

## STUDY GUIDE

# TECHNICAL WRITING

The purpose of the study guide is to familiarize yourself with the terms you will study in class. This study guide alone will not allow you to pass your exam. You must attend the prep-course.





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### Disclaimer

Each study guide is unique and presents the information in a clear and condensed form to orient you to the material applicable to the exam. The materials cite various textbooks, journal articles and literature, including some found on websites.

We strongly encourage you to review and study these study guides, take the practice tests, and become familiar with the terms and concepts before stepping into class. Our goal is to help you attack the content by sharing these specific study tools and test-taking strategies with you, which have proven to be successful. You will need to attend and complete our preparation course in order to qualify for our money-back guarantee. The study guide and prep course, when used together, will best prepare you for the final exam.

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## INSTRUCTIONS:

- Read the study guide.
- Print and complete the sample test. Correct your test and review the incorrect items.
- Attend class to ensure your money-back guarantee.

We look forward to helping you achieve your academic goals!

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# I. THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TECHNICAL WRITING

## A. ESTABLISHING GOALS:

1. ***The goal of a technical writer is to explain complex technical information clearly, concisely and in simple language, so the average reader can understand the information.***

## B. ANALYZING THE AUDIENCE

1. ***It is important that the technical writer know their audience early in the writing process.*** This helps create an objective and writing style for the intended audience. It is important to think about what matters to the reader and focus on that.

## C. ENSURING THE VALIDITY

1. ***The purpose of writing a document is to convey information. You will need to understand the information yourself to give instructions.*** It is necessary to conduct research and ensure that the information you are giving to the reader is valid. Once you complete your documentation, you need to test it to make sure it is understandable, and the instructions given are understood and doable to the reader.

## II. PURPOSE, CONTENT, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS OF COMMON TYPES OF TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

### A. REPORTS

1. ***Reports communicate information, which has been compiled because of research and analysis of data and of issues***  
(UniLearning, n.d.). Technical reports should include a short paragraph summarizing what the report is about. It will often include graphs and diagrams to illustrate the data from the research. It should also include details of work, problems encountered, questions that arose and the consequences of actions towards the research.

### B. PROGRESS/INSPECTION REPORTS

2. ***Progress reports explain the progress of a given project or several projects. It is to reassure recipients that you are making progress, that the project is going smoothly, and the expected completion date. A progress report includes how much work is complete, what work is still in progress, and what work remains to be completed. It should also include what problems have occurred, and how the project is going in general.***
3. Inspection reports explain the condition of the item being inspected as observed at the time of inspection. ***Inspection reports should include the condition of the item being inspected, any major concerns, safety issues, needs of improvements, and whether further monitoring is needed.***

## C. FEASIBILITY REPORTS

4. **Feasibility reports provide information and argue the point of certain course of action.** It may present information to prove whether a project can be done and/or worth doing. The feasibility report includes the project information, problems, solutions, what you need in order to achieve the solutions, alternative plans, risks and the length of the project.

## D. RESEARCH/LABORATORY REPORTS

5. **Research/laboratory reports include scientific information that is gathered during a study.** The information is presented and tested to make sure that the findings are legitimate. Research and laboratory reports should include the title of your report, introduction, objective, hypothesis, the method and materials, and the results. A summary with discussion and observations on the results would also be included in the report.

## E. CORRESPONDENCE

6. **Memos: A memo is commonly used for communication within a company. It may be formal or used to present a report.** The memo is used to inform readers of specific or basic information.
7. **Letters: A letter needs to have an objective and an aim.** You need to know the recipient and always remain courteous and professional. A business letter is printed on company letterhead. The format of a letter contains the recipient name, date, and address. The body of the letter includes a salutation, subject or objective of the letter, and at the end a signature.
8. **Resumes: A resume is a document that lists the set of your professional and personal accomplishments. You would present this to a potential employer when applying for a position.** The resume should include an objective as well as employment history, your skill sets, and educational background.



## F. MANUALS

9. ***A manual is a document that serves as a training tool to educate the reader how to use, run, install, set up or build a tool/product. It should include simple language and images.***
10. ***Instructions: When creating instructions, start by writing steps that are logically ordered.*** It is helpful to write steps for a procedure by starting with a verb and should be in present tense.
11. **Procedures:** Procedure steps should be written in simple English so the reader may easily understand it. Sentences should be short but very descriptive. Procedure steps written in bullet points rather than paragraphs make it easier for the reader to understand. There should be some assumption that the reader has little knowledge and experience.
12. **Process Descriptions:** ***Manuals should be written with instructions, which include a sequence of events.*** Each instruction may be numbered by which the order it should occur. The process should be broken up into smaller stages. Describe each stage in order in chronological or sequential order.

## G. PROPOSALS

13. ***A proposal is a written document, which includes a suggestion or recommendation on a plan.*** When gathering information for a proposal, it should include the summary of the entire proposal, why the proposal is necessary, proposal description, budget and conclusion. The proposal should also include a cover page, and contact information.

### III. ELEMENTS OF VARIOUS TECHNICAL REPORTS

#### A. TITLES

1. ***The title of a report needs to be detailed, so there is no question as to what the report is about. The title appears on the title page, which would also include the author's name and the date of the report.***

#### B. SUMMARIES/ABSTRACTS

2. The ***summary/abstract*** is a brief overview of the report. It clearly states the main topic, purpose, investigation, results, conclusions and any recommendations. ***It should only be a few sentences long.***

#### C. HEADINGS

3. ***Headings are an important feature of a technical report because they help break up long stretches of straight text.*** All headings should be consistent in style and format. The title of the headings should indicate the topic coverage in the section. ***Effective headings make it easier for the reader to access and understand the document.*** You may have 2 to 3 headings per page with regular text. Do not overdo headings. There may be first level, second level, and third level headings dependent on the type of technical report (McMurrey, D., 2011).
  - a. ***First-Level Heading***
    - i. ***Make first-levels all-caps.***
    - ii. Use Roman numerals with first-levels.
    - iii. ***Either underline the words but not the Roman numeral or bold the entire heading including the Roman numeral.***
    - iv. ***Make first-levels centered on the page.***

- v. ***Start a new page whenever you have a first-level heading.***
  - vi. Begin first levels on the standard first text line of a page.
  - vii. Leave 3 blank lines between first levels and the first line of text.
- b. Second-Level Headings
- i. ***Make second-levels headline-style caps.***
  - ii. ***Underline or use bold on second levels.***
  - iii. Do not include outlining apparatus such as "A." or "B." or "1." or "2." with second-levels.
  - iv. Make second-levels flush left.
  - v. Leave 2 blank lines between previous text and second levels.
  - vi. Leave 1 blank line between second levels and the following text.
- c. ***Third-Level Headings***
- i. ***Make third-levels sentence-style caps.***
  - ii. ***Underline or use bold for third-levels (but don't underline the period).***
  - iii. ***End third levels with a period.***
  - iv. Do not include outlining apparatus such as "A." or "B." or "1." or "2." with third levels.
  - v. Indent third levels 5 spaces (or the standard paragraph indentation).
  - vi. Do not make third levels a grammatical part of sentences that follow.
  - vii. Use the standard spacing between paragraphs for paragraphs that contain third-levels.

## D. DEFINITIONS

- 4. All terms and concepts that need to be defined should be included in the material documents. ***The definitions may be placed in endnotes or in the glossary at the end of the document.*** This should be indicated at the beginning of the document.

## E. CONCLUSIONS

5. The **conclusion** section is an effective ending to your report. The content should state whether you have achieved your objective, a brief summary of important **information and findings and highlights the outcomes and results of your investigation and the significance.**

## F. RECOMMENDATIONS

6. **Recommendations are often included in reports that include results of test experiments, field trials, specific design problems and feasibility reports.** The author may suggest a course of action to the reader, such as if any additional information needs to be learned and what the author wants the reader to do with the information presented.

## G. GRAPHICS

7. **Using graphics in a technical document helps the reader understand the instructions of a technical document.** When including graphics, tables or charts in a technical document make sure, the graphics are appropriate to the reader, subject matter and purpose. Always discuss graphics in nearby text preceding the graphic. Orient readers to the graphic; explain its basic meaning. **The graphic should be labeled, include a title and a source if the graphic is not your own.**

### B. Report supplements (glossary, footnotes, appendices, indices)

1. Information essential to the understanding and defending of the text appears in the text. Information that needs more understanding such as definitions, sources, should be included in the document. **Each new type of data or procedure/technique should be found in its own appendix. Anything that cannot be left out of a report, but is too large for the main part of the report and would serve to distract or interrupt the flow belongs in the appendixes.**



## H. PAGE DESIGN

2. The page design covers a wide range of reader aids, including white space, bullets or numbering, indentation, underlining, boldfacing, capitalization, headings, subheadings, and visual aids.
  - a. ***White space refers to the amount of blank space between lines or groups of lines.*** It can set off an important line or section simply by putting more than the usual space above and below it just as this guidebook uses space to separate different sections from one another.
  - b. ***Bullets or numbers can be used to emphasize separate points. Bullets and numbering are especially useful when writing a technical manual.***
  - c. ***Indentation also visually separates important points from the rest of the text.***
  - d. ***Underlining, either by itself or in combination with other strategies such as boldfacing, italics and CAPITALIZATION, help define separate sections, especially in headings and subheadings.***
  - e. ***Headings***, placed at the beginning of every major segment of your report, guide your readers to the parts they consider most relevant and interesting.
  - f. ***Subheadings*** break down long segments into more manageable pieces and serve as guideposts for the reader.
  - g. ***Visual aids*** encompass many items: ***tables and graphs, illustrations, and charts.*** All visual aids must be labeled; usually they are numbered and captioned. Anything not in a table is called a figure. Place numbers and titles above tables and below figures. Refer to each table or figure in the text, for example, "see Figure 1," or "see Table 2." Be sure to show the source of your visual aid at the bottom of the table or figure.
  - h. ***Tables present information in columns and rows.***
  - i. ***Graphs simplify statistical data.***
    - i. ***Line graphs show trends or relationships.***
    - ii. Bar graphs compare separate items.

- iii. Pie charts show different values as part of a whole.
- j. **Illustrations** include photographs and line drawings.
- k. **Line drawings** come in three types:
  - i. A simple reproduction of an object, similar to a photograph
  - ii. An exploded view of an object showing its parts disconnected but arranged in the order they fit together.
  - iii. A detailed drawing showing a close-up view of a particular part.
- l. **Chart** is a catch-all term for many kinds of visual aids. Charts represent visually the organization of something such as a process or corporation.

## IV. TECHNICAL EDITING

### A. CLARITY

1. ***The purpose of a technical document is to inform the reader of your conclusions and any supporting evidence.*** Your document must convey the exact meaning to the reader; the text must be exact, clear and understandable.

### B. COMPLETENESS

2. ***When creating a technical document, it needs to be edited for completeness.*** If instructions are involved, ***test them to make sure they are complete, and a reader can understand the simple instructions.***

### C. CONCISENESS

3. Technical documents should be concisely written, they should be brief but comprehensible. You can help your readers by writing the document with the fewest possible words and illustrations. ***Give enough information to help them understand clearly what you are describing and why you are describing it.*** Include enough background information and details to make the context clear.

### D. CORRECTNESS

4. Reports should tell a complete story as logically and interestingly as possible. Choose the places where you refer to figures and tables carefully to limit distractions. Making references to tables and illustrations at the beginning or end of the document is usually preferable.

## E. SEQUENCE

5. Information presented in a logical sequence creates a readable document. Certain sequence patterns, or methods of development, are useful when creating technical documents.

## F. UNITY

6. ***Unity of a document refers to its single purpose and its presentation of information.*** Each paragraph should focus on one idea and not stray from it. Each paragraph should concentrate on a single concept. When editing a technical document, the author must question if the document is achieving one purpose, and if all the ideas flow logically together.

## G. TONE

7. ***Readers do not want to be confused when reading a document. They must not feel uncertain or confused with the information given to them,*** which is why the tone you set in your document is important. ***The tone you set in the document, just as your speaking reflects an attitude, an attitude to the reader and to the subject matter.*** When editing a technical document, make sure the information conveyed is in an informative confidential tone.



## PRACTICE EXAM

1. A report that includes scientific information that is gathered during a study is a \_\_\_\_\_ report.
  - a. Progression report
  - b. Research/laboratory reports
  - c. Inspection report
  - d. Feasibility report
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a document that lists the set of your professional and personal accomplishments.
  - a. Memo
  - b. Manual
  - c. Proposal
  - d. Resume
3. \_\_\_\_\_ should only be a few sentences long.
  - a. Headings
  - b. Titles
  - c. Summaries/Abstracts
  - d. Memos
4. \_\_\_\_\_ are an important part to a technical report because they break up long stretches of straight text.
  - a. Titles
  - b. Resumes
  - c. Summaries/Abstracts
  - d. Headings
5. Definitions are placed \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. On the cover page
  - b. Endnotes or glossary
  - c. Any random part of the document
  - d. In the footnotes

6. \_\_\_\_ are included in the reports that include results of test experiments, field trials, specific designs and feasibility report.
  - a. Graphics
  - b. Report supplements
  - c. Recommendations
  - d. Page designs
7. \_\_\_\_ can be used to emphasize separate points.
  - a. White space
  - b. Underlining
  - c. Indentation
  - d. Bullets or numbers
8. Report supplements include:
  - a. Subheadings
  - b. Visual aids
  - c. Graphs
  - d. Glossary, footnotes, appendices, indices
9. Tables, graphs, charts, and illustrations are:
  - a. Visual aids
  - b. Headings
  - c. Indentations
  - d. Bullets or numbers
10. \_\_\_\_ should be labeled, include a title, and a source.
  - a. Cover Page
  - b. Conclusion
  - c. Graphics
  - d. Definitions
11. What is the main goal of a technical writer?
  - a. Explain complex technical information clearly, concisely and in simple language
  - b. Reassure recipients are you making progress
  - c. Provide information and argue the point of certain courses of action
  - d. Have an objective and aim

12. When you need to understand the information yourself to give instructions, this is called \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Analyzing the audience  
b. Creating definitions  
c. Ensuring validity  
d. Creating headings
13. \_\_\_\_\_ reports provide information and argue the point of certain courses of action.  
a. Manual  
b. Proposal  
c. Progress/Inspection  
d. Feasibility
14. \_\_\_\_\_ is a written document, which includes suggestions or recommendations on a plan.  
a. Proposal  
b. Progress/Inspection  
c. Manual  
d. Memo
15. Things that help define separate sections include \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Boldfacing  
b. Underlining  
c. a & b  
d. Indentation
16. Anything that cannot be left out of a report should be placed in the \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Glossary  
b. Appendix  
c. Cover Page  
d. On the illustration
17. When creating instructions start writing steps that \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. Are logically ordered  
b. Lists the set of your professional and personal accomplishments  
c. Include a signature  
d. Can be printed on company letterhead

18. A \_\_\_\_\_ is commonly used for communication within a company.
- Memo
  - Manual
  - Proposal
  - Research Report
19. You would present a \_\_\_\_\_ to a potential employer.
- Feasibility report
  - Resume
  - Inspection Report
  - Manual
20. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a document that serves as a training tool to educate the reader how to use, run, install set up or build a tool/product.
- Summary/Abstract
  - Progress/Inspection Report
  - Memo
  - Manual
21. The \_\_\_\_\_ of a report needs to be detailed, so there is no question as to what the report is about.
- Glossary
  - Index
  - Title
  - Cover Page
22. The outcomes and results of your investigation and the significance should be placed in the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Conclusion
  - Heading
  - Illustration
  - Illustration
23. \_\_\_\_\_ are placed at the beginning of every major segment of your report, and guide your readers to the parts they consider most relevant and interesting.
- White space
  - Underlining
  - Headings
  - Visual aids



24. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to the amount of blank space between lines or groups of lines.
- a. Memos
  - b. White space
  - c. Visual aids
  - d. Subheadings
25. \_\_\_\_\_ presents information in columns and rows.
- a. Tables
  - b. Charts
  - c. Illustrations
  - d. Line drawings
26. A \_\_\_\_\_ graph shows trends or relationships.
- a. Pie
  - b. Bar
  - c. Line
  - d. Scattered
27. \_\_\_\_\_ simplify statistical data.
- a. Chart
  - b. Table
  - c. Illustrations
  - d. Graphs
28. A \_\_\_\_\_ communicates information, which has been compiled because of research and analysis data and of issues.
- a. Memo
  - b. Resume
  - c. Report
  - d. Glossary
29. When your documents convey exact meaning to the reader this is called \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. Clarity
  - b. Unity
  - c. Tone
  - d. Sequence

30. When instructions are tested, this is part of the \_\_\_\_\_ editing process.
- Clarity
  - Completeness
  - Accessibility
  - Tone
31. \_\_\_\_\_ refers to its single purpose and its presentation of information.
- A report
  - Clarity
  - Sequence
  - Unity
32. Conciseness includes \_\_\_\_\_.
- Giving information to help them understand clearly what you are describing and why you are describing it
  - A single purpose and its information
  - Information presented in a logical sequence
  - A close-up view of a particular part
33. Concentrating on a single concept in each paragraph is editing for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Correctness
  - Clarity
  - Conciseness
  - Unity
34. The \_\_\_\_\_ of a document reflects the attitude to the reader and to the subject matter.
- Conciseness
  - Sequence
  - Tone
  - Unity
35. It is important to set a tone for your document because the reader must \_\_\_\_\_.
- Not feel uncertain or confused
  - Be told of the progress of a project
  - Convey information
  - Explain complex technical information

36. \_\_\_\_\_ reports includes any major concerns, safety issues, needs of improvement and whether further monitoring is needed.
- Inspection
  - Feasibility
  - Research
  - Progress
37. \_\_\_\_\_ reports explain how much work is complete.
- Inspection
  - Research
  - Progress
  - Feasibility
38. \_\_\_\_\_ should be written with instructions and include a sequence of events.
- Memos
  - Manuals
  - Proposals
  - Resumes
39. \_\_\_\_\_ includes a suggestion or recommendation on a plan.
- Headings
  - A Cover page
  - Proposals
  - Manuals
40. A memo may be \_\_\_\_\_.
- Formal or used to present a report
  - Must include your employment history
  - Presented to a potential employer
  - Includes procedural steps in sequential order
41. When you have a first level heading, you must \_\_\_\_\_.
- Must use all capitals
  - Centered on a page
  - Start a new page
  - All of the above

42. Which level heading would end with a period?
- a. First
  - b. Second
  - c. Third
  - d. None of the Above
43. For the first, second, and third level you may.
- a. Bold
  - b. Make it all caps
  - c. Underline
  - d. B and C only
44. Each new type of data or procedure/technique should be found within its own \_\_\_\_.
- a. Page
  - b. Chart
  - c. Appendix
  - d. Footnote
45. \_\_\_\_ also visually separates important points from the rest of the text.
- a. Indentation
  - b. Visual aids
  - c. Tables
  - d. Charts
46. It is important to analyze the audience \_\_\_\_.
- a. Early in the writing process
  - b. Once you complete your document
  - c. A and B
  - d. None of the above
47. A progress reports \_\_\_\_.
- a. Reassures recipients that you are making progress
  - b. Includes how much work is complete
  - c. What work remains to be completed
  - d. All of the above

48. What needs to appear on the title page?
- a. Title of Report
  - b. Summary/Abstract
  - c. Date of the Report
  - d. A and C
49. The author's name should be in the \_\_\_\_\_ of the report.
- a. Appendix
  - b. Footnote
  - c. Title Page
  - d. On the last page of the Report
50. Using \_\_\_\_\_ helps the reader understand the instructions of technical report.
- a. Graphics
  - b. Bullets or numbers
  - c. Subheadings
  - d. Underlining

## ANSWER KEY

1. B) Research/ laboratory reports
2. D) Resume
3. C) Summaries/ Abstracts
4. D) Headings
5. B) Endnotes or Glossary
6. C) Recommendations
7. D) Bullets or numbers
8. D) Glossary, footnotes, appendices, indices
9. A) Visual aids
- 10.C) Graphics
- 11.A) Explain complex technical information clearly, concisely and in simple language
- 12.C) Ensuring Validity
- 13.D) Feasibility
- 14.A) Proposal
- 15.C) a & b
- 16.B) Appendix
- 17.A) Are logically ordered
- 18.A) Memo
- 19.B) Resume
- 20.D) Manual
- 21.C) Title
- 22.A) Conclusion
- 23.C) Headings
- 24.B) White space
- 25.A) Tables
- 26.C) Line
- 27.D) Graphs
- 28.C) Report
- 29.A) Clarity
- 30.B) Completeness
- 31.D) Unity
- 32.A) Giving information to help them understand clearly what you are describing and why you are describing it
- 33.D) Unity
- 34.C) tone
- 35.A) Not feel uncertain or confused
- 36.A) Inspection
- 37.C) Progress
- 38.B) Manuals
- 39.C) Proposals
- 40.A) Formal or used to present a report
- 41.D) All of the above
- 42.C) Third
- 43.D) b and c only
- 44.C) Appendix
- 45.A) Indentation
- 46.A) Early in the writing process
- 47.D) All of the above
- 48.D) A and C
- 49.C) Title Page
- 50.A) Graphic

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