What is Technical Writing?

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# Goals

Welcome to technical writing!

In this presentation, we will discuss:

* What technical writing is
* Where technical writing is used
* What kinds of documents are considered technical writing
* What is most important in technical writing

# Technical Writing

Technical writers create or revise content that is specialized. When we say specialized, we do not necessarily mean that most people would not understand it. Rather, we mean that it is specific to a certain field or needs extra explanation for those who do not regularly interact with the information.

Some fields that use technical writing are

* Finance
* Medicine
* Forestry
* Computer hardware and software, and
* Engineering

Technical writing is even involved in education and, to an even simpler example, furniture that needs to be built.

# Audience is Key

The audience is also sometimes called the user in technical writing because often what is being written is something that the reader needs to complete a task.

When thinking about the audience, consider:

* Who is reading your document?
	+ Is it a manager? supervisor? colleague? customer? Depending on who that person is, you may need to adjust your style.
* How technical is your audience? Non, semi, expert?
	+ Non-technical refers to people who have little-to-no knowledge of the field or information that you are writing about.
	+ Semi-technical refers to readers who may have some experience but maybe they do not know it extremely well. These may be people who have an interest in what you are writing about but who have not studied it in depth.
	+ Technical refers to readers who have studied the subject and are considered experts. In this case, you may be using more jargon and not need to explain certain information in detail.
* What jargon (specialized words) need to be defined or changed?
* What can stay the same?
	+ Depending on the audience, you may need to adjust or define certain terms to help them better understand.
* What design and formatting does the audience need to make information easy, accessible, and quickly understood?
	+ Does the audience need images to help them see what you are trying to explain?
	+ Do they need the information in a certain format? If you are writing instructions for a child, you may need more color and images. If you are writing instructions for linespeople, you probably need to put them into a format that they can use on a smartphone because they cannot have a bulky book or piece of paper while fixing electrical lines.

Important: The readers of technical documents are usually reading because they have to, not because they want to. They need to find the information that is most important to them quickly and easily and understand the information without confusion or needing to look up more information.

# KISS

Keep it short and simple. This is key. You need to keep this in the forefront of your mind when it comes to technical writing.

What does it mean to keep it short and simple?

We are talking about wording, style, documents, design, formatting, and information that is precise, concise, organized, and direct.

# Document Design

When designing your documents, keep in mind that the audience needs to find the information quickly and easily. This means using, among many other things, headings, white space, images, charts, graphs, and color.

# Examples

Technical writing comes in many forms. Some examples include:

* Proposals
* Brochures
* Newsletters
* Product descriptions
* Reports
* Case studies
* Memos
* Emails
* \*Instructions (procedures and manuals)\*

Technical instructions are among the most written and used forms of technical writing.

# Conclusion

This presentation touched on many parts of technical writing that we will discuss in more detail later. For now, I hope you have a better understanding of technical writing and what you will be learning in this course.