How I Became a Technical Writer

I'm currently working as a technical writer, but I worked as a system analyst and developer for more than ten years before starting my technical writing career.

Do you want to know why and how a system analyst became a technical writer? Here is how.

I got my first job as a system analyst and developer two months after landing in Toronto, Canada. I moved to Vancouver ten years later because it was too cold in Toronto, and Vancouver is much warmer. In Vancouver, I went to a meditation center to learn meditation. That led me to my second job as a web developer and system administrator. Later I joined the video production team for two years. I enjoyed the work, but I found I didn’t want to continue for the long term. I started thinking about my next career; that was 2012.

While searching for information about my next career, I found that a technical writer would be in massive demand within five years. I felt like I would fit a technical writer role because I loved organizing and clarifying information to help people learn new software and share my knowledge. Most importantly, the results I produce would be documentation. In the technology space, relevant knowledge of code and applications changes at a fast pace. However, writing skills will never be out-of-date. Although not as necessary of a factor, writing as a job doesn’t tie me down to the office.

Becoming a technical writer was a huge challenge because I couldn't speak English well, let alone write, but I decided to pursue it anyway. I started from high school English 12. When I registered for English 12, the teacher looked at my entrance exam result said, "It will be tough, but you'll be OK." Indeed, it was tough because each assignment was a reflective essay on hard-to-understand poems like *Ode to the West Wind* and short novels like *The Necklace* by Maupassant. However, I completed English 12, which made me feel confident registering for the Technical Communication program at Simon Fraser University. After earning the Technical Communication Certificate, I was much better with English writing. Then I found it was easy for me to make some mistakes due to the habits from my first language. Again, I registered for the Edit Certificate Program at Simon Fraser University. All courses in the program focused on finding and fixing mistakes, which helped me find my own mistakes and avoid errors in my writing.

While I was learning, I wrote many instructions and online help for video production software and equipment training, which let me put my writing skills into practical use. After earning my Editing Certificate, I passed the internal exam and became a full-time technical writer.

I have learned three things from this experience.

First, making the decision is important. If you want to pursue something you love, go for it. Don't be afraid of difficulties or think it will take too long to learn. If only you put in the time and start learning, you will gradually reach your goal.

Second, acting is essential. Time is fair to everyone. You can use it to learn and reach your goal or stay there thinking while doing nothing. Time will pass anyway. Act, and you'll succeed.

Third, education is the most important. You need new knowledge and skills no matter whatever you want to pursue. Education is the bridge for you to get the knowledge and skills and make you capable and confident of advancing to your goal.

I hope everyone can make the decision and act right away if they have a dream.