

Technical Writing: A Comprehensive Hands-On Introduction - 4 Days

Course 319 Overview

- You Will Learn How To**
- Write clear, effective technical documents, including user manuals and technical reports
 - Assess your target audience and develop documents to meet their needs
 - Choose the appropriate writing style to communicate to specialized audiences
 - Build effective sentences, paragraphs and sections that explain information clearly
 - Employ diagrams, tables, charts and other graphical tools effectively
 - Create informative and interesting content that your readers will understand and use

Course Benefits Success in business relies on clear and concise communication, making those who possess effective writing skills a valuable component to any organization. In this practical hands-on course, you gain the skills to assess the needs of your users and create documents that explain technical information. You learn the mechanics of good technical writing, along with techniques for document design and page layout.

Who Should Attend Individuals who need to effectively communicate technical information or instructions to others, or those entering the field of technical writing who need to create clear and concise manuals or papers.

Hands-On Training During this course, you perform extensive hands-on exercises, including:

- Analyzing your audience to meet their needs
- Applying a style guide to achieve consistency
- Editing to remove unnecessary verbiage
- Crafting a powerful tutorial
- Developing a document using specific writing styles
- Choosing the right words and building strong sentences
- Organizing using the audience's scenarios
- Guiding research through explicit and tacit knowledge
- Improving readability

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Course 319 Outline

Introduction to Technical Writing

The purpose of technical writing

- Benefits of effectively communicating technical information
- Dealing with common writing problems

The Writing Process

Getting ready to write

- Eliminating misconceptions that stall technical writing
- Driving your document design with scenarios
- Focusing on a document's purposes

Assessing your audience

- The investigation process
- Identifying your purpose and the reader's purpose
- What the audience brings to the table

Covering the knowledge domain

- Exposing tacit knowledge
- Knowing when you've "covered it all"

Ensuring Clarity and Readability

Writing technically

- Discriminating between the three levels of information
- Determining information needs with the OODA loop

Architecting sentences that communicate

- Creating strong subjects
- Building sentence variety
- Punctuating for clarity
- Solving common grammar problems in technical writing

Managing style in technical writing

- Evaluating readability using the Given/New technique
- Ensuring consistency with a style guide
- Eliminating reader recycling

The Mechanics of Writing

Technical writer's tools

- Structuring information with tables and lists
- Selecting the right words
- Two strategies for rewriting

Writing in the right style

- Official

- Primer
- Nominal
- Telegraphic
- Selecting the most effective style

Editing for quality

- Knowing when and what to edit
- The editing triage
- Editing throughout the document process

Maintaining document structure

- Developing cohesive documents with Given/New and transitions
- Applying useful headings to support skimming
- Structuring information around the reader's scenarios

Methods of explanation

- Available writing styles
- General to specific
- Effect and cause
- Problems-methods-results
- Order of importance
- Compare and contrast
- Writing as a signaling system

Designing Your Document

Audience-driven document design

- Relating document structure to the audience
- Recognizing the varieties of user manuals
- Developing reference manuals and white papers

Determining the document types

- Postpositive vs. pragmatic documents
- Implementing the right document format

Building documents

- Tutorials and standard operating procedures
- Designing Playscript and Minimalist tutorials
- Structuring sentences and sections
- Handling introductions and conclusions

Prototyping the document

- Testing the document for success
- Levels of prototypes

Developing the Look of Your Document

Designing the appearance of your page

- The technical document reading process
- Fonts

- White space
- Alignment

Conveying information with graphics

- Chunking the document
- Employing photos, drawings and graphs
- Focusing graphics