

IMPROVING TECHNICAL WRITING



RESETTING BASIC WRITING SKILLS AND GOOD HABITS CAN BRIDGE THE CONSISTENCY GAP BETWEEN TECHNICAL WRITERS AND REVIEWERS. LITERALLY.

During WD Communications' writing seminars, we work with writers and reviewers focused on the gamut of technical documents. From clinical study and investigation reports to safety protocols, from users' guides to regulatory responses and data-heavy emails – we understand the challenges involved with writing for external and internal audiences. Document templates as well as quality management systems and software are evolving to make reporting environments easier to navigate. But what actually helps people write better quality documents and review them in less time?

PAYING ATTENTION TO SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Improving writing often requires less technical detail and more attention to sentence structure. Cutting clutter, clarifying ambiguous language, and using straightforward tone are basic writing skills and good habits that are often forgotten or just not applied within technical documents.

Technical writers we work with do understand their content. So well, in fact, that they fall into the bad habit of writing from their own points of view, assuming that readers will also understand. Technical content intended to be easily understood and actionable might not hit its target due to extra-long sentences, dense paragraphs, and buried, key information. A reviewer of documents in the energy-engineering sector once described such content as “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma.”

TOOLS TO IMPROVE YOUR WRITING AND REVIEWING SKILLS

Seminars, writing workshops, and coaching sessions provide immediately applicable tools:

- ▶ Job aids help to identify a document's purpose and readers' needs before any writing actually begins.
- ▶ Document checklists promote style and formatting consistency at client sites.
- ▶ Readability Statistics serve as data for dialogue during motivating, feedback conversations.

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.

- Albert Einstein

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AVOIDING DOCUMENT CHURNING

In these situations, reviewers often tell writers to “just re-write it,” rather than providing clear, consistent, and motivating feedback on how to write better. When bad writing habits fester, document churning begins. *Churning*, the passing back and forth of documents between writers and reviewers, is an all-too-common occurrence that frustrates everyone while prolonging the review and revision process.

In 2018, a client’s team within a top-ten, global pharmaceutical company tasked with writing scientific dossiers explained the frequent need for five or six rounds of revisions after originally budgeting for only three rounds. With weeks and thousands of dollars churning away, how do you get technical writers and reviewers on the same page, literally?

Our solution to bridge the consistency gap between writers and reviewers is to refocus and reset everyone around the process, skills, and good habits of technical writing. We offer training experiences where people can normalize writing concerns and create individual action plans.

TAKING TECHNICAL WRITING TO THE NEXT LEVEL

With this back-to-basics foundation firmly reset, employees are more self-aware and confident around on-the-job writing tasks. The review process is more collaborative. The quality of documents increases as churning decreases. Time and money are saved. **BONUS:** People enjoy technical writing more!

Let’s discuss how WD Communications can contribute to your organization’s training continuum in 2019.

In the meantime, here are two videos with tips to reset essential habits around writing shorter sentences and summaries that meet readers’ needs. Check out [this video on writing shorter sentences](#) and [this video on writing a summary](#).

ABOUT WD COMMUNICATIONS

WD Communications specializes in developing and delivering seminars, webinars, and coaching sessions to develop employees, managers, and executives. Our staff is expert in listening to client needs and partnering to build learning programs.



If you or your company is interested in conducting a writing skills workshop, contact **Jill Mazza** at jmazza@wdcommunications.com