



# Technical Writing: A Practical Approach

*By William S. Pfeiffer*

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For undergraduate-level courses in Technical Writing, Business Communication, Professional Communication, and Freshman Composition with a company emphasis. Technical Writing: A Practical Approach offers an easy-to-use approach towards learning the fundamentals of technical writing. The author's writing style is reader-friendly, and engages the student by providing a comprehensive overview of current topics in technical writing.

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## Editorial Review

### From the Publisher

Unique in approach, this introduction to technical writing immerses students in a running case study of situations and projects in a fictitious company that is much like an actual potential employer of college graduates. The text offers clear guidelines for all documents, annotated writing models, realistic assignments, and a writing handbook all in one -- allowing students to place themselves into professional roles and to respond to real-world technical problems, even if their own experience is limited.

### From the Back Cover

This book covers a full range of technical writing topics, including document design and preparation, organization techniques, and a emphasis on the practice of writing as a means of learning how to write.

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*It is a good thing, perhaps, to write for the amusement of the public, but it is afar higher and nobler thing to write for their instruction, their profit, their actual and tangible benefit.*

— Mark Twain, "Curing a Cold"

Perhaps it was in a moment of weakness that Mark Twain—an amusing writer if there ever was one—wrote this passage about the value of practical writing. Whatever his motivation, he clearly acknowledges the importance of writing that makes the world function, the kind of prose we call "technical writing" today.

Every student who plans to work in business and industry must master the art of technical writing. Your employer will expect as much. Just as importantly, skill in writing will give you personal satisfaction and will help you advance throughout your life. Indeed, in this new century, effective writing remains a major criterion for success in all professions.

To this end, this book stresses one simple principle: you learn to write best by doing as much writing as possible. What follows is a summary of the main features of this book. Some were brought forward from the previous edition and others are new features developed for this edition.

The fifth edition adds features that make it more readable and usable, without changing what has made the book work in all its editions—numbered guidelines, good models, practical assignments, and clear writing.

## New Features to This Edition

The fifth edition of Technical Writing: Approach includes six new features:

### ***1. "Collaboration at Work" Exercises***

Every chapter begins with a "Work" exercise.

These exercises engage in chapter content by getting teams to complete a simple project. Now all 15 chapters have "bookends" of collaborative exercises—the "Collaboration at Work" at the start and the "Communication Challenge" at the end.

## ***2. International Assignments***

Every chapter begins with a "Work" exercise.

## ***3. Appendix on Web Site Design***

Appendix B introduces students to issues of design, construction, use, and evaluation of web sites.

## ***4. Expanded Email Coverage***

Chapter 7 includes a revised set of guidelines, an "ABC Format" for email documents, and an additional email model.

This expanded coverage of email is critically important as email continues to replace internal and external correspondence at an amazing rate. Writers need a clear understanding of how to use email properly.

## ***5. Revised Research Chapter***

Chapter 13 has been thoroughly updated to respond to rapid changes in Internet research and databases.

This chapter includes a new research example topic—hybrid and battery-powered vehicles—that runs throughout the entire chapter. Also new to the chapter is a model of a short research report that uses the hybrid vehicle topic.

## ***6. Expanded Coverage of Style and Usage***

Chapter 15 adds information on tone, and the Handbook (Appendix C) includes 30 new entries on matters of correct usage.

Other changes in the fifth edition include (1) more assignments, (2) more information on electronic job searches in Chapter 14, (3) outlines of chapter headings at the beginning of each chapter, (4) additional web site support at [www.prenhall.com/pfeiffer](http://www.prenhall.com/pfeiffer), and (5) the use of four-color layout throughout the book.

# **Core Features of This Book**

*Technical Writing: A Practical Approach* is built on a core of five basic features.

## ***1. Focus on Process and Product***

This book has you practicing writing early (Chapter 1).

The text immerses you in the process of technical writing while teaching you practical formats for getting the job done. After initial chapters that discuss the planning, drafting, and editing process, the bulk of the book provides guidance for writing the most common types of documents. A final set of chapters and appendices covers special topics such as oral presentations, research, and style.

## ***2. A Simple ABC Pattern for All Documents***

The "ABC format"—Abstract, Body, and Conclusion—will guide your work in this course and throughout your career.

This underlying three-part structure provides you with a convenient handle for designing almost every technical document you encounter.

### ***3. McDuff, Inc.—A Fictional Company***

McDuff, Inc. creates a fictional company for the classroom.

Not all students have experience working in a professional or technical organization, so McDuff supplies a realistic backdrop for many of the book's examples and assignments. By placing your reader or yourself in the role of a McDuff employee, you give concrete importance to the abstract principle of "writing for your reader."

### ***4. Numbered Guidelines***

Many sets of short, numbered guidelines make this book easy to use while you complete class projects.

Each set of guidelines will take you through the process of finishing assignments, such as writing a proposal, doing research on the Internet, constructing a bar chart, and preparing an oral presentation.

### ***5. Annotated Models***

The text contains models grouped at the end of chapters on color-edged pages for easy reference.

Annotations in the margins are highlighted in color and show you exactly how the sample documents illustrate the guidelines set forth in the chapters.

## **Additional Features**

Beyond features already described, the following six additional features define the book's mission and demonstrate its utility in the classroom.

### ***1. Communication Challenges***

Every chapter includes a McDuff case study, with related questions, at the end of the chapter text.

Called a "Communication Challenge," each case describes a communication problem that relates to the material in its respective chapter. Your instructor may use these case studies as a springboard for class discussion or for collaborative assignments.

### ***2. Writing Handbook***

This book provides a well-indexed, alphabetized handbook on grammar, mechanics, and usage.

The writing handbook gives you quick access to rules for eliminating editing errors during the revision process.

### ***3. Coverage of International , Communication***

Because globalism continues to transform the business world, this book includes suggestions for understanding other cultures and for writing in an international context.

## ***4. Information on English as a Second Language***

An ESL section is included in the Handbook.

A growing number of technical communication students are from countries or cultures where English is not the first language. The ESL section of the Handbook focuses on three main problem areas: articles, prepositions, and verb use. It also applies ESL analysis to an excerpt from a technical report.

## ***5. Assignments on Ethics***

To reinforce the ethical guidelines described in Chapter 2, each chapter includes an ethics assignment.

No one can escape the continuous stream of ethical decisions required of every professional almost every day—such as deciding what to include in your resume or choosing what tone to adopt in a proposal—which is why the text challenges you to address ethical issues in these assignments.

## ***6. Appendix on Online Documents***

Appendix A addresses issues raised by the increasing prevalence of online documents in the workplace.

Many professionals, not just technical writers, are writing documents that will be read by their audience online, often never to be placed in hard copy. This new medium requires that we change the way we think about designing "pages" (screens), to help the reader gain quick access to all parts of the document.

# **Supplements**

The book is supported by the following supplements.

- Instructor's Resource Manual that includes Sample Syllabi, Chapter Summaries, Chapter Tests with Answer Keys, Editing Revisions, Planning Form and Letterhead (blank for copying), Resources for New Teachers of Technical Writing, and over 100 Transparency Masters of the book's Writing Guidelines and some of the Models.
- Transparency Acetates of most of the book's Models and ABC Formats.
- PowerPoint Slides of all the book's Models, Guidelines, and ABC Formats.
- Companion Web Site.

## **Users Review**

**From reader reviews:**

**Gerri Townsend:**

Have you spare time for a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Yep, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their own spare time to take a wander, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or even read a book allowed Technical Writing: A Practical Approach? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time along with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have other opinion?

**Bryce Adams:**

The event that you get from Technical Writing: A Practical Approach is a more deep you searching the information that hide in the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Technical Writing: A Practical Approach giving you joy feeling of reading. The writer conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by simply anyone who read this because the author of this guide is well-known enough. This particular book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. It is therefore easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having that Technical Writing: A Practical Approach instantly.

**Vera Harris:**

Spent a free time and energy to be fun activity to accomplish! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they accomplishing activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic inside the park. They actually doing same thing every week. Do you feel it? Do you need to something different to fill your current free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book could be option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to try look for book, may be the book untitled Technical Writing: A Practical Approach can be very good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

**Ettie Hardcastle:**

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