

Project 4: Technical Documents Portfolio

Overview

We've created user personas and we've written persuasive technical reports. Now it's time to turn to other technical documents. Technical communication covers a wide variety of documents that are used in a wide variety of situations. While it's impossible to cover every document and every situation, one thing remains true about technical documents: they are written with a user-centered focus and are both written and designed to be as clear as possible.

Assignment

It's time to start developing documents for our theme park. For this assignment, you will work in teams. Each team will be assigned a "land" that they will be writing for. Over the course of the next few weeks, each group will regularly produce drafts of a variety of technical documents. You will receive feedback as you produce these documents, and in the last few weeks of class, you will revise those documents and turn them in as a portfolio.

Your documents should be themed around your land and make general reference to the larger theme park itself. Other than that,

Below is the sequence of documents and the criteria for each:

a. Ethical Case Study:

- You will write a case study about an ethical challenge that employees and/or technical communicators in your "land" may face. You may need to do some additional research to find examples of similar ethical issues that are encountered in theme parks. For this case study, you will write a fictional ethical case study, but you should write it as if it were real. Your case study should
 - Describe the situation (the setting, the people involved, what happened, etc.)
 - Clearly discuss the ethical challenge that those involved face.
 - Offer 2-3 possible actions that participants might undergo to resolve the challenge.
- Your case study should run 500-750 words (about 1-2 pages, single-spaced)

b. Technical Description/Specification

- You will choose something from your "land" and create two technical descriptions or specifications (one of each). This could be something related to one of the rides (perhaps a roller coaster car, a piece of robotics, etc.), one of the shops (perhaps a specification of the point-of-sale hardware that the shop will use), or a restaurant (it could be a specification of a kitchen appliance).
- Your description or specification should each be about 2 pages long and include visual elements.

c. Instructions/Troubleshooting/Process Documentation

- You will create a set of instructions, troubleshooting, or process documentation (choose 2 of the 3) related to your land. Your document could be instructions on how to set up a computer, troubleshooting software issues, or a process of getting park patrons onto and off of a ride, or anything else that fits (be creative!).
- Your documents should each run about 2 pages and include visual elements.

d. Fact Sheet/Public Communication

- You will create a fact sheet about some element of your land. For example, you could describe the different kinds of plants in your land.
- You will also create some kind of public communication—a press release or series of social media posts or other public messaging—about some event or news coming out of your land that is noteworthy.
- Your fact sheet should be 1-2 pages in length and include visuals. Your public communication should be about 300 words and may or may not include visuals (depending on the genre you choose).

Where possible, describe real things (rather than made up ones) so that you can take photographs of real objects (or find real objects online) for use in your documents. If you are documenting something that isn't real (such as elements of a ride that your team makes up), treat this activity as if they were real. Make sure to stay true to the branding of the park—all of your documents should have a uniform scheme to them, even if they are very different in content.

You will be turning in drafts of each of these sets of documents (a-d) and will receive completion points for turning in your draft. Once the drafts are complete (in Week 14), you will spend the rest of the semester using feedback to revise your drafts accordingly, and then you will compile them into a final portfolio.

With your final portfolio, you will include an **Introductory Memo**¹—a 2-page document that discusses your process in working as a team and the choices you made as you drafted and revised each document—and a **Team Evaluation**, a separate form you will fill out evaluating your team members' contributions to the project.

A note on teamwork: I recognize that team projects can be intimidating. Please note that if a team indicates that one team member did not contribute equally, I reserve the right to give that team member a lower score (up to and including a failing score) than the rest of the team.

¹ See *Technical Communication Strategies for Today* p. 142 for sample memo format

Deliverables and Due Dates (due before start of class on day listed)

- **Drafts of Documents (100 points)**
 - Ethical Case Study due March 18
 - Technical Description/Specifications due March 25
 - Instructions/Troubleshooting/Process Documentation due April 1
 - Fact Sheet/Public Communication due April 8
- **Rough Draft of full Portfolio due April 15 (for peer workshop)**
- **Final Draft of Portfolio with Introductory Memo and Team Evaluations Due Friday April 26 11:59pm**

Rubric

The assignment will be scored per the criteria below.

	Advanced	Proficient	Developing	Underdeveloped
Drafts 100 points (25 pts each)	Submission includes full drafts of all required documents. 25-23 pts.	Submission includes nearly-full drafts of all required documents. 22-20 pts.	Submission includes rushed and/or incomplete drafts of all required documents 19-17 pts.	Submission is missing one or more required document or drafts are illegible or unreadable. 16-0 pts.
Introductory Memo (30 points)	Memo successfully discusses the process of working as a team and discusses the choices that went into the drafts and revisions of each deliverable. 30-27 pts.	Memo discusses the process of working as a team and the choices that went into the writing, but with less thorough discussion. 26-24 pts.	Memo includes minimal discussion of the process of working as a team and the choices that went into the writing. 23-21 pts.	Memo is poorly composed, fails to discuss all categories, or is missing from the portfolio. 20-0 pts.
Ethical Case Study (30 pts)	Your study describes the situation, the individuals impacted, and clearly delineates the ethical dilemma and 2-3 possible courses of action. Your study runs 500-700 words and is generally free of errors. 30-27 pts.	Your study describes the situation, individuals, and delineates the ethical dilemma and 2-3 possible courses of action, with some inconsistencies. Your study runs 500-700 words and has a few distracting errors. 26-24 pts.	Your study's description of the situation seems like it may be missing important details or recommended courses of action or is otherwise less clear. Your study is 500-700 words with many distracting errors. 23-21 pts.	The ethical dimensions of the study you discuss are unclear or difficult to follow. Your study is less than 500 words. Errors may make it difficult to read. 20-0 pts.
Technical Description / Specification (30 pts)	Both documents are sophisticated and professional in composition and design, benefit the end-user, and are free of error. 30-27 pts.	Documents are sufficient in composition and design, with some lapses, and are mostly useful to the end-user. 26-24 pts.	Documents make an effort in composition and design but come across as unprofessional and may confuse the end-user. 23-21 pts.	Documents are insufficient in composition and design, are unprofessional, and care little for the end-user. 20-0 pts.
Instructions/ Troubleshooting/ Process Documentation (Choose 2 out of the 3) (30 pts)	Both documents are sophisticated and professional in composition and design, benefit the end-user, and are free of error. 30-27 pts.	Documents are sufficient in composition and design, with some lapses, and are mostly useful to the end-user. 26-24 pts.	Documents make an effort in composition and design but come across as unprofessional and may confuse the end-user. 23-21 pts.	Documents are insufficient in composition and design, are unprofessional, and care little for the end-user. 20-0 pts.

Fact Sheet/Public Communication (30 pts)	Both documents are sophisticated and professional in composition and design, benefit the end-user, and are free of error. 30-27 pts.	Documents are sufficient in composition and design, with some lapses, and are mostly useful to the end-user. 26-24 pts.	Documents make an effort in composition and design but come across as unprofessional and may confuse the end-user. 23-21 pts.	Documents are insufficient in composition and design, are unprofessional, and care little for the end-user. 20-0 pts.
Team Engagement (50 pts.)	A team evaluation indicates that you were a valuable and contributing member of the team with respect to communication, workload, and respect. The instructor agrees with the evaluation. 45-50 points	A team evaluation indicates that you were a useful member of the team but may have wavered in communication, workload, or respect. The instructor may or may not agree with the evaluation. 40-44 points	A team evaluation indicates that, while you contributed, you could have been a more useful member of the team with respect to communication, workload, and/or respect. The instructor agrees that you could have done more. 35-39 points	The team evaluation reveals that you burdened the team with lack of communication, contribution, and respect for others. The instructor agrees that you harmed the team with lack of engagement. 0-34 points