

# TECHNICAL WRITING

JOHN M. LANNON • SIXTH EDITION



<sup>1</sup> **tech·ni·cal** \ 'teknəkəl, -nek-\ *adj* Gk *technikos* of art, ful, practical (fr. *technē* art, craft, practical skill + *-ikos* -i E *-al*; akin to Gk *tektōn* carpenter, builder, Skt *taksan* carpenter, *taksati* he forms, constructs, L *texere* to weave, struct, OHG *dehsa* hatchet, *dahs* badger. **1a**: having usu. practical knowledge esp. of a mechanical or scientific subject <the construction of the thermonuclear weapon was a great challenge to the ~people of this country –Edward Teller> **b**: marked by or characteristic of specialization <

<sup>1</sup> **writing** *n* -s [ME, fr. gerund of *writen* to write – WRITE] **1** : the act or process of one who writes <with copies may be made—E.M.Robinson>: as **a** : the forming letters on stone, paper, wood, or other suitable medium to record the ideas which characters and press or to communicate the ideas by visible signs characters to record in visible form words or sounds were not to be done on stone with a chisel but on papyrus –George Steindorff & K.C. Steele> <~on the

# Technical Writing

Sixth Edition

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# A Checklist for Revising the Document

Numbers in parentheses refer to the first page of discussion in this text.

## Is the Content Worthwhile?

- ☐ A brief but explicit title (370)
- ☐ Subject and purpose clearly stated (231)
- ☐ Enough information for readers to understand the meaning (26)
- ☐ Material (or insight) new and significant to the audience (26)
- ☐ All material technically accurate (16)
- ☐ Technical details appropriate for the audience (27)
- ☐ All needed warnings and cautions (433)
- ☐ All data examined fully and interpreted impartially (180)
- ☐ Both sides of the issue presented (182)
- ☐ Opinions and assertions supported by evidence (47)
- ☐ Conclusions and recommendations supported by the facts presented (555)
- ☐ No recommendations where none were requested (25)
- ☐ No gaps, foggy areas, or needless details (27)
- ☐ All anticipated reader questions answered (19)
- ☐ All data sources documented (188)
- ☐ All material honest and fair to everyone involved (62)

## Is the Organization Sensible?

- ☐ Structure of the document visible at a glance (224)
- ☐ An evident line of reasoning (555)
- ☐ A distinct introduction, body, and conclusion (230)
- ☐ A given section's length that is equal to its importance (231)
- ☐ Enough transitions and connectors to signal relationships (623)
- ☐ Material organized for best emphasis (246)
- ☐ A topic (orienting) sentence to begin each supporting paragraph (239)
- ☐ One main point developed in each supporting paragraph, with unity, coherence, and resonable length (238)

### Is the Style Readable?

- ☐ Each sentence understandable on *first* reading (251)
- ☐ The most information expressed in the fewest words (263)
- ☐ Sentences varied in construction and length (274)
- ☐ Each word chosen for exactness (279)
- ☐ All definitions double-checked (382)
- ☐ Abstractions and generalizations replaced by concrete, specific, and exact language (286)
- ☐ No triteness, overstatements, euphemisms or inappropriate jargon (283)
- ☐ Tone unbiased and appropriate (291)

### Are Form, Format, Visuals and Mechanics Appropriate?

- ☐ The best document form (letter, memo, report) for the stated purpose and audience (461)
- ☐ An inviting and accessible format: white space, typeface, etc. (346)
- ☐ Adequate, clear, and informative headings (359)
- ☐ Adequate visuals, to clarify meaning and create interest (302)
- ☐ All visuals properly introduced, integrated, and discussed (338)
- ☐ All pages numbered and in order (352)
- ☐ All needed supplements: title page, abstract, etc. (367)
- ☐ Correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar (592)

# Proofreader's Marks

- / the concluding stroke after each insertion and also used to separate two or more marks\*
- e delete; take it out
- c close up within line  
( )
- close up close up between lines
- e delete and close up
- ^ insert here (something)
- # insert space
- eq# space evenly between words
- stet let it stand
- tr transpose
- cap set in capitals (CAPITALS)
- lc set in lowercase (lowercase)
- sm cap set in small CAPITALS (SMALL CAPITALS)
- ital set in italic (italic)
- bf set in boldface (boldface)
- sp spell out (abbrev)
- ¶ Begin new paragraph.
- run in Do not begin new paragraph
- break begin new line
- ⊙ period
- ^ comma
- ⊙ colon
- ^ semicolon
- ✓ apostrophe
- ✓/✓ quotation marks
- (/) parentheses
- [/] brackets
- $\frac{1}{M}$  em-dash standard  $\frac{1}{M}$  dash
- $\frac{1}{N}$  en dash (1941-1945)
- = hyphen
- ✓ superscript ( $\pi^2$ )
- ^ subscript ( $H_2O$ )
- = align horizontally
- || align vertically
- move left
- move right
- center horizontally
- center vertically
- wf wrong font
- 9 inverted letter
- x broken letter

\*If you wish to make the same change more than once in a line, indicate the change and follow it by the relevant number of slashes, such as

^// Dr. Jones a pediatric surgeon completed her rounds at noon.

If more than three slashes are necessary, instead circle the number following the change:

lc/5 Complete Exercises A, B, C, and D.

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# Preface

*Technical Writing*, sixth edition, is a comprehensive and flexible introduction to technical and professional communication. Designed for classes in which students from a variety of majors are enrolled, the book addresses a wide range of interests. Rhetorical principles are explained, illustrated, and applied to an array of assignments, from brief memos and summaries to formal reports and proposals. To help students develop awareness of audience and accountability, exercises embody the writing demands that are typical throughout college and on the job.

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## ORGANIZATION

Following a brief overview of technical writing in Chapter 1, the remaining text has five major sections:

**Part I: Writing for Readers in the Workplace** treats job-related writing as a problem-solving process. Students learn to think critically about the informative, persuasive, and ethical dimensions of their communications. Also, they learn about adapting to rapidly changing communication technologies, to interpersonal challenges of collaborative writing, and to the various needs and expectations of global audiences.

**Part II: Information Retrieval, Analysis, and Synthesis** treats research as a deliberate inquiry process. Students learn to formulate significant research questions; to explore primary and secondary sources; to record, evaluate, interpret, and document their findings; and to summarize for economy, accuracy, and emphasis.

**Part III: Sequence, Shape, and Style in a Document** demonstrates strategies for organizing and expressing messages that readers can follow and understand. Students learn to control their material and to develop a style that connects with readers.

**Part IV: Graphic and Design Elements** treats the rhetorical implications of graphics, page design, and document supplements. Students learn to enhance a document's access, appeal, visual impact, and usability.

**Part V: Specific Documents and Applications** applies earlier concepts and strategies to the composing of technical documents. Various letters, memos, reports, and proposals offer a balance of examples from the



workplace and from student writing. Each sample document has been chosen so that students can emulate it easily.

Finally, the **appendixes** offer a brief handbook of grammar, usage, and mechanics; interviews with four writers on the job; and a sample proposal, progress report, and final report for an actual workplace project.

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## THE FOUNDATIONS OF *TECHNICAL WRITING*

- More than a value-neutral exercise in “information transfer,” workplace writing typically is a complex social transaction. Each rhetorical situation places specific interpersonal, ethical, legal, and cultural demands on the writer.
- Writers with no rhetorical awareness overlook the decisions that are crucial for effective writing. Only by defining their rhetorical problem and asking the important questions can writers formulate an effective response.
- As well as being *communicators*, today’s workplace professionals increasingly are *consumers* of information, who need to be skilled in the methods of inquiry, retrieval, evaluation, and interpretation that comprise the research process.
- Although it follows no single, predictable sequence, the writing process is not a collection of random activities; rather, it is a set of deliberate decisions in problem solving. Beyond emulating this or that model document, students need to understand that effective writing requires critical thinking.
- A technical writing classroom typically contains an assortment of students with varied backgrounds. The textbook, then, should offer explanations that are thorough, examples and models that are broadly intelligible, and goals that are rigorous yet collectively achievable. And the book should be flexible enough to allow for various course plans.
- As an alternative to reiterating the textbook material, classroom workshops apply textbook principles by focusing on the students’ writing. These workshops call for an accessible, readable, and engaging book to serve as a comprehensive reference.

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## NEW TO THIS EDITION

- New material (in Chapter 5) on critical thinking about ethical issues: avoiding fallacies, applying reasonable criteria for ethical judgment,



confronting ethical dilemmas, avoiding communication abuse, deciding when and how to take an ethical stand, and anticipating the consequences.

- A new chapter (6) on adapting to communication technology, collaborative relationships, and global audiences. Coverage includes telecommuting, electronic mail, global networks, hypermedia, paperless documents, online documentation, hypertext applications in writing and research; the social nature of collaboration, conflict in collaborative groups, guidelines for managing and evaluating collaborative projects; cultural influences on audience expectations and interpretations, guidelines for analyzing multicultural audiences, a checklist for intercultural documents.
- Two fully revised chapters (8 and 9) on research methods for the information age. New coverage includes thinking critically about the research process; designing a focused and balanced inquiry; evaluating and interpreting findings; exploring automated resources; designing surveys; assessing validity, reliability, and certainty; recognizing the influence of bias (in database sources, direct observation, and interpretation); avoiding causal and statistical fallacies; paraphrasing and integrating quoted material; choosing a system of parenthetical documentation (MLA, APA, or numerical); reassessing one's research process (a checklist).
- A new section (in Chapter 10) on distinctions among forms of summarized information: closing summary, informative abstract, executive summary, and descriptive abstract.
- A new section (in Chapter 13) on the rhetorical implications of sexist usage.
- A new section (in Chapter 19) on assessing a document's usability according to "human factors."
- A new section (in Chapter 23) on the role of critical thinking in the formulation, evaluation, and refinement of recommendations.
- A new analytical report (in Chapter 23) on hazards posed by electromagnetic radiation.
- New material (in Chapter 24) on peer evaluation of oral reports.
- More on rhetorical, legal, and ethical considerations in word choice, definitions, product descriptions, instructions, and other forms of communication.
- A new art program and greater emphasis on visual communication.
- More annotated writing samples, to highlight rhetorical features.
- More applications suitable for collaborative work.

- A comprehensive educational package including an instructor's manual with test bank, chapter quizzes, and master sheets for overhead or opaque projection, and a packet of acetate transparencies.

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John M. Lannon

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# Brief Contents

**Contents**      **vii**

**Preface**      **xxiii**

**Acknowledgements**      **xxvi**

**Chapter 1**      **Introduction to Technical Writing**      **1**

## **PART I      WRITING FOR READERS IN THE WORKPLACE      9**

**Chapter 2**      **Problem Solving in Workplace Writing**      **10**

**Chapter 3**      **Solving the Information Problem**      **18**

**Chapter 4**      **Solving the Persuasion Problem**      **34**

**Chapter 5**      **Solving the Ethics Problem**      **62**

**Chapter 6**      **Solving the Adaptation Problem**      **88**

**Chapter 7**      **The Problem-Solving Process Illustrated**      **111**

## **PART II      INFORMATION RETRIEVAL, ANALYSIS, AND SYNTHESIS      129**

**Chapter 8**      **Acquiring Information**      **130**

**Chapter 9**      **Recording, Reviewing, and Documenting Findings**      **175**

**Chapter 10**      **Summarizing Information**      **206**

## **PART III      SEQUENCE, SHAPE, AND STYLE IN A DOCUMENT      223**

**Chapter 11**      **Outlining**      **224**

**Chapter 12**      **Shaping the Paragraphs**      **237**

**Chapter 13**      **Revising for a Readable Style**      **250**

**PART IV GRAPHIC AND DESIGN ELEMENTS 301**

Chapter 14	Designing Visuals	302
Chapter 15	Designing Effective Formats	346
Chapter 16	Adding Document Supplements	367

**PART V SPECIFIC DOCUMENTS AND APPLICATIONS 381**

Chapter 17	Definitions	382
Chapter 18	Descriptions and Specifications	404
Chapter 19	Procedures and Processes	427
Chapter 20	Letters and Employment Correspondence	461
Chapter 21	Memos and Short Reports	497
Chapter 22	Proposals	514
Chapter 23	Analytical Reports	550
Chapter 24	Oral Reports	583

Appendix A	Review of Grammar, Usage, and Mechanics	592
------------	---	-----

Appendix B	Writers and Audiences on the Job	632
------------	----------------------------------	-----

Appendix C	The Reporting Process for the Course Project: A Document Sequence Culminating in the Final Report	648
------------	---	-----

Works Cited	669
-------------	-----

Index	I-1
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# Contents

**Preface**      xxiii

**Acknowledgements**      xxvi

## **Chapter 1 Introduction to Technical Writing**      1

Technical Writing Serves Practical Needs	1
Technical documents are reader oriented	1
Technical documents strive for efficiency	2
Writing Is Part of Most Careers	4
Writers Today Need Better Skills than Ever	5
Exercises	7
Collaborative Project	7

## **PART I WRITING FOR READERS IN THE WORKPLACE**      9

### **Chapter 2 Problem Solving in Workplace Writing**      10

Technical Writers Face Four Related Problems	10
Problem Solving Requires Critical Thinking	15
Exercise (Individual or collaborative)	17

### **Chapter 3 Solving the Information Problem**      18

Assess Readers' Information Needs	18
Identify Levels of Technicality	20
The highly technical message	20
The semitechnical message	21
The nontechnical message	22
Primary versus secondary readers	23
Develop an Audience-and-Use Profile	25
Reader characteristics	25
Purpose of the document	25
Readers' technical background	26
Readers' knowledge of the subject	26

Appropriate details and format	27
Due date	28
Brainstorm for a Useful Message	28
Exercises	29
Collaborative Project	30

## Chapter 4 Solving the Persuasion Problem 34

Assess the Political Realities	35
Expect Reader Resistance	37
Know How to Connect with Readers	38
Ask for a Specific Decision	41
Never Ask for Too Much	42
Recognize All Constraints	42
Organizational constraints	43
Legal constraints	44
Ethical constraints	45
Time constraints	45
Social and psychological constraints	45
Support Your Claims Convincingly	46
Offer convincing evidence	47
Appeal to common goals and values	48
Observe Persuasion Guidelines	49
Exercises	51
Collaborative Project	57

## Chapter 5 Solving the Ethics Problem 62

Recognize Unethical Communication	63
Expect Social Pressure to Produce Unethical Communication	65
Never Confuse Team Play with <i>Groupthink</i>	69
Rely on Critical Thinking for Ethical Decisions	71
The fallacy of "doing one's thing"	71
The fallacy of "one rule fits all"	72
Reasonable criteria for ethical judgment	72
Ethical dilemmas	74
Anticipate Some Hard Choices	74
Never Depend Only on Legal Guidelines	76
Understand the Potential for Communication Abuse	78
Suppressing knowledge the public deserves	78
Exaggerating claims about technology	78
Divulging or stealing proprietary information	79
Mismanaging electronic information	79
Withholding information people need to do their jobs	79
Know Your Communication Guidelines	79

Decide Where and How to Draw the Line	80
An Ethics Checklist for Communicators	82
Exercises	83
Collaborative Project	85

## **Chapter 6 Solving the Adaptation Problem 88**

Computers Diversify the Ways We Communicate	89
Technology facilitates telecommuting	90
Writers today use multipurpose tools	91
Computers Diversify Our Work Relationships	96
Much workplace writing is collaborative	96
Collaborative writing is a social enterprise	98
Group effort can lead to interpersonal conflict	98
Collaboration requires definite guidelines	98
Computers Diversify Our Audiences	101
Cultures differ in expectations	104
Global communication requires cultural fluency	106
Stereotypes do not equate with cultural fluency	106
Global communication requires ethical standards	108
A Checklist for Intercultural Documents	108
Exercise	109
Collaborative Project (Group or Individual)	109

## **Chapter 7 The Problem-Solving Process Illustrated 111**

Critical Thinking in the Writing Process	111
A Sample Writing Situation	111
Working with the information	114
Planning the document	116
Drafting the document	119
Revising the document	120
Your Own Writing Situations	122
Exercises	122
Collaborative Project	125

## **PART II INFORMATION RETRIEVAL, ANALYSIS, AND SYNTHESIS 129**

### **Chapter 8 Acquiring Information 130**

Thinking Critically About the Research Process	130
Asking the right questions	132



Focusing on essential views	132
Evaluating your findings	134
Interpreting your findings	135
Searching the Literature	137
The card catalog	137
Guides to literature	140
Reference works	140
Indexes	144
Abstracts	149
Access tools for government publications	150
Microforms	151
Using Electronic Information Services	152
Compact disks and diskettes	152
Mainframe databases	153
Retrieval services for home and office	156
Benefits and limitations of automated searches	157
Exploring Primary Sources	157
Interviews	157
Surveys and questionnaires	162
Other primary sources	169
Exercises	170
Collaborative Project	172

## **Chapter 9 Recording, Reviewing, and Documenting Findings 175**

Recording Findings	175
Taking notes	175
Quoting the work of others	176
Paraphrasing the work of others	178
Reviewing Findings	180
Evaluating the sources	180
Evaluating the evidence	181
Interpreting the material	181
Documenting Sources	188
Why you should document	188
What you should document	188
How you should document	189
MLA documentation style	189
APA documentation style	196
Numerical documentation	201
Reassessing the Entire Process	202
Checklist for the Research Process	203
Exercises	204
Collaborative Projects	205

## **Chapter 10 Summarizing Information 206**

Purpose of Summaries	206
Elements of a Summary	208
Essential message	208
Nontechnical style	208
Independent meaning	208
No added material	208
Conciseness	208
Critical Thinking in the Summary Process	209
A Sample Situation	209
The Forms Summarized Information Can Take	215
The closing summary	216
The informative abstract	216
The descriptive abstract	216
Placement of Summarized Information in a Document	217
Revision Checklist for Summaries	217
Exercises	218
Collaborative Project	221

## **PART III SEQUENCE, SHAPE, AND STYLE IN A DOCUMENT 223**

### **Chapter 11 Outlining 224**

Types of Outline	224
The informal outline	224
The formal topic outline	225
The sentence outline	227
Elements of a Formal Outline	228
Parallel construction for parallel levels	228
Clear and informative headings	228
Parts in a sequence logical to readers	229
An Outline Model	230
Introduction	230
Body	230
Conclusion	232
The Importance of Being Messy	232
The Report Design Worksheet	235
Exercise	235
Collaborative Projects	235