**Good Documentation: Handouts**

**Process**

The following process guides the creation of good documentation:

1. Determine the purpose and the use of the documentation.
2. Identify the target audience.
3. Interview the Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) and gather the information you need.
4. Plan the content.
5. Create the document.
6. Build an output locally and verify the content and the presentation.
7. Provide the output to SMEs for review.
8. Solicit peer review.
9. Publish.

**The Guidelines**

Stick to the following guidelines when you write:

1. Keep sentences and paragraphs short and concise.
2. Use Active instead of Passive Voice as much as possible.
3. Use Present Simple over any other tense.
4. Use the Imperative Mood and directly address the user.
5. Use an action-centered writing style.
6. State the goal or the user problem first; everything else comes second.
7. Leave the figures of speech to fiction and write literally.
8. Do not sacrifice clarity for style.
9. Use consistent terminology.

**Tips and Tricks**

The following tips and tricks might help you improve your documentation:

* Remember that it's not about how it's supposed to work according to specifications, prototypes, or the engineering team. It's about what you see and experience as a user.
* Try to break down your information into meaningful lists or tables. This makes your text more visually appealing and easier to process.
* After you have completed an article, ask yourself the following questions:
  + Does this article answer the question "What can I achieve using this" instead of "What does this interface do"?
  + Does this article provide a solution to a problem?
  + Does this article focus on what tasks you can complete using something instead of its inner workings and implementation details?
  + Does this article simplify and clarify the subject or does it bring more complexity?
  + If needed, rework your article to get positive answers to these questions.
* After you are done writing, run a check for the following and self-edit:
  + spelling
  + "there is" and "there are" statements
  + "we" and "I" statements
  + verb or noun phrases longer than three elements
  + gerunds
  + passive voice
  + tenses other than present simple
  + anything that you know you tend to abuse (for example: "allow", "however", "actually", "just")