

**Course: English II (6465)**  
**Semester: Autumn 2021**

**ASSIGNMENT No. 1**

**Q. 1 Give a detailed note on Memos.**

A memo is actually short for Memorandum. It is one of the most used means of official communication in the business world. Its main purpose is to serve as a reminder or to give some instructions. Again these like circulars are a means of mass communication, i.e. to communicate with a large number of people within the organization.

Usually, we write a memo is for one of the following five reasons

1. as a reminder
2. highlight an event or circumstance
3. to recount an event
4. keep an official record of anything
5. to pass information or instructions

Memos have been a popular way for commuting for over a century now. This is because they have many advantages as seen below:

- They are a very cost effective way of mass communication. And their transmission is also very cheap.
- Another advantage is its simplicity. They are very simple to write and understand.
- Memos tend to be brief and to the point. They also reach a lot of people. So they are very time-saving as well.
- They also serve as evidence in case of a dispute

**The Format of a Memo**

Let us see the steps of writing a memo.

1. **Heading:** After the name and address of the company (which is on the letterhead) we type the word “Memo” or ‘Memorandum’ at the top of the page in the center.
2. **Recipient:** Address the recipients in the correct format, Example - ‘To: All Employees of the Sale Division’
3. **Writer:** Write the name of the person writing the memo, Example – ‘From: Mr. ABC, Head of Sales’
4. **Additional Recipients:** These are the people who will receive a courtesy copy of the memo. We don’t address the memos to them, but we keep them in the loop.
5. **Date:** The date of writing the memos is an important detail that one must include.
6. **Subject Line:** This will give the reader a brief idea about the information in the memos. The line must be brief, precise and to the point. Example – Subject: Meeting of all employees of the Sale Division.
7. **The body of a memo:** This is where all the information is contained. A formal salutation is not required in a memo. Just relay the necessary information with clarity and precision. The body must not be too long. The ending must restate the issue and end on a positive note.
8. **Proofread:** Finally, proofread the memo before sending it.

**Q. 2 Write a detailed essay on process of technical writing.**

Like other professionals, technical writers come up against ethical issues regularly and must make decisions about how to move forward with a project in the face of ethical dilemmas. Writers may encounter situations in which she must ask the following kinds of questions: What kinds of support material and sources are ethical to use? Are open web sources just as valid as academic sources for certain topics? Can email communications be used without permission? What if the writer discovers that a company falsified data about the effectiveness of its product? Should she reveal this in her report or should she take other courses of action? How much should a writer adapt to an audience without sacrificing his own views?

Ethics principles provide the basis for deciding whether “x” is ethical, but in reality, ethical issues are complicated—for example, imagine working for a large company that employs substantial numbers of people in your town, where relatively few other employment opportunities exist. Imagine that the company disposes of its chemical waste in a way that could endanger people’s health. Imagine, further, that the company cannot afford to dispose of this waste more safely and that, if you turn them in, the company will close down, most of the town will be unemployed, and the town’s entire economy will collapse. What do you do? Is the risk of future health problems more serious than the certainty of immediately destroying your town? Which choice is really more ethical?

On a smaller scale, if one way of presenting evidence requires some manipulation of data but seems to be the only way of keeping sales strong enough for your company to survive, what should you do? If you take the unethical route, odds are good that few (or no) people will realize you have done so, and you would not be doing anything illegal. If you take the ethical route, and sales plummet, few people will recognize the ethical issue, but most will clearly understand that you caused the sales decline.

## General Principles

In day-to-day life, most people have a sort of sliding scale on what constitutes ethical behavior: they would not tell a direct lie on trivial matters if doing so would hurt someone's feelings. For example, you might tell your best friend her new haircut looks attractive when in fact you believe that it does not. This lie, though minor, preserves your friend's feelings and does no harm to her or anyone else. Some might consider the context before determining how to act. For example, you might not tell a stranger that he was trailing toilet paper but you would tell a friend. In a more serious situation, a person might not choose to die to save a stranger's life, but she might risk dying to save her children's lives. Ethical behavior, including ethical technical communication, involves not just telling the truth and providing accurate information, but telling the truth and providing information so that a reasonable audience knows the truth. It also means that you act to prevent actual harm, with set criteria for what kinds and degrees of harm are more serious than others (for example, someone's life outweighs financial damage to your company; your company's success outweighs your own irritation). As a guideline, ask yourself what would happen if your action (or non-action) became public. If you would go to prison, lose your friends, lose your job, or even just feel really embarrassed, the action is probably unethical.

## Presentation of information

How a writer presents information in a document can affect a reader's understanding of the relative weight or seriousness of that information. For example, hiding some crucial bit of information in the middle of a long paragraph deep in a long document seriously de-emphasizes the information. On the other hand, putting a minor point in a prominent spot (say the first item in a bulleted list in a report's executive summary) tells your reader that it is crucial.

A classic example of unethical technical writing is the memo report NASA engineers wrote about the problem with O ring seals on the space shuttle Challenger (the link provides further links to a wide range of information, including ethics analyses; the first link is the overview for what happened). The unethical feature was that the crucial information about the O rings (O rings provide a seal) was buried in a middle paragraph, while information approving the launch was in prominent beginning and ending spots. Presumably, the engineers were trying to present a full report, including safe components in the Challenger, but the memo's audience—non-technical managers—mistakenly believed the O ring problem to be inconsequential, even if it happened. The position of information in this document did not help them understand that the problem could be fatal. Possibly the engineers were just poor writers; possibly they did not consider their audience; or possibly they did not want to look bad and therefore emphasized all the things that were right with the Challenger. (Incidentally, the O rings had worked fine for several launches.)

Ethical writing, then, involves being ethical, of course, but also presenting information so that your target audience will understand the relative importance of information and understand whether some technical fact is a good thing or a bad thing.

### **Q.3 Explain the parts of Proposal.**

Private foundation proposals differ greatly from most federal proposals. While foundations often outline the general format that they prefer, there is more latitude regarding the structure of the narrative. Always frame your proposal to align as closely as possible to the funders programs' stated mission, without going so far that you are compromising your research interests.

Further, if there is a published list of judges/reviewers available, as is usually the case for scientific applications, try to compose your proposal so that it piques the interest of one or more of the judges' expertise.

### **1. Abstract/Summary**

- The abstract is the most important component of the proposal. Spend time developing the best possible title. If the length is not mandated, it should be no longer than one half to one page maximum.
- Use bolded subheadings. Include highlights in the topic sentence in each section of the proposal.
- What will be done, by whom, how, over what period of time? What is the problem/need? Who will the outcomes benefit?

### **2. Statement of Need**

- What is the issue that you are addressing and why does it matter?
- Why is what you propose necessary? What is the void in Knowledge?
- Who benefits? Indicate the public good, not just the effect on campus.
- Why hasn't this issue been addressed sufficiently in the past? Who else is working in this field, what have they done, and why isn't that enough? Demonstrate your knowledge of the field.
- Provide convincing evidence that what you are proposing does not duplicate other work. Replication of someone else's work in a new environment or larger scale may be fundable.

### **3. Project Activity, Methodology and Outcomes**

- Why did you choose to address the issue in the manner that you have? Are there other approaches? If so, why aren't they appropriate to the situation?
- What are the specific activities involved? Who will do them?
- Present a timeline of activities. Tables and charts work best here. They crystallize data, break up pages of narrative, and convey extensive information well in a limited space.
- What specific outcomes will be achieved? What will change?
- Why are you/your organization the best one to do what you propose to do? Is it an extension of successful, innovative work or a pilot project you already completed?

### **4. Evaluation**

- Essential piece that should be both quantitative and qualitative, if feasible.
- Outline clearly the methodology that you will use to assess the projects success.

### **5. Dissemination**

- Dissemination should be linked to your project goals and objectives. If you are trying to affect policy, your dissemination plan should target policy-makers, media, and affected populations.
- Describe your communication strategy.
- Be creative. Sending an article to a professional journal is only one of many options. Consider submitting op-ed pieces to newspapers and articles to more popular periodicals; work with University Relations to obtain newspaper coverage and interviews on local radio stations; engage in conference presentations, community outreach activities, presentations to policy-makers and community groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce; launch a web site or blog; convene work groups of your peers; create briefing papers, press releases, videos; and, list yourself on speakers bureaus.

## **6. Budget and Continuation Funding**

- Show your budget in table form and use a budget narrative to explain each item.
- Only Include other sources of funding if the funder mandates it's inclusion. UMass policy does not allow including in-kind or outside contributions unless it is required, as it adds administrative burden and costs.
- Indicate how the project will be funded or be sustainable after the grant funds have run out.

### **Q. 4 Give comprehensive overview on styles related with technical writing.**

Technical language refers to written or oral communication that has specialized content. The product specification for a new microprocessor, a financial presentation by a senior executive and a design meeting for a new medical device are examples of technical communication. Everyday language involves using common business terms, such as "strategy" and "schedule," that everybody understands. The differences between technical and everyday language center on the use of jargon and assumptions about the audience.

The main difference between technical and everyday language is the use of jargon. Jargon refers to abbreviations, technical buzzwords and convoluted constructions. There is usually too much of it in technical language, and it could complicate otherwise simple concepts and leave the audience confused. While some jargon use might be intentional, perhaps to communicate an air of superiority, technical language users are often unaware that their audience cannot grasp the core message. Everyday language is usually jargon-free, although group members might use technical terms that everybody in the group understands.

Technical language users assume a certain audience knowledge level. For example, an executive who is presenting at an analysts' meeting can assume that the audience is knowledgeable about the industry. However, the analysts cannot assume the same level of knowledge when preparing research reports for their clients. They must use everyday language in these reports to justify their opinions and buy-sell recommendations. Misplaced assumptions can also cause problems in written products, such as user manuals and how-to guides, because writers sometimes overestimate the audience's technical expertise. What may seem obvious to a technical writer might be perplexing to the everyday consumer.

The context for technical and everyday language use is different. Technical language seeks to communicate specifics, while everyday language is usually more general. A chief executive uses technical language in a financial presentation to research analysts but uses everyday language when speaking to employees and shareholders at the company's annual general meeting. Written communication offers more flexibility because footnotes, charts and other supporting material can help explain complex technical concepts.

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Simply put, technical writing is used as efficient and clear way of explaining a product or technical aspect of production and how it works. Although the average many cannot understand this style and all of the jargon involved in this genre, technical writing is the preferred style by many industries.

Technical writing is meant to get facts across to its reader base. It is commonly read by a group of people with a shared, advanced knowledge of a particular subject. These essays are focused on explaining something or some process in an industry, such as the product manufacturing procedure, the testing protocols, and giving the facts of an industry report.

Instead of constructing an argument to share facts, like expository writing, technical writing is geared towards clearly and succinctly giving the data in an impersonal way. You can count on technical writing to sound more like a textbook than an expository essay.

If you are looking to start a career in the writing world, it is important to learn how to manipulate your writing style to fit the needs of a client. As a student your professor is your "client."

If you are a student, you will need to know whether your assignments are to be written in a technical way, such as a lab report or an analytical mathematics paper, or in an expository way, such as an English Essay or Philosophical paper. Ask your professor if you are confused about what style he or she is looking for in the classroom.

If you are a writer, you will find yourself writing using a blend of genres in the writing world.

- You might be involved in freelancing or copy writing in which, at times, you are trying to reach a targeted audience with technical writing for an advertisement.
- At other times, you market the same product using expository writing.

In these cases, it isn't about expository writing vs. technical writing, but about blending the two or using them in conjunction with one another for effective marketing.

#### **Q. 5 Explain the trends in technical writing with examples.**

For some time now, technical writers have been battling several challenges – sometimes the trouble is with the ‘technical’ and sometimes with the ‘writing’! Whether it is to sustain his/her present job or clear an interview for better opportunities, trends in technical writing have changed so much that the humble technical writer is now expected to know about web programming, mobile applications, cloud storage and what not! Technical writing techniques have also changed due to a massive influence of software and digital technology in the authoring process. Today, there are so many different technical writing tools available that it becomes a hard choice as well as the fact that their usage has to be mastered. To add to this, technical writing is no longer an isolated function. Rather, there are several business focus areas that overlap with technical writing such as e-learning, onboarding, software product adoption, customer success and so on! But this is no surprise either. As the world economy evolves and disruptions become ubiquitous, companies understand that they must do two things on priority. The first is to ensure that every resource and asset becomes valuable by driving certain business outcomes. The more outcomes each resource drives, the more valuable to the company it is. The second is to become lean and agile, sometimes as a way to cut costs, but also to improve immunity from external shocks which could be highly threatening. And that’s where these trends in technical writing emerge from. In its legacy form, technical writing may not deliver a lot of value for companies. But, when companies adopt these new emerging trends in technical writing, the function transforms into something entirely new and, more importantly, value driven. Though the changes are plenty, a systematic and focussed effort can help technical writers bridge this technical writing skill gap. This is the first in a series of articles

intended to serve as a one stop jaunt to uncover all the major trends in technical writing and how the function can be pivoted to drive several critical business processes.

### Trends in Technical Writing Pivoting the Function

#### Technical writing for Enterprise Software Product Adoption

Apart from the traditional Product Development lifecycle, there is another sequential process that enterprises are dealing with. It covers the all steps that lead a customer from initial awareness, to committed product purchase and value realization. Technical writers trained to deal with the traditional PDLC have a perspective in which user interest in a product is taken for granted. But that is no longer the case. This is because product vendors also have a role in driving end user adoption. And without end user adoption, the project can't be deemed successful.

Product adoption deals with the customer's changing attitude towards the product as he gets to know the product better. Product adoption is essentially a marketing process, so the key documentation revolves around product recall, competitor analysis, promotion and pricing. Technical writers would do well to reorient themselves into this paradigm. Upcoming trends in technical writing encourage technical writers to work towards helping drive end user adoption. This is one of the trends in technical writing that companies should definitely adopt to future proof themselves.

#### Tech Writing for E-learning

A technical writer's principal goal is to ensure the reader gets the message that the product team wants to convey. It could be about educating the reader on a product, service, new technology, anything. Modern businesses have found that e-learning is a very effective technique to achieve this. Be it instructional videos or live interactive sessions, learning content can be of various forms, deployed using an LMS (Learning Management System). E-learning serves to achieve a critical portion of the product adoption process – train the user on the product. On the other side, content needs to be personalized to the end user as well. That's where customized content delivery comes into play.

#### Technical Writing for User Onboarding

User onboarding is another business paradigm that runs alongside with product adoption. User onboarding process refers to the induction and integration a new customer (or employee) into the product (or company) fold. Going by the recent trends in technical writing, it can be said that a technical writer is also responsible for generating user documentation to facilitate this phase. Product help, usage instructions, example case studies, interactive training sessions – all of these and several other e-learning solutions – could be used to serve this purpose. Quick and effective onboarding is a direct consequence of good technical writing.



## Compliance to Documentation Standards

### *SCORM (Shareable Content Object Reference Model)*

SCORM is a reference standard for creating and sharing web based training content. It forms the foundation for a Learning Management System (LMS), as it content creators to reuse their content across vendors and tools. Whatfix enjoys the distinction of being the first SCORM compliant in-app guidance system.

### **DocBook**

A slightly older and well matured standard floated by the same forum who came with DITA much later. This one is for designing technical books and articles in digital formats, but printing them as hard copies.

### **Mode of Publishing**

#### **Print gives way to online documents**

First, designing documents and layouts went digital. From the humble MS Word to sophisticated Adobe tools, desktop designing brought in design reuse, open DTD standards, XML based layouts and templates. Subsequently, documents were not just digitally designed but published online too. So the printed version was almost eliminated.

#### Variety of devices

Once publishing went digital, the challenge of device diversity had to be faced. Technical documents would now have to work on all sorts of devices – PCs, smart phones, tablets of various sizes. A lot depends on whether the documentation is being developed from scratch or existing ones are being adapted. **Responsive layouts** (browser adjusts page) or **adaptive layouts** (product server manages) are the key methods employed. Some tools offer Liquid Layout rules, while some others create device-specific layouts.

### **Trends in Technical Writing Changing Its Focus**

#### **Instructive to Interactive**

Technical documentation has been about ‘educating’ a user in the old paradigm, irrespective of what he already knows or what he seeks to know. Manuals, guides, white-papers – all of them were about instructive one sided communication. However, with the onset of high speed internet and data analytics, the user is not a passive player any more. User profiling algorithms can unearth deep insights into their preferences. Once the user begins to use the product, constant feedback is received about his usage. 2 way interactive systems (with the help of eLearning platforms, product adoption tools) ensures that users get what they want with least time and effort.

#### Rich media content has replaced long text documents

High exposure to digital gadgets has lowered the attention span of users, and also made our searches more visual. Hence technical writers need to convey the message to the customer in short, succinct and effective ways. Research papers are discussed on Podcasts. Customer support chats are answered by pre-programmed bots. Installation manuals carry a series of animated GIFs! FAQs are replaced by in-page support tags (Whatfix link). Trouble shooting guides are replaced by interactive video sessions. The common trend among all these

developments is that communication between the customer and the product team is not through lengthy documents anymore. It takes various forms of audio-visuals that are interactive and easy to consume.

#### Product Focus to User Focus

In the past, technical documentation for a product was an elaborate representation of the product on paper. Manuals to cover how it works, brochures to promote sales, whitepapers about research and so on were the common ones. The technical writers hired were primarily 'writers' who understood the product and wrote about it. But in today's day and age, technical writers commonly known as 'content writers'. There is a whole lot of UX blended into the content generation process, making the user the centrepiece of documentation and not the product itself.

There is one noticeable thread that can be spotted across all these trends, it is that technical documentation (or content writing as it is called now) is certainly a job in great demand. It has certainly morphed into modern forms, increased its reliance on technology and tools. But the essence of the job remains the same – understand the product and convey your understanding to the customer effectively. Technical writers can take heart with that fact! And this series of articles hopes to aid technical writers to achieve their transition into modern business world.