

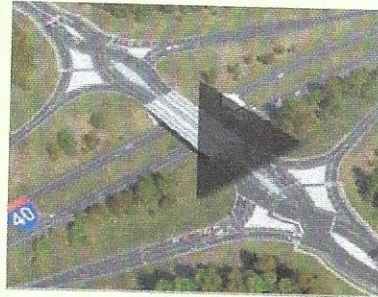
e DOCUMENT ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES

To complete the activities below, go to "Document Analysis Activities" under "Additional Resources" in Ch. 20 at macmillanhighered.com/launchpad/techcomm11e.



Mechanism Description Using Interactive Graphics

Hybrids Under the Hood (Part 2): Drivetrains, used by permission of the Union of Concerned Scientists.



Process Description Using Video Animation

Courtesy of the N.C. Department of Transportation.



Instructions Using Video Demonstration

Courtesy Eldis Group.



Instructions Using Video Screen Capture

Courtesy TechSmith.



Instructions Using a Combination of Video Demonstration and Screen Capture

Courtesy Texas Tech University Department of English Media Lab.



Definition Using Video Animation

Used by permission of ABC News.

Writing Manuals

There is no absolute distinction between a set of instructions and a manual. Typically, the two share a main purpose: to explain how to carry out a task safely, effectively, and efficiently. Both kinds of documents can include safety information. For example, a set of instructions on how to use an extension ladder explains how to avoid power lines and how to avoid falling off the ladder. A manual for a laptop explains how to avoid electrocution when you open the case. However, a set of instructions (which can be anywhere from 1 to 20 or more pages) is typically shorter than a manual and more limited in its subject. Obviously, using a laptop requires knowing about many more topics than does using a ladder.

A manual likely also includes some sections not found in a set of instructions. For instance, it typically has a title page. The main difference between the two is that a manual has more-elaborate front matter and back matter:

- **Front matter.** The introduction, sometimes called a *preface*, often contains an *overview of the contents*, frequently in the form of a table, which explains the main contents of each section and chapter. It also contains a *conventions* section, which explains the typography of the manual. For instance, *italics* are used for the titles of books, **boldface** for keyboard keys, and so forth. It also might include a *where to get help* section, referring readers to other sources of information, such as the company's website and customer-support center. And it might contain a section listing the *trademarks* of the company's own products and those of other companies.
- **Back matter.** Manuals typically include a set of *specifications* of the device or system, a list of relevant government *safety regulations* and *industry standards* that the device or system supports, *tips on maintenance and servicing* the device, a *copyright page* listing bibliographic information about the manual, and an *index*. Many manuals also include *glossaries*.

Because they typically are longer and more complex than a set of instructions, manuals are almost always written collaboratively. Often, the writing team uses a wiki to make it easy for various subject-matter experts to contribute. When the manual is finished, the writing team often uses other social-media tools to enable users to evaluate and comment on it or even contribute to future versions of it.

Organizations work hard to make their instructions and manuals appropriate for multicultural readers. Because important instructions and manuals might be read by readers from any number of cultures, you need to answer three important questions as you plan the documents:

- **In what language should the information be written?** You can either translate the document into readers' native languages or try to make the English easy to understand. Although translation is sometimes the best or only alternative, companies often use Simplified English or some other form of English with a limited grammar and vocabulary. Many organizations translate their manuals into various languages and post the translations on their websites as PDF documents for download.
- **Do the text and graphics need to be modified?** As discussed in Chapter 5, communicators need to be aware of cultural differences. For example, one printer manual aimed at an Italian audience presented nude models with strategically placed rectangles showing the various colors the machine could reproduce. Nudity would be inappropriate in almost all other countries. A software manual in the United States showed an illustration of a person's left hand. Because the left hand is considered unclean in

For more about typography, see
Ch. 11, p. 265.

For more about trademarks, see
Ch. 2, p. 26.

For more about Simplified English,
see Ch. 10, p. 242.

many countries in the Middle East, the manual would need to be modified for those countries (Delio, 2002).

- **What is the readers' technological infrastructure?** If your readers don't have Internet access, there is no point in making a web version of the information. If your readers pay by the minute for Internet access, you will want to create web-based information that downloads quickly.

WRITER'S CHECKLIST

Parenthetical, Sentence, and Extended Definitions

- ☐ Are all necessary terms defined? (p. 535)

Are the parenthetical definitions

- ☐ appropriate for the audience? (p. 536)
- ☐ clear? (p. 536)
- ☐ smoothly integrated into the sentences? (p. 536)

Does each sentence definition

- ☐ contain a sufficiently specific category and distinguishing characteristics? (p. 537)
- ☐ avoid describing one particular item when a general class of items is intended? (p. 537)
- ☐ avoid circular definition? (p. 537)
- ☐ identify a category with a noun or a noun phrase? (p. 537)

- ☐ Are the extended definitions developed logically and clearly? (p. 537)
- ☐ Are the definitions placed in the location most useful to readers? (p. 541)

Descriptions of Objects and Mechanisms

- ☐ Are the nature and scope of the description clearly indicated? (p. 544)

In introducing the description, did you answer, if appropriate, the following questions:

- ☐ What is the item? (p. 545)
- ☐ What is its function? (p. 545)
- ☐ What does it look like? (p. 545)

- ☐ How does it work? (p. 545)
- ☐ What are its principal parts? (p. 545)
- ☐ Is there a graphic identifying all the principal parts? (p. 545)

In providing detailed information, did you

- ☐ answer, for each of the major components, the questions listed above in the section on introducing the description? (p. 546)
- ☐ choose an appropriate organizational principle? (p. 547)
- ☐ include graphics for each of the components? (p. 547)

In concluding the description, did you

- ☐ summarize the major points in the part-by-part description? (p. 547)
- ☐ include (where appropriate) a description of the item performing its function? (p. 547)

Process Descriptions

- ☐ Are the nature and scope of the description clearly indicated? (p. 544)

In introducing the description, did you answer, if appropriate, the following questions:

- ☐ What is the process? (p. 545)
- ☐ What is its function? (p. 545)
- ☐ Where and when does it take place? (p. 545)
- ☐ Who or what performs it? (p. 545)
- ☐ How does it work? (p. 545)
- ☐ What are its principal steps? (p. 545)

- ☐ Is there a graphic identifying all the principal steps? (p. 545)