

What is technical writing?

Technical Writing is a scientific discipline that comes between the designer of a product and the end user. Technical Writing handles technical information and presents it in a way without ambiguity and ensures that the information presented to the user, is as simple and clear as possible.

Well, Technical Writing is a form of technical communication. It is a style of formal writing. Technical writing is an established way to communicate information to a particular audience for a particular reason. It is often a systematic interpretation of scientific subjects and technical subjects associated with sciences.

How to describe technical writing? An easy way is to think of the gadgets you use at home, like the DVD player, the music system, the microwave oven, the vehicle you drive, the software you use in your computer. All these items are delivered to you with manuals, instruction guides so that you are able to go through them and use your gadgets in the right way.

Who is a technical writer?

Technical writers are women and men with strong language and interpersonal skills. They produce documentation for some of the smartest people around. The demand for writers who can communicate complex topics in simple formats is always there. . A good technical writer needs strong language skills, and must understand the highly evolved conventions of modern technical communications.

Technical writers work under titles like *Information Development*, *Technical Documentation*, or *Technical Publications*. Technical Writers may be called Information Developers, Documentation Specialists, Documentation Engineers, or Technical Content Developers.

Technical writers explain complex ideas to technical and nontechnical audiences. This could mean telling a programmer how to use a software library, or telling a consumer how to operate a television remote control. Technical writers gather information from existing documentation, and from subject matter experts.

A subject matter expert (SME) is any expert on the topic the writer is working on. Technical writers usually are not SMEs themselves—unless they're writing about creating good technical documentation. Workers at many levels, and in many different fields, have a role in producing and distributing technical communications.

Where is it applied?

Technical Writing is applied in diverse fields like computers, hardware, software, chemistry, biotech, finance, consumer electronics, aerospace industry and many more.

Characteristics of a good technical writer

Good technical writing clarifies technical jargon. It presents useful information in a clear and easy to understand way, and, is directed at the intended audience. Poor technical writing, creates unnecessary technical jargon, and confuses the reader. The TW should write a lot. A TW should write at least 10 pages a day on a variety of subjects. Good writers blossom into good technical writers. A good technical writers thinks, plans, conducts research and reviews, interviews, reads, writes, makes right decisions at the right time, and above all, never gets out of the reader's zone. This means the TW stays in the reader's shoes all the time.

Technical writers cannot tolerate mistakes in documents. They obsessively proof-read all mistakes and fix them. Good English is a must for technical writers. Commas, apostrophes, articles, and capitalization are commonplace to the technical writers. Compulsive reading of articles, magazines, news, and blogs impregnate the technical writer's mind with language semantics, structures besides ideas and information. In due course, the technical writers starts proof-reading everything that he reads. It becomes a way of life for him.

Technical writer's evolution

Technical writers become versatile users of some fascinating and state-of-the-art applications. A technical writer needs to know how to use publishing programs, help authoring tools, web design, and graphics packages.

Publishing Tools: FrameMaker, MSWord, InterLeaf, ArborText, Quark Express, PageMaker, Quadralay Webworks Publisher, Authorit

Graphic Programs: Illustrator, Corel Draw, PhotoShop, PaintShop Pro

Help Tools: RoboHelp, ForeHelp, Doc-To-Help

Web Tools: Front Page, DreamWeaver, HomeSite, Cold Fusion

Learning and adapting to changing info technology scenario is a must for the TW. They learn a new application quickly. They can figure it out or learn how to use it on their own, with a reference book or manual.

Style and presentation are most valued by the TW. The TW documents have great looks. Their pages have white space, neat, properly-aligned numbered steps, bullets, and text.

The best technical writers create pages and screens that look like a freshly cleaned bathroom - shiny chrome faucets, clean, folded white towels, gleaming floor, a fresh, new bar of soap. Good tech writers use the principles of good graphic design to achieve this attractive effect. [They often hire real graphic artists to help them select great-looking fonts, covers, and page layouts.] TW don't allow big, long paragraphs. People do not wish to read long paragraphs.

Technical writer's deliverables

Technical writing is most often associated with Online Help and User Manuals. There are other forms of technical content created by technical writers. They are:

Requirements documentation, Scientific reports, Installation guides, Magazine articles, Network administrators' guides, Multimedia Tutorials, Developer Guides, Feature Design documentation, Network recovery guides, Policies and procedures, Presentations, Specifications, Technical papers, Training materials, Troubleshooting guides, Corporate Annual Reports, Corporate disclaimers, Proposal (business), Reference documents, Release notes, Reports, Business Guides, Contracts, Certification and accreditation activities, Site preparation guides, Maintenance and repair procedures, User guides, White papers, Application programming interface programmers' guides, Assembly instructions, Network configuration guides.

