

2023 INTERNAL AUDIT WEBINAR SERIES

Technical Writing Basics

Technical writing involves communicating complex technical information clearly and effectively to a specific audience. Follow these four core principles: Clarity, Brevity, Audience Awareness and Consistency.

Clarity

- Use simple, straightforward language that the audience will understand. Avoid unnecessary jargon or technical terms that haven't been explained.
- For unfamiliar terms or concepts, provide context, definitions, and background information so readers can understand the usage and meaning.
- Break down complex topics into smaller, more understandable sections and chunks using descriptive headings and bullet points.
- Use clear examples, analogies, and comparisons to everyday experiences to clarify difficult ideas and make them more relatable.
- Include visual elements like diagrams, flowcharts, graphs, screenshots, and schematics to aid understanding and reinforce key points.
- Summarize main takeaways and key points throughout the document to reinforce the most important information.

Brevity

- Be brief and to the point. Avoid excessive elaborations, repetitions, or rambling discussions.
- Remove redundant words, phrases and sections that do not add substantial value for the reader.
- Use active voice and strong action verbs. Avoid passive voice and excessive use of "to be" verbs.
- Minimize unnecessary adverbs and adjectives. Use them only if they serve an important purpose.
- Use lists, bullet points and tables to break up dense blocks of text and highlight key information.
- Focus only on the most essential details and examples. Omit non-critical background information.

Audience Awareness

- Identify the target readers early when planning the document. Consider their background, knowledge level and technical expertise.
- Use an appropriate tone and vocabulary suited to the audience. Avoid language that is too basic or too advanced for their level.
- Explain unfamiliar terms and provide necessary context so readers can understand the concepts and discussion.
- Structure content in a logical order based on what readers need to know first to build foundational knowledge.
- Anticipate potential questions and concerns. Address them proactively in the text.
- Have audience representatives review drafts to ensure it is understandable and meets their needs.

Consistency

- Adhere to the organization's style guide for formatting conventions, terminology, voice, and grammar usage.
- Maintain consistency in writing approach, structure, and tone across documents.
- Use standard templates for a consistent look and structured layout.
- Develop a style sheet glossary to ensure consistent vocabulary usage.
- Always run a spell check.