

Projects

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GENERAL

1. Improve readability by revising the style and design of these instructions.

What to Do Before Jacking Up Your Car

Whenever the misfortune of a flat tire occurs, some basic procedures should be followed before the car is jacked up. If possible, your car should be positioned on as firm and level a surface as is available. The engine has to be turned off; the parking brake should be set; and the automatic transmission shift lever must be placed in "park" or the manual transmission lever in "reverse." The wheel diagonally opposite the one to be removed should have a piece of wood placed beneath it to prevent the wheel from rolling. The spare wheel, jack, and lug wrench should be removed from the luggage compartment.

2. Select part of a technical manual in your field or instructions for a general audience and make a copy of the material. Using the checklist on page 468, evaluate the sample's usability. In a memo to your instructor, discuss the strong and weak points of the instructions. Or explain your evaluation in class.
3. Assume that colleagues or classmates will be serving six months as volunteers in agriculture, education, or a similar capacity in a developing country. Do the research and create a set of procedures that will prepare individuals for avoiding diseases and dealing with medical issues in that specific country. Topics might include safe food and water, insect protection, vaccinations, medical emergencies, and the like. Be sure to provide background on the specific health risks travelers will face. Design your instructions as a two-sided brief reference card, as a chapter to be included in a longer manual, or in some other format suggested by your instructor.

4. Select any one of the instructional visuals in Figure 19.4 and write a prose version of those instructions—without using visual illustrations or special page design. Bring your version to class and be prepared to discuss the conclusions you've derived from this exercise.
5. Find a set of instructions or some other technical document that is easy to use. Assume that you are Associate Director of Communications for the company that produced this document and you are doing a final review before the document is released. With the Checklist for Instructions and Procedures as a guide, identify those features that make the document usable and prepare a memo to your boss that justifies your decision to release the document.

Following the identical scenario, find a document that is hard to use, and identify the features that need improving. Prepare a memo to your boss that spells out the needed improvements. Submit both memos and the examples to your instructor.

TEAM

1. Draw a map of the route from your classroom to your dorm, apartment, or home—whichever is closest. Be sure to include identifying landmarks. When your map is completed, write instructions for a classmate who will try to duplicate your map from the information given in your written instructions. Be sure your classmate does not see your map! Exchange your instructions and try to duplicate your classmate's map. Compare your results with the original map. Discuss your conclusions about the usability of these instructions.
2. Divide into small groups and visit your computer center, library, or any place on campus or at work where you can find operating manuals for computers, lab or office equipment, or the like.

(Or look through the documentation for your own computer hardware or software.) Locate fairly brief instructions that could use revision for improved content, organization, style, or format. Choose instructions for a procedure you are able to perform. Make a copy of the instructions, test them for usability, and revise as needed. Submit all materials to your instructor, along with a memo explaining the improvements. Or be prepared to discuss your revision in class.

3. Test the usability of a document prepared for this chapter or Chapter 18 by using the think-aloud evaluation (page 467). Begin by adapting the Audience and Use Profile Sheet (page 30) to include more questions about the intended use of the document. To become familiar with the technique, first practice the think-aloud evaluation on something simple (such as a one page set of instructions on how to get from your classroom to the nearest pizza shop). Then, run the test on your actual document. Take plenty of notes, and when the test is completed, use the Basic Usability Survey (page 466) to ask follow-up questions. Revise the document based on your observations.

DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Think of a product you have at home, such as your coffee maker, dishwasher, Wi-Fi router, or DVD player. Imagine the product is not working and you can't find the original instruction manual. Go to the company's Web site and see if you can find the manual. How easy or difficult was it to locate? Is the manual in PDF and easy to download? Can you find the manual for all models or just newer ones? Write a one-page set of instructions to help others locate similar manuals online.

GLOBAL

In many cultures, the use of imperative mood is considered impolite or too direct. For instance, instructions that state "Place the disk into the disk drive" may sound bossy and inconsiderate. Find a set of instructions that use imperative mood (for example, Figure 19.7 in this chapter) and rewrite these for a cross-cultural audience where the imperative mood would be offensive. For instance, you might use an indirect imperative ("Be sure to insert the disk into the drive").

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Visit Chapter 19, *Instructions and Procedures*, in MyWritingLab to complete this chapter's applications, to explore this chapter's overview, checklist, and flashcards, and to test your understanding of the chapter objectives