

Soft skills for technical writing

Fundamentals of technical writing 2025
Brno University of Technology

What we'll discuss today

- What are soft skills?
 - Communication
 - Curiosity - Proactivity
 - Teamwork
 - Feedback
 - Time management
 - Adaptability
- Conclusion & Useful Resources

What are soft skills?



- = interpersonal skills useful in all relationships in life
- Not related to specific technical knowledge or training
- Help us to:
 - Work effectively with others
 - Adapt to changing situations
 - Perform well in variety of roles
- Soft skills in TW:
 - Communication and collaboration
 - Curiosity and proactivity
 - Adaptability and time management

Communication 101



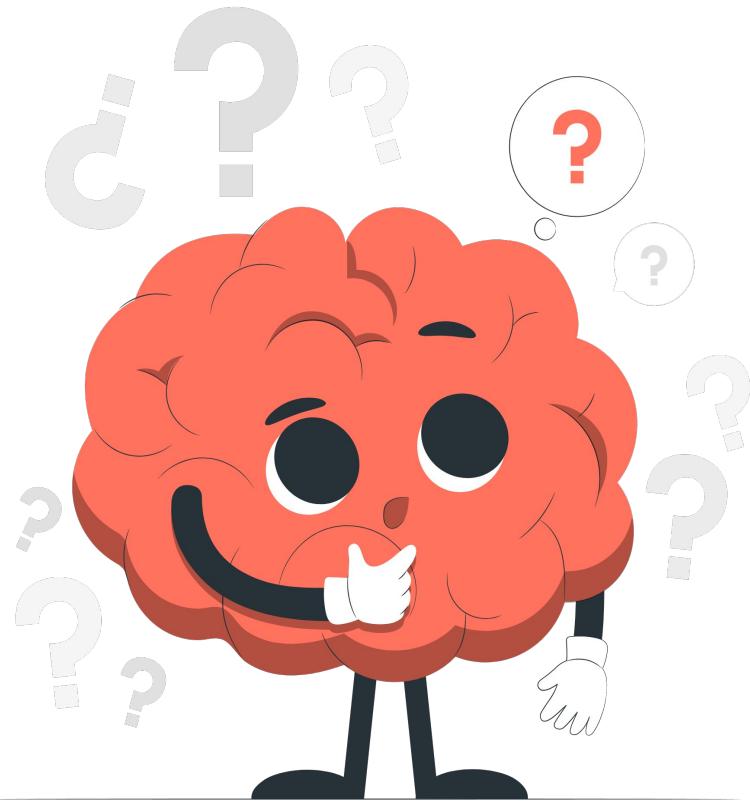
Communication plays the main part

- Active listening and full attention:
 - Good eye contact.
 - Non-verbal cues.
 - Ask open-ended questions to encourage further discussion.
 - Paraphrase and reflect back what you hear.
 - Listen to understand, not to respond.
 - No judgment and pushy advice.
- Never show up “empty-handed”
- Pose hypotheticals, ask for directions

Curiosity - Proactivity

Being proactive and staying motivated as a Technical writer

You're heading into your first team meeting about a new documentation task.



Go to menti.com and enter 86210502

Advocate for docs



- Make internal stakeholders understand the docs priority.
- Bad or missing documentation = bad user experience, unhappy customers, overwhelmed customer support, and lost revenue.
- In some companies, the docs are a part of the product customers pay for, so it is important to deliver a full product.

TEAMWORK - GENERAL GUIDELINES



- ✓ Be polite and respectful.
- ✓ State your purpose - clear and transparent.
STICK TO THE FACTS!
- ✓ Ask educated questions.
- ✓ Behave in a way that helps others grow, not put them down.
- ✓ If you like how a coworker does something good at work, tell them - a little boost in confidence can go a long way.
- ✓ Cultivate psychological safety like we do in Red Hat.

TEAMWORK - GIVING PRAISE, ASKING QUESTIONS

STICK TO THE FACTS!

If you are **pleased** with the results, say it:

- "I like how you made that chapter clearly structured."
- "Thanks for catching that detail!"
- "Thank you for the helpful feedback."

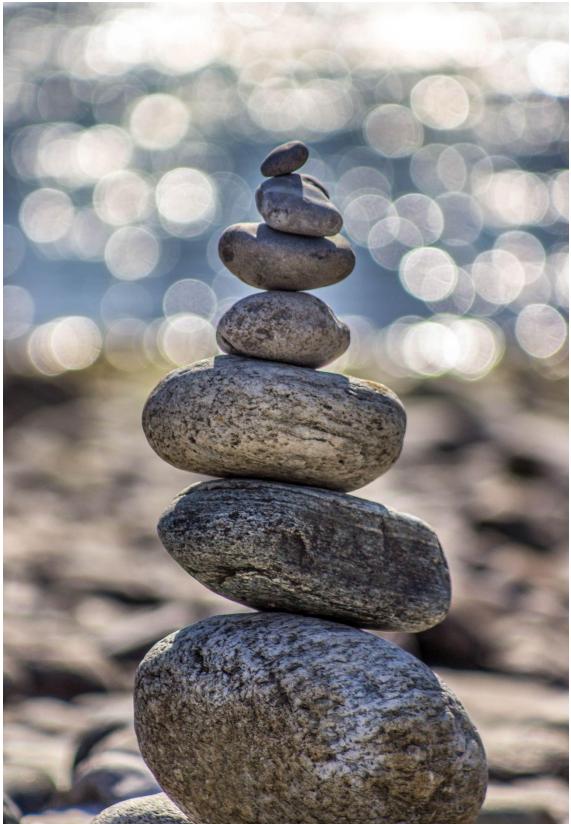
If you need to **ask for more information**:

- "Hi, I am [name+role], and I am reaching out to you about [context]. From what I understand, [results of the research I made] point to the fact that [the dilemma I'm having or the clarification I need]. Could you please:
 - *elaborate on [a specific thing I request]?
 - *clarify the audience of this text?
 - *point me in the right direction with this [step I am writing about]?

Thank you

TEAMWORK - EXPRESSING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

If you are **unhappy** with the results, always **STICK TO THE FACTS**:



- “The project was set up with these [expectations/criteria], and I see two of them have not been met.”
- “The customer complained they received the project incomplete and a week after the set deadline. The ticket shows the final draft was in the [Review] status for a long time. Can you help me understand what happened?”
- “Thank you for the feedback; however, I made [*the decisions*] based on [*verifiable guidance document/discussion with the developer*], which makes me more inclined to keep them [*i.e. disregard your feedback*].”
- “Where do we go from here?”
“How can we prevent this from happening again?”
“What would be the win-win resolution to this situation?”



Feedback: How to give it

- **Prepare.**
- Mind your **tone**.
- Remain **sensitive**. Stick to the facts!
- Focus on **improvements**.
- Emphasize the **future**.
- **Listen!**



Feedback: How to receive it

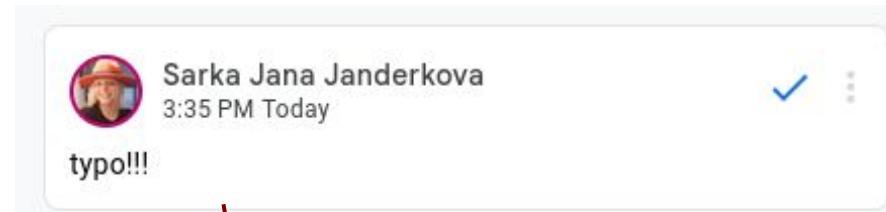
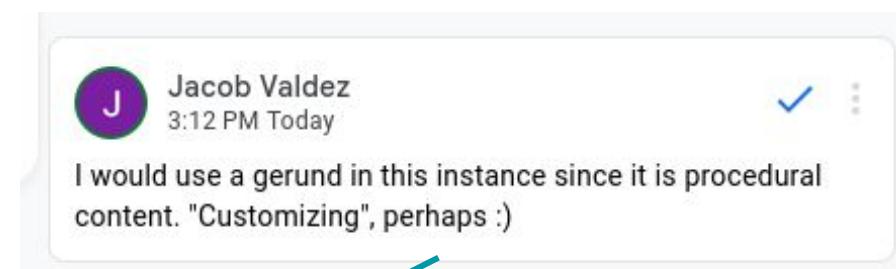
- Don't be a caveman!
- Ask for it.
- Ask for it again.
- "What can I do better?"
- Be grateful.
- Be objective.

== How to customize the cpu-partitioning TuneD profile

Extending TuneD profiles can help to make aditional tuning changes.

The `cpu-partitioning` profile sets the CPUs to use `cstate=1`. In order to use the `cpu-partitioning` profile but to additionally change the CPU cstate from cstate1 to cstate0, the following procedure describes a new TuneD profile named _my_profile_, which inherits the `cpu-partitioning` profile and then sets C state-0.

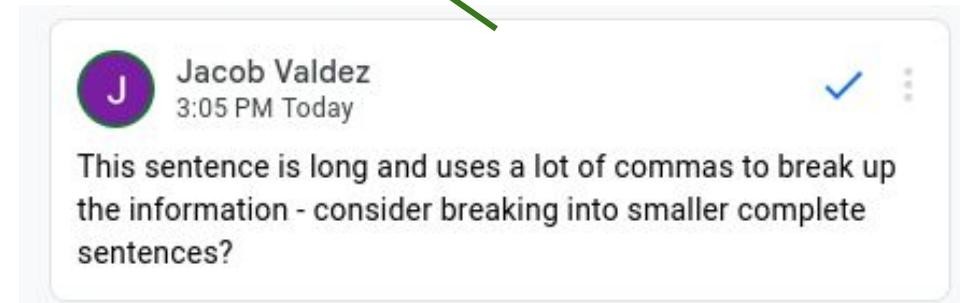
EXERCISE



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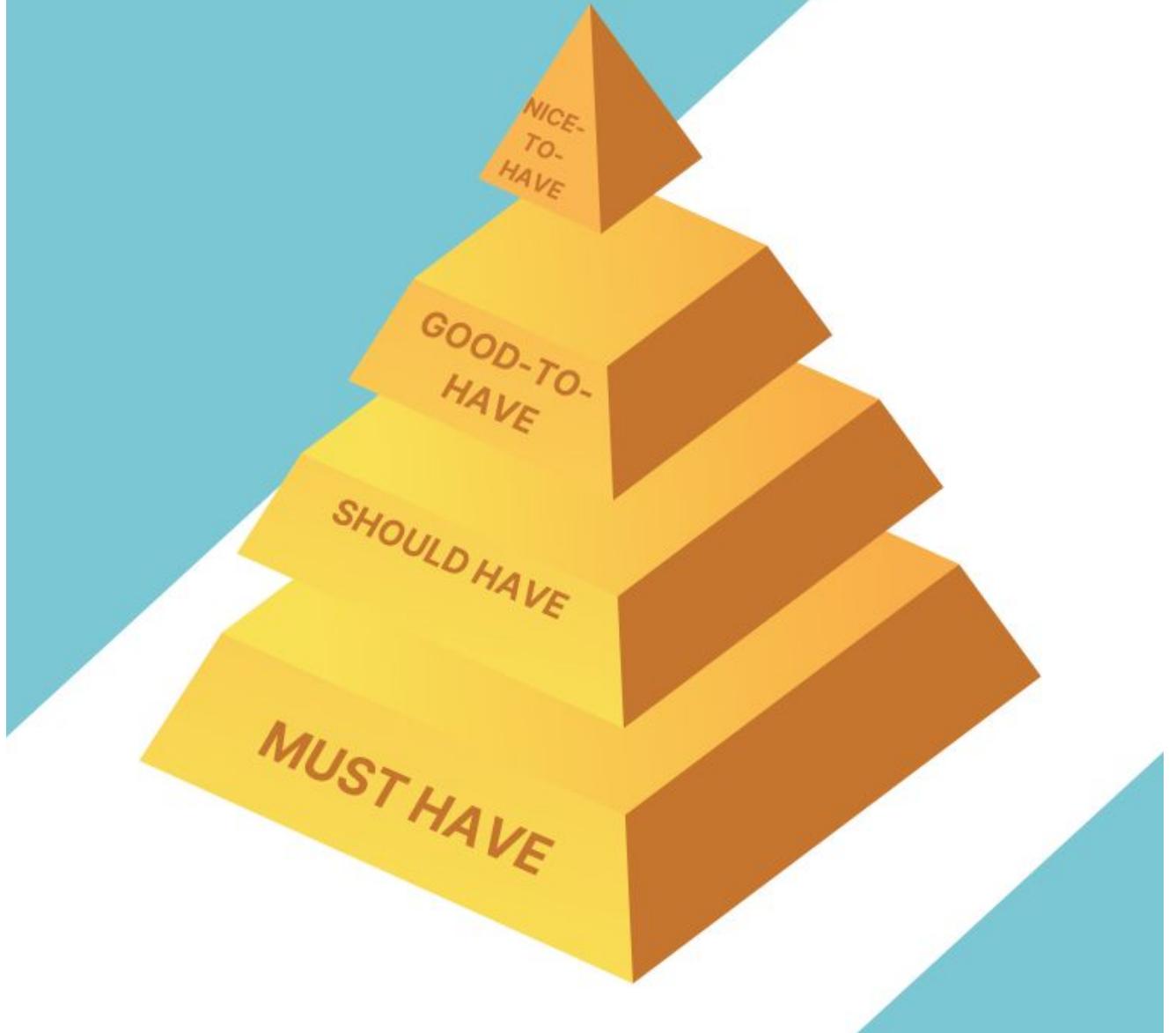
Peer review

- Work with **style guides**
- **Support** your comments
- Differentiate between **required** and **optional** changes.
- Provide **positive** feedback as well as negative.
- Focus on:
 - **language**
 - **style**
 - **minimalism**

Time management & Adaptability

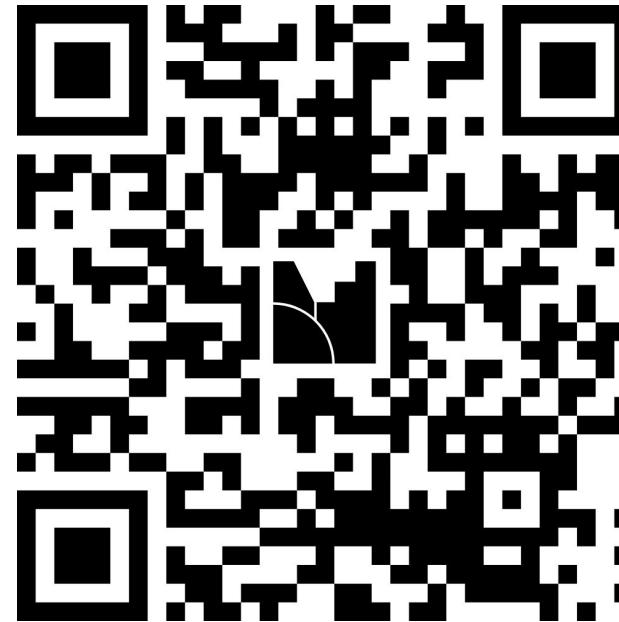
"The bad news is time flies.
The good news is you are the pilot."
~ Michael Altshuler

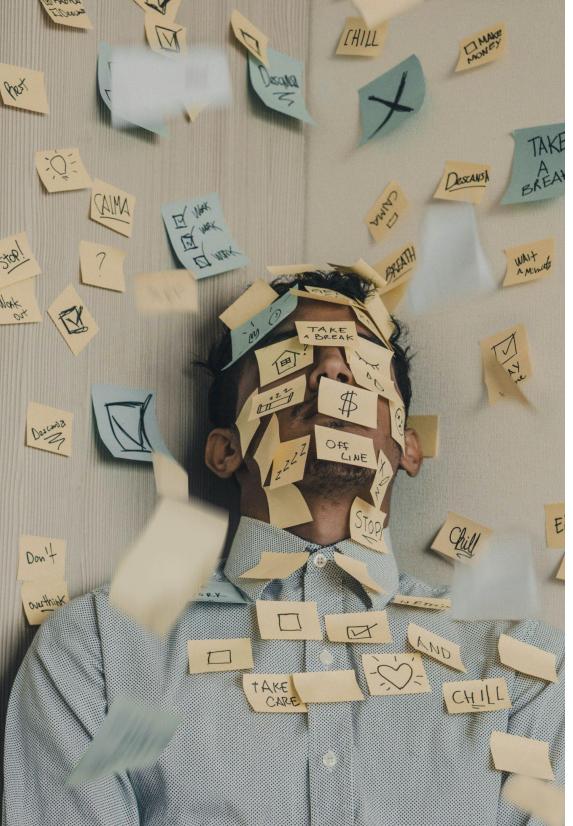
WORKING IN LAYERS





Procrastination





Your key to success

- Eliminate distractions
 - START
 - Little by little (5 minutes)
 - Focus on what you can control
 - Just figure out the NEXT step
 - Ask for help if needed - no shame
 - INSERT A BREAK
 - REPEAT
 - Check & adapt

Your biggest enemies

- Striving for perfection
 - Parkinson's law: Task expansion



USEFUL RESOURCES

- *Feel Good Productivity* by Ali Abdaal
- *4000 Weeks* by Oliver Burkeman
- *Respektovat a být respektován* by Kopřiva, Nováčková, et al.
- *Difficult Conversations* or *Crucial Conversations*

Thank you