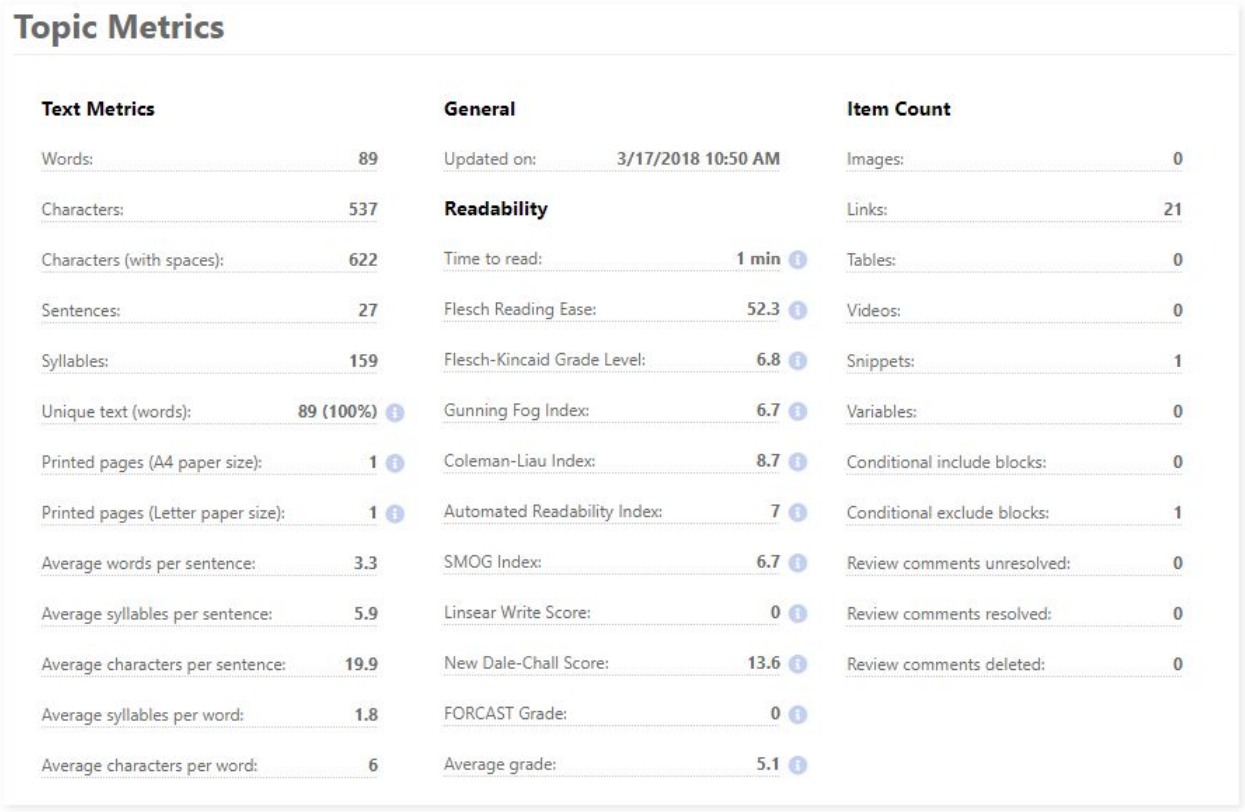
Even Time to read and Readability (FRES) alone can instantly give you an idea of what the topic in question is like.

The ClickHelp team added dozens of useful metrics you can analyze. You can select to display any metric at the top of the page by clicking the cog wheel icon and selecting the one you need.



The new metrics are grouped into: Text Metrics, General, Readability and Item Count.

You can examine all of the metrics on one screen:



Topic Metrics

Text Metrics		General		Item Count	
Words:	89	Updated on:	3/17/2018 10:50 AM	Images:	0
Characters:	537	**Readability**		Links:	21
Characters (with spaces):	622	Time to read:	1 min	Tables:	0
Sentences:	27	Flesch Reading Ease:	52.3	Videos:	0
Syllables:	159	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:	6.8	Snippets:	1
Unique text (words):	89 (100%)	Gunning Fog Index:	6.7	Variables:	0
Printed pages (A4 paper size):	1	Coleman-Liau Index:	8.7	Conditional include blocks:	0
Printed pages (Letter paper size):	1	Automated Readability Index:	7	Conditional exclude blocks:	1
Average words per sentence:	3.3	SMOG Index:	6.7	Review comments unresolved:	0
Average syllables per sentence:	5.9	Linsear Write Score:	0	Review comments resolved:	0
Average characters per sentence:	19.9	New Dale-Chall Score:	13.6	Review comments deleted:	0
Average syllables per word:	1.8	FORCAST Grade:	0		
Average characters per word:	6	Average grade:	5.1		

Readability metrics are calculated with many factors in mind. ClickHelp analyzes text on different levels to provide you with a score.

Let's take Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level as an example; these particular readability indexes are tied to the American school grades system. Basically, when you get a certain score, you will understand what hypothetical background a reader needs to have to easily read this topic.

When analyzing topics based on different indexes, pay special attention to the extremes. If all your topics are getting pretty much the same score within one metric, everything is fine. But, if you stumble upon topics with unusually high or low scores, double-check them, something must be off.

Comparing scores of different technical writers is another way to benefit from readability metrics. If some team members keep getting

lower scores, they might have poor writing habits, like, their sentences tend to be too long or they contain too many terms. When you possess this knowledge you can turn this situation around pretty quickly.

It goes without saying that more readable text equals shorter sentences, more lightweight grammatical structures, and frequently used words. Now, all this is trackable and visible with the Text Metrics.

Tracking employees' performance via Text Metrics is also possible. For example, you can figure out how many words a technical writer is supposed to write in a week and check how all team members are doing as far as the word count is concerned. Of course, this approach cannot guarantee high proximity, but conclusions can definitely be made based on it.

ClickHelp provides authors and reviewers with a great number of metrics that will help your team create readable documentation. Here is a list with descriptions of all the metrics that you can use for your projects and topics.

Text Metrics

Here are text metrics which are available in ClickHelp and you can use for managing your writing process:

- **Words**. The number of words in a topic.
- **Characters**. The number of characters in a topic.
- **Characters (without spaces)**. The number of characters without spaces in a topic.
- **Sentences**. The number of sentences in a topic.
- **Syllables**. The number of syllables in a topic.
- **Unique text (words, % of total)**. The number of unique words in a topic.
- **Printed pages (A4 size)**. The approximate number of printed pages the current topic text will occupy when printed on paper of the A4 size.
- **Printed pages (Letter size)**. The approximate number of printed pages the current topic text will occupy when printed on paper of the Letter size.
- **Average words per sentence**. The average number of words per sentence.
- **Average syllables per sentence**. The average number of syllables per sentence.
- **Average characters per sentence**. The average number of characters per sentence.
- **Average syllables per word**. The average number of syllables per word.
- **Average characters per word**. The average number of characters per word.

Readability Metrics

A readability score is a computer-calculated index which can tell you what level of education a reader will need to understand a text easily. Readability really matters because technical writers should

write documentation that users will understand and gladly keep reading. Moreover, search engines like Google also care. Google has even publicly stated that readability is one of the factors in its ranking algorithm. So, the readability score also helps you improve SEO.

That's why ClickHelp provides you with a number of readability metrics. For example, Flesch Reading Ease, Gunning Fog Index, New Dale-Chall Formula and so on. This will make your documentation more effective. In this section, you will find the details of all those metrics calculation and meaning, so you can read about them in detail:

- Time to Read Metric
- Flesch Reading Ease
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level
- Gunning Fog Index
- Coleman-Liau Index
- Automated Readability Index
- SMOG Index
- Linsear Write
- New Dale-Chall Score
- FORCAST Grade
- Average Grade

Item Count Metrics

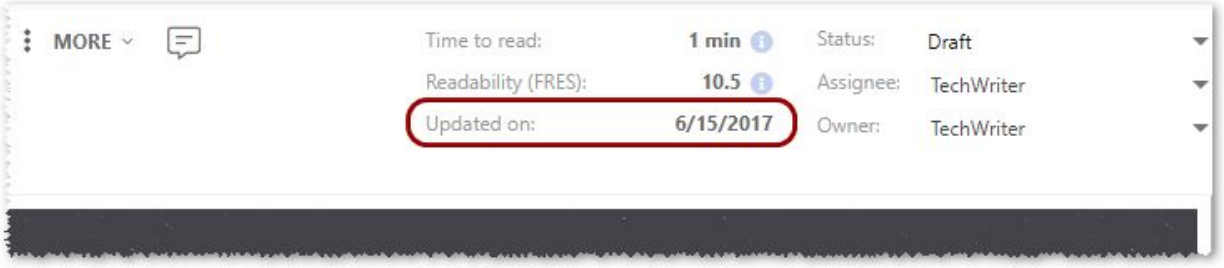
Here are item count metrics that you can examine for your topic:

- **Images**. The number of images in the topic.
- **Links**. The number of links in the topic. All links are counted - cross-topic links, File Storage links, external web links, mailto links.
- **Tables**. The number of tables in the topic.
- **Videos**. The number of videos in the topic.

- **Snippets**. The number of snippets in the topic.
- **Variables**. The number of variables in the topic.
- **Conditional include blocks.** The number of conditional blocks of the **Include** type in the topic.
- **Conditional exclude blocks**. The number of conditional block of the **Exclude** type in the topic.
- **Resolved review comments**. The number of resolved review comments.
- **Deleted review comments**. The number of deleted review comments.

General Metrics

The **General** category includes just one metric at this time: the date and time of the latest topic update. If you select this metric, it'll display only the date.

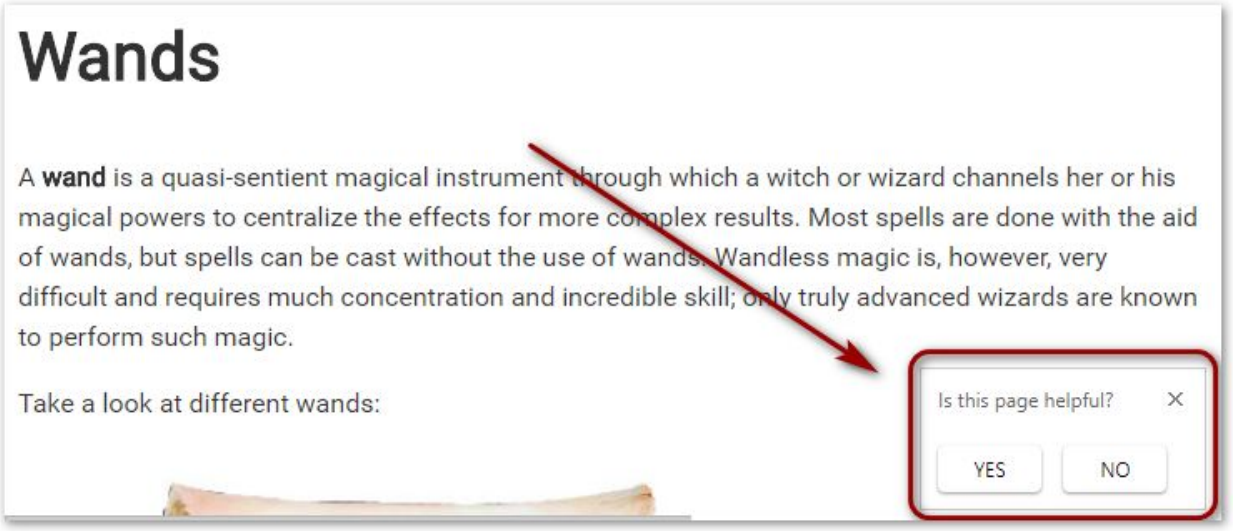


Other Ideas on Improving Your Documentation

How else can you identify which articles are well-performing and which ones need adjustments or updates? With ClickHelp, it's easy. The online documentation tool provides users with various reports

which you can examine to improve your documentation. Here is what you can use to improve your writing:

- As we mentioned above, you can examine the Topics Views and Ratings Report. When readers visit your publication the following widget appears, so every reader's reaction is gathered in the report.

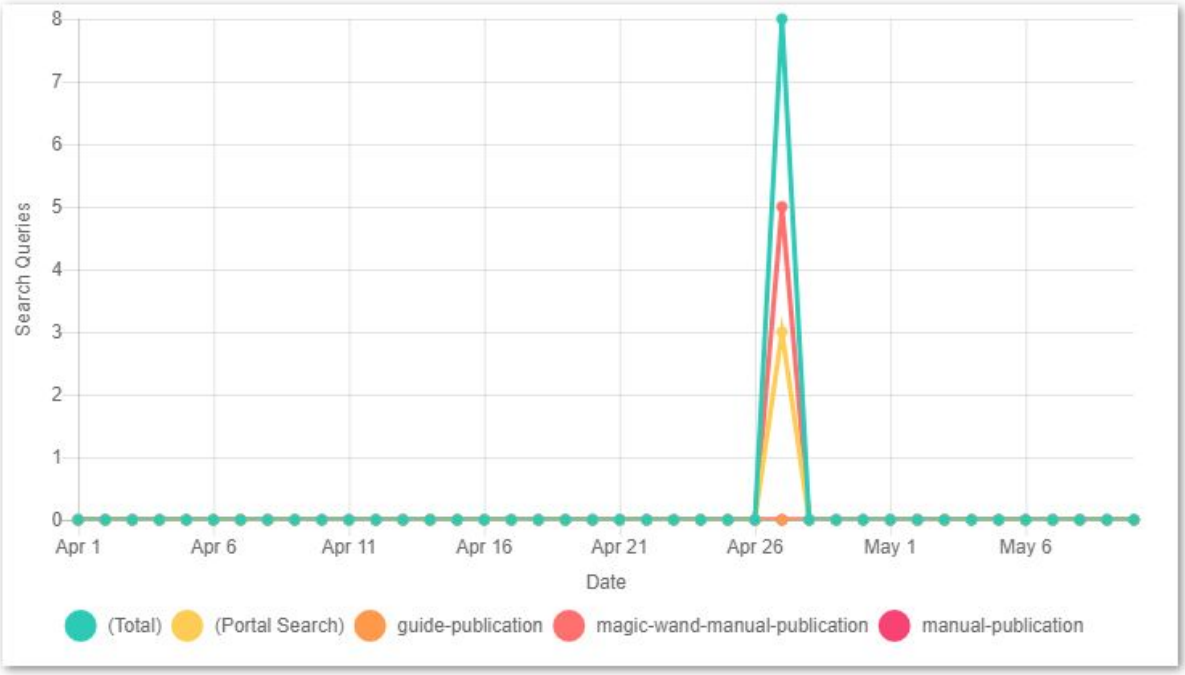


- Monitor the number of unique users who visited your documentation for a specific period of time. This information can be generated for the entire online documentation portal, or just be specific for a user manual or every topic thanks to ClickHelp Reader Count Report.

As for Restricted Manuals, the details table will give information on which specific Power Readers viewed your documentation. Studying

such statistics can be extremely useful in long term planning. One way to apply it is to see which help topics get more views and treat them with more attention - these topics need to be updated timely and constantly improved and elaborated.

- Analyze the Search Queries Report that allows you to monitor the keywords queried by readers. You can sort the results by last queries to learn what and when readers search for the particular keyword.



- Use Google Analytics. It is one of the top freemium marketing tools for tracking and reporting website traffic. Google Analytics can be integrated right into a ClickHelp portal. So, you can examine a huge variety of possible metrics like:
  - Visitors - its the number of people who visited your portal.
  - Content - Google Analytics allows evaluating which help topics are the most popular once.
  - Average Time Spent on a Page - this metric will show you how much time readers spend on any topic on average.
  - Navigation paths, and much more.

Conclusion

Surely, one of the main goals of technical writing is to get your target audience. And text and readability metrics can be a solution in this situation. However, you should keep in mind that there is no good or bad score. It depends on what result you want to achieve. For example, if your target audience is wide, the score should be lower than if you're aimed the B2B audience. Nevertheless, your writing should be clear and concise, so people will get the main idea quickly and keep reading your documentation gladly.

This is possible in ClickHelp that allows technical writers to write and examine instantly whether their content is appropriate or not. You can try our text and readability engine yourself, just order a free 30-day trial.

For more stories for technical writers, web developers and web designers willing to grow subscribe to our blog and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Medium, Telegram, LinkedIn.

Other free ebooks which you may find useful:

- Responsive Layouts: Getting Started Guide
- HTML Templates for User Manuals
- Technical Writer Career Guide
- Types of Technical Documentation

Good Luck with your technical writing!
ClickHelp Team