Technical Communication
A Practical Approach
Chapter 1: Process in Technical Communication
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Defining Technical Communication
- Features of Academic Writing
- Features of Technical Communication

Process in Technical Communication
- Defining Technical Communication
- Determining the Purpose
- Analyzing Your Readers
- Collecting Information
- Completing the Outline
- Writing Initial Drafts
- Revising Drafts

Defining Technical Communication
- Features of Academic Writing
  - Purpose
    - Demonstrate your knowledge of the topic
    - Practice communication (writing) skills
  - Your Knowledge of Topic
    - Less than the teacher in general
  - Audience
    - The teacher

Defining Technical Communication
- Features of Academic Writing
  - Criteria for Evaluation
    - Depth, logic, clarity, unity, and grammar
  - Statistical and Graphic Support
    - Sometimes used to explain and persuade

Defining Technical Communication
- Features of Academic Writing
  - Examples
    - Essays
    - Exams
    - Research Papers
Defining Technical Communication

Features of Technical Communication

- Purpose
  - Accomplish a task
- Your Knowledge of Topic
  - Greater than the reader
- Audience
  - Variety of people with differing technical backgrounds

Criteria for Evaluation

- Clearly organized ideas that meet the needs of busy readers
- Statistical and Graphic Support
  - Used to explain conditions and present alternative courses of action

Examples

- In-house correspondence
- Short reports
- Long reports
- Proposals
- Websites

Technical Communication

- Plays a practical role on the job
- Completed by an informed writer to an uninformed reader
- Read by many readers

Academic Writing

- Displays your knowledge
- Completed by a student for a teacher or fellow students
- Practice writing skills
- Aims to satisfy one person, the teacher (?)
Determining the Purpose

- Question 1: Why am I writing this document?
  - Answer in one or two sentences
  - Move to the beginning of your outline
- Question 2: What response do I want from readers?
  - Pinpoint what you want your audience to know, think, or feel

Analyzing Your Readers

- Obstacles for Readers
  - Readers Are Always Interrupted
  - Readers Are Impatient
  - Readers Lack Your Technical Knowledge
  - Most Documents Have More Than One Reader

- Ways to Understand Readers
  - Write Down What You Know About Your Reader
  - Talk With Colleagues Who Have Written to the Same Readers
  - Find Out Who Makes Decisions
  - Remember That All Readers Prefer Simplicity

- Types of Readers
  - Managers
  - Experts
  - Operators
  - General Readers
  - These readers expect...
    - background information
    - definitions of technical terms
    - lists and other format devices that highlight points
    - clear statements about what should happen next
Analyzing Your Readers

Types of Readers

Experts
- These readers expect...
  - thorough explanations of technical details
  - data placed in tables and figures
  - references to outside sources used in writing the report
  - clearly labeled appendices for supporting information

Operators
- These readers expect...
  - clear table of contents
  - easy-to-read listings for procedures or instructions
  - definitions of technical terms
  - clear statement of how document affects their jobs

General Readers - “Laypersons”
- These readers expect...
  - definitions of technical terms
  - frequent use of graphics like charts and photos
  - clear distinction between facts and opinions

Decision-Making Levels

First-Level Audience: Decision-Makers
- Translate information into action

Second-Level Audience: Advisers
- Give advice to those who make decisions

Third-Level Audience: Receivers
- Receive information contained in document

Collecting Information

- Decide What Kind of Information You Need
- Devise a Research Strategy
- Record Notes Carefully
- Acknowledge Your Sources
- Keep a Bibliography for Future Use
Collecting Information

Completing an Outline

- Record Your Random Ideas Quickly
- Show Relationships
- Draft a Final Outline
- Consider Where to Use Graphics

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Writing Initial Drafts

- Schedule at Least a One-Hour Block of Drafting Time
- Do Not Stop to Edit
- Begin with the Easiest Section
- Write Summaries Last

Revising Drafts

- Adjust Content
- Edit for Style
- Edit for Grammar
- Edit for Mechanics
- Review Layout and Graphics