

Technical Writing and Documentation

Two-day course

The course aims to teach attendees to write well for any technical or business genre. The techniques are easy to learn and are highly successful in producing smart, easily understood text.

Part 1 Technical Writing Skills

Introduction to technical writing

Communication theory
Communication in the workplace
What is Plain English?
What is content management?

Writing and words

The four levels of writing
The ten common problems with technical writing
Problems with words
 Verbs—passive verbs—weak verbs
 Nouns—weak nouns—ambiguity—nominalisation
 Appropriate words—correct words—jargon

Sentences and punctuation

Sentence structures
Problems with sentences
 Clause structuring
 Misplaced modifiers
 Subject-verb agreement
 Parallel construction
 Ambiguity
 Long sentences
Punctuation
 Punctuation rules and examples:
 commas
 semicolons
 colons
Hyphens and apostrophes

Good technical writing and style

What makes technical writing good?
What is style?
Consistency when writing
Style manuals
Common style conventions

Part 2 Technical Documentation

Audience and task analysis

How knowledge of the audience impinges on documentation
When and how to do an audience analysis
Task analysis
Putting it all together—using the matrix concept

Planning a technical document

Overview
Generating information
Collecting information
Organising information
After the document is written—the editing and reviewing process

Structuring and designing effective documentation

The concept of information types
 Document-specific information—the major parts of all documents
 How to write Executive Summaries, procedures and many other types of specific information
 Content-specific information—how to develop information within the document-specific categories
Techniques for different types of documents

Company Examples

There is time to discuss specific problems related to the work of each attendee, as well as the generic examples provided.

References

The manual also contains several extremely valuable appendices containing words and phrases to avoid, words commonly confused or misused, and much more.

Course topics are illustrated with real examples and interactive exercises. With the course you get a substantial manual with full text for all topics—enabling the manual to be used later as a reference.

About Jill

Jill Nicholson is an experienced technical and business communicator who lectured for many years at the University of Technology, Sydney. She now presents technical and business communication courses to Government Departments and to the private sector in Australia, New Zealand, the USA, and Singapore; and writes and edits a variety of documents for business clients.

Jill has presented courses at the University of California at Santa Clara, the Colorado School of Mines, the University of Western Sydney, Ngee Ann Polytechnic in Singapore, and the University of Technology, Sydney. She often presents workshops at the Society for Technical Communication (USA) and the ASTC (NSW) annual conferences, and for the Australian Medical Writers Association.

Most of Jill's training work is now done for corporate clients.

Jill is a former President of the ASTC (NSW) and the Australia Chapter of the STC.

Formal education includes an MSc(Hons), a Graduate Diploma in Economics, and a Diploma in Advanced Technical Writing (USA).