

The Elements of Technical Writing



Reviewed by JENNIFER PARKS

**THE ELEMENTS OF
TECHNICAL WRITING**
Gary Blake and
Robert W. Bly
New York, NY: MacMillan
General Reference: 1993.
165 pp. • \$9.95
0-02-013085-6

Gary Blake and Robert Bly, both authorities in the field of business and technical writing, have provided a valuable tool in *The Elements of Technical Writing*. As the cover states, this book is the essential guide to writing clear, concise proposals, reports, manuals, letters, memos, and other documents in every technical field. Not only have Blake and Bly included all the necessary information concerning punctuation, grammar, and tone, they have organized the book in an easy-to-use, precise format.

The first chapter begins with the following quote and serves as a good introduction to the material in the first chapter.

"Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writing. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to the reader."

—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The first chapter, "Fundamentals of Effective Technical Writing," identifies the ten principles that make technical writing good technical writing. These principles include:

1. Technical Accuracy
3. Usefulness
4. Conciseness
5. Completeness
6. Cleanliness
7. Consistency

8. Correct Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar
9. A Targeted Audience
10. Clear Organization
11. Interest.

These principles are easily overlooked in business writing. Blake and Bly urge us to remember that our audience is made up of humans, not just technical personnel.

Each chapter in this guide is broken out into sections that clearly outline the information that follows. The format is legible, succinct, and lends itself to easy reference. There are chapters regarding the use of equations and numerals, grammar and punctuation, and principles of communication, as well as a chapter regarding commonly misused words and phrases.

Chapters six through nine break away from the rules of the English language and get down to the specifics of writing proposals, technical articles and reports, letters and memos, and manuals.

Chapter six, "Proposals and Specifications," details the components necessary in a formal proposal. The authors set forth their ten principles of proposal writing, which revolve around the focal point of the client. They are:

1. Learn everything you can about your prospective client and the people who will evaluate your proposal.
3. Sell your ideas by fitting them into your client's needs.
4. Don't just solve the technical problems; empathize with the customer's critical needs.
5. Recognize all critical factors that evaluators will use in assessing the proposal.
6. Make sure your proposal addresses every element mentioned in the RFP.
7. Use appropriate graphics to highlight your ideas and make them easy to visualize.
8. Tailor each proposal to the needs of the specific client.
9. Anticipate and defuse objections.
10. Avoid hedging and subtlety in proposals.

This issue features books on technical writing and statements of work. The opinions expressed by reviewers are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals. Book review recommendations are welcomed by book review editors Nancy Bromc and Paul Gigarec.

11. Make a list of where key resources are located if you do not have a proposal library.

Blake and Bly urge us to learn everything we can about our clients and then tailor our proposals to their needs. For example, the following sentence does not tell the client what we can do for them:

"We have extensive experience in airlines operations and forecasting and evaluating traffic flows."

A better way to make the point is:

"Our extensive experience in airlines operations and forecasting and evaluating traffic flows gives us insight in to the logistics of your business and will help you respond faster."

The second sentence focuses on what your company can do for the potential client and tells the reader how you will benefit them rather than simply stating your qualifications. The more tailored your proposal is to the reader, the more impact it will have.

Blake and Bly have written a useable, handy, and inexpensive style guide that is tailored to their audience: people who write for business. While the majority of style guides and writer's reference books tend to be very dry, I found Blake and Bly's book to be highly readable. They have practiced what they preach—their writing is clear, and more importantly, interesting. *The Elements of Technical Writing* is written specifically for technical writers, but it is also a very valuable reference guide for other writers. This concise style guide is now an indispensable part of my library.

Technical Writing A Guide With Models

Alan S. Pringle, Sarah O'Keefe



Technical Writing A Guide With Models:

Survivor's Guide to Technical Writing David Ingre, 2003 A comprehensive easy to use guide to key workplace communication skills Survivor s Guide to Technical Writing presents all of the essentials of workplace communication in an easy to read and easy to use format The content is comprehensive and universal and emphasizes the most practical and useful information making the concepts relevant to each user Integrating the most current technology users will discover the usage and resources available to them through a number of different media Survivor s Guide to Technical Writing reflects the most current topics and issues in technical communication and includes many cases activities and features to engage and enrich learning

Technical Writing Bonnie Carter Brinegar, Craig Barnwell Skates, 1983

An Introductory Guide to EC Competition Law and Practice Valentine Korah, 1994

Resources in Education , 1985

Technical Writing Process Kieran Morgan, Alison Pickering, Amanda Butler, Caity Cronkhite, Felicity Brand, John New, Steve Moss, Swapnil Ogale, 2024-02-29 From the basics to advanced skills the Technical Writing Process is your comprehensive guide to the art and science of crafting technical documentation With eight core steps Plan Design Write Edit Review Translate Publish and Manage this guide integrates both classical writing principles and the transformative potential of modern tools like AI This book is more than a guide it s an invitation to embrace the art of writing instructions with the mentorship of our experienced technical writers Whether you re a novice writer or an industry stalwart aiming to refine your technical communication skills this book offers a blend of tried and true methods with the power of new age tools AI as a significant element of the modern toolkit receives special attention helping readers stay ahead of the curve Features Insights from industry experts around the world Real world case studies and examples Comprehensive chapters on techniques and concepts Downloadable templates to support each step in the process For exclusive discounts on our premium content use the coupon code in this book About the Authors Our writing team composed of top notch technical writers translation experts and technical documentation managers from around the world has pooled their experience and insights to help you succeed in your technical writing career Praise for the First Edition Every aspiring author tech writer in college should have this book Steve Ballard Manager Enterprise Content Solutions This is exactly the sort of guide I wish I had when I first started tech writing Sharon Witheriff Technical Writer The Technical Writing Process is a practical toolkit that demystifies the art of technical writing with useful templates to help you succeed quickly and smartly Richard Kidd General Manager Aspiring writers throughout the enterprise will find this to be a solid resource as they try to figure out how they should go about documenting something It s logically laid out not too heavy on jargon and uses good diagrams and illustrations Duane Green Sr Director of Content Strategy Solutions I think this pragmatic approach is excellent and fills a desperate need in the tech writing world Many a point raised will have the older hands nodding sagely and the younger people remembering the advice when they first run into those issues Dr Charlotte Nash Stewart Engineer Author and Technical Writer This is a well written comprehensive and practical

guide for technical writers It is packed full of great information and is very easy to read I particularly like the Insights What does that mean and Tips callouts which appear throughout the book Sue Geercke Director Technical Communications

Technical Writing Process explores the essential elements any technical writer should consider when tackling their next assignment The book systematically guides the reader through an intuitive yet effective methodology that spans everything from Planning to Publishing Shay Withnell Product Marketing Manager Technical Writing Process is the professionalisation of the technical writing discipline It rightly considers the holistic context for a technical document and provides a comprehensive cookbook for getting it right within an organisation The insights examples and templates are perfect and pragmatic The definitive standard in technical writing Rami Banna Product Lead This book serves as a great reference to someone tasked with the technical writing aspect of a project It would have saved me much heartache and a considerable amount of time if I had this information at the start of my project Keo Phetsaya Technical Sales Manager *The Insider's Guide to Technical Writing* Krista Van Laan,2012-05-15 Every complex product needs to be explained to its users and technical writers also known as technical communicators are the ones who do that job A growing field technical writing requires multiple skills including an understanding of technology writing ability and great people skills Whether you re thinking of becoming a technical writer just starting out or you ve been working for a while and feel the need to take your skills to the next level The Insider s Guide to Technical Writing can help you be a successful technical writer and build a satisfying career Inside the Book Is This Job for Me What does it take to be a technical writer Building the Foundation What skills and tools do you need to get started The Best Laid Plans How do you create a schedule that won t make you go crazy How do you manage different development processes including Agile methodologies On the Job What does it take to walk into a job and be productive right away The Tech Writer Toolkit How do you create style guides indexes templates and layouts How do you manage localization and translation and all the other non writing parts of the job I Love My Job How do you handle the ups and downs of being a technical writer Appendixes References to websites books and other resources to keep you learning Index

Basic Cost Engineering Kenneth King Humphreys,Paul Wellman,1987 **Writer's Solution** Prentice Hall PTR,1997 Technical Writing 101 Alan S. Pringle,Sarah O'Keefe,2003 Record ... Catalog ... Announcements Clemson Agricultural College of South Carolina,1924 **Technical Writing for Industry** Larry A. Riney,1989 **IPCC91 Proceedings** ,1991 **The Design of User Manuals for Office Systems** Jo W. Tombaugh,Richard F. Dillon,1983 Catalogue of books in the reference library, including technical section. [With] Edinburgh publ. libr,1891 *Model Drawing, Containing the Elementary Principles of Drawing, Etc* Ellis A. Davidson,1871 NASA Specifications and Standards ,1967 **Introduction to Solid Modeling Using SolidWorks** William E. Howard,Joseph C. Musto,2006 Geared toward in an introductory course in solid modeling Introduction to Solid Modeling Using SolidWorks by Edward Howard and Joseph Musto of East Carolina University and the Milwaukee School of

Engineering respectively teaches solid modeling using SolidWorks The text presents solid modeling not just as a communication tool but as an integral part of the design process To this end the book explores design intent the use of solid models in engineering analysis and introduces techniques from manufacturing such as mold design and sheet metal patterning Howard and Musto provide a student friendly presentation filled with easy to use tutorials Their approach is also designed to help students understand how engineering is used in the real world For instance modeling exercises are largely centered on examples drawn from industrial applications As well Future Study boxes introduce students to different topics they will study in their engineering programs

The Author's & Writer's Who's who Edward Martell,1971 Model Yachts and Boats: Their Designing, Making, Sailing J. Du V. Grosvenor,1882 Books to Come; Bowker's Advance Book Reporting Service ,1960

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