

What Is Technical Writing

⊗ Introduction:

Technical Writing is the writing which involves a particular subject that requires special features of writing such as clear explanation, directions, instructions, and visual elements. It is the writing that is specially used in workplaces like offices, laboratories, construction sites, kitchen table, classrooms, etc. Technical writing involves a technical subject with a specific purpose and audiences. The approach is straightforward and it gives practical information to specific audience. The most remarkable aspect of technical writing is that it conveys the information which enables the audiences to take action through visual elements.

⊗ Technical Writing vs. Academic Writing:

| Technical Writing | Academic Writing |
|---|--|
| i) It is a formal-format based writing. | i) It follows informal format. |
| ii) It is targeted to the audiences of all levels of understanding. | ii) It is targeted for specific audiences. |
| iii) Technical writing contains factual and straight forward content. | iii) Academic writing contains contents on specific discipline or field. |
| iv) Technical writers should have expert knowledge. | iv) Academic writers have learners knowledge. |
| v) It covers scientific and technical subjects. | v) It covers academic-based subjects. |
| vi) Its purpose is getting something done. | vi) Its purpose is to demonstrate what a person knows. |
| vii) Iterative language is used. | vii) Figurative language is used. |

⊗ You Are a Technical Writer!

If you answered yes to any of following questions or have had similar experiences, you are a technical writer or you have already engaged in technical writing or technical communication.

→ Have you ever given someone written directions or drawn a map to your home?

→ Have you ever written brief instructions for how to use a fax machine at work?

→ Have you ever told someone how to make French toast?

⊗ Characteristics of a Technical Writing:

The characteristics of technical writing are discussed below:

i) Subject: It refers to how the text portrays the subject matter. The subject varies within the range of writers experience. The subject matter is related to the purpose of writing. The subject of technical writing should be based on technology and factual information. Like other types of non-technical writing the writers should not convey personal observations or feelings in technical documents.

ii) Audience: Audience refers to readers, listeners, or viewers in general to whom a particular writing and other forms of communication are intended. The audience have their own expectations. The writer's job is to relate purpose of writing and the expectations of the audience. The audience analysis often helps us to determine the purpose of writing.

iii) Organization: Organization is related to format and logical sequence in writing. Technical writing needs to be properly organized to convey the intended meaning. A less organized writing results into confusion and boring to the readers. So, technical writing is highly structured with short paragraphs, clear transitions and structural uses such as headings and sub-headings.

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iv) Style: Style involves the choices that a writer makes with words and sentences to express themselves. It is the matter of careful choice of words and phrases, verbal and grammatical patterning, integration of various patterns in text, suitable document format etc. It is the writer's weapon that every writer adopts during writing.

v) Tone: Tone is the overall impression of the writing. It refers to emotional overtones that make how an audience feels. It is the emotional character of a document. Tone in technical writing is professional and factual. It falls between formal and informal way of writing.

vi) Special Features: Technical writer has to implement special features such as mechanics of writing, computer graphics and technical knowledge along with their writing. Technical documents often relies on special features of visual efforts to hold the attention of the audience. The writers should adopt necessary software and desktop publishing tools to design the document look inviting and attractive.

⊗ Technical and Other types of Writing:

Three types of writing are of major concern; Technical Writing, Academic Writing, and Imaginative writing. Although all types of writing stick to principles of unity, coherence, and standard usages, they have different features.

Technical and Academic Writing: Technical writing and academic writing are comparable in the sense that both types of writing are unified, coherent, and well organized. Style and standard usage are important in both writings. These both types of writing rely on the process of thinking and writing for certain time and the purpose of these writing is to inform. However, there are some differences between these two. (already discussed differences).

Technical and Imaginative Writing: Imaginative writing is less academic and more artistic and creative. This writing is the product of imagination of the writer. The people and the events in the imaginative writing are fictional which may reveal universal truths but the technical writing is factual and objective.

| Technical Writing | Imaginative Writing |
|--|--|
| i) The purpose of technical writing is to inform a course of action, to request for specific action. | i) The purpose of imaginative writing is to record a memory to discover oneself. |
| ii) Writing style is clear, concise, plain and direct language. | ii) Writing style is complex. |
| iii) Organization is modular, predictable and apparent. | iii) Organization is clear and well-planned. |
| iv) Error free grammar as possible. | iv) Grammar is likely to be error free. |
| v) Register in between formal and informal. | v) Register formal and if necessary informal. |

Technical vs. Non-technical (Personal) Writing:

| Criteria | Technical Writing | Non-technical (Personal) Writing |
|--------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| i) Audience | Varied including technical, non-technical | Family, friends, relatives. |
| ii) Content | Technical/Standard | Conversational |
| iii) Writing Style | Clear, concise, plain and direct language. | Simple and compound sentences. |
| iv) Grammar | Likely to be error free | May not always use complete sentences |
| v) Register | Formal | Informal |
| vi) Organization | Highly structured, short paragraphs, clear transitions | Less clear as Technical writing is. |