

# Technical Writing Principles

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## Structure

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- uniformity of structure
- few variations in font type and size are preferred
- visual alignment helps speed up searches
- typical organization: introduction, body, conclusions, references

## Communication

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- make minimal assumptions about the audience
- readability by the broadest possible audience, at different levels
- the organizational principle for the document should be made clear
- a clean conceptual model helps establish the organizational principles
- all introductions start with purpose and scope (background), continue with a stand-alone overview, and end with a document outline
- each section starts with a brief overview of its contents and organizational principle
- a document is written once and read many times (if useful)
- rapid access to specific information is critical
- ease of change must be built in
- separation of concerns limits the impact of change

## Layout

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- uniformity in style speed up reading and builds expectations
- reading bandwidth is a major concern in putting together the layout
- too much indentation and white space can reduce the volume of information one can perceive at a glance

## Basic rules

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- terms are defined before usage
- full sentences and proper grammar
- key idea/element should come first in the sentence
- avoid unnecessary use of technical terms
- do not spend time on the obvious
- explain the subtleties
- direct, simple, precise, and concise
- eliminate details that do not communicate information