Technical Descriptions

Technical Descriptions: Product and Process © 2023 by Joyce Bower is licensed under [CC BY 4.0](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/?ref=chooser-v1)

[Video Link](https://linnbenton.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=668b7df6-c059-46f8-8129-b0210121402b&start=0)

[Slide Deck](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1uAmJUfQiDGeu2yT625ETx2eXKDE2a5hMY2R9WlN-dkM/edit?usp=sharing)

# Goals

In this presentation, we will be exploring technical descriptions. After watching this video, you will know:

* what they are,
* how they are used, and
* how to write an effective technical description.

# What Are Technical Descriptions?

A technical description is a document that explains to a user how a product (object) or process works. Both focus on the purpose of the object or process. Both also use text and images to show the user what the product or process is. Often technical descriptions are part of a larger document; however, sometimes they are a document on their own.

# What Are Some Examples?

## Examples Slide 1

When it comes to products, the objects or mechanisms could be anything from a pen to a computer. The description is usually simple enough to explain in a page or two, yet complex enough to break down into several parts. Usually, this is not a document that you would need sources for, but if you do consult a source, cite it! You will also need to cite any images used.

## Examples Slide 2

The following are a few examples:

* French press coffee maker
* Beehive
* Lawn mower
* Blow dryer

The technical description focuses on the physical parts and how they work together as a whole. Because of this, images are necessary to show the user what the parts are and what their purpose is.

When it comes to processes, technical descriptions could be anything from photosynthesis to a nuclear reactor. Again, these focus on the parts and how they work together as a whole.

# How Can I Write an Effective Technical Description?

As with all technical documents, technical descriptions focus on the end user. This focus on the audience is crucial in developing a clear, concise, yet thorough description.

## How Should the Description Be Organized?

Whether describing an object or process, the structure is fairly similar:

* First, discuss the use of the object or process.
* Second, break the object or process down into parts.
* Third, explain how the parts work together to create the whole.

## Images

Include an image or several images, preferably with labeled parts. Make sure you cite it to give credit to the person who took or created the image. (Use APA, MLA, or whatever style you are required to use.)

## How Do I Format a Technical Description?

* Use headings. These are typically in bold font, so that way users can find what they need quickly.
* Use block paragraphing and single spacing, unless told otherwise.
* Be consistent for each part. For each part, use the same pattern. Examples:
  + Bold Part Name: Full sentence.
    - **Carafe:** The pitcher holds the water and coffee grounds. It can be glass or stainless steel.
  + Bold part name as the beginning of the sentence. Full sentence.
    - The **carafe** is the pitcher that holds the water and coffee grounds. It can be glass or stainless steel.
* Be simple and concise in your wording. You do want to be thorough, but you also want to use as few words as possible to convey the description. Remember, the user is reading to get the information (not to be entertained).

## Reminders

* When writing any document, keep your audience (the user) in mind. What do they need?
* Revise!
* Use document design.
  + Headings
  + Bold print
  + Color if needed or wanted
  + White space
* Edit!
  + Technical writing avoids unnecessary adjectives and adverbs.
  + Keep wording concise.
  + Keep it simple.

# Review

Remember, when it comes to the technical description, it is in three parts:

* The use of the product or process
* The parts of it
* How the parts work together to create the whole

I hope you now have a better understanding of technical descriptions and how you can write an effective one.