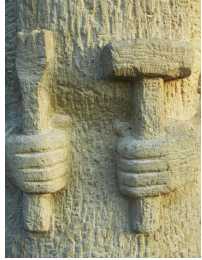


Technical Communication is the communication of technical information to a specific audience for a specific purpose. The goal of a technical document is to inform or persuade users, to help them understand a subject, accomplish a task, make a decision, adopt a particular perspective, or take specific action.

How Technical is Technical?



Technical began in the Classical Age as **techne**, which Aristotle included in his taxonomy of knowledge, defined as the art of craft or making. The crafter-apprenticeship model grew out of this perspective. During the Enlightenment Age to the Industrial Age, techne evolved into

technical or technique, which is defined in terms of mechanical inventions that allowed for automation, efficiency, and mass production.



From the Industrial Age to the Modern Age, technical turned into **technology**, a term defined mostly in terms of computers, emphasizing speed, databases, progress, standardization, and uniformity. The Information Age to today, what I think of as the New Media Age, all three terms have accumulated into a yet-



fully defined concept, **digital**, which is thought of

mostly in terms of innovation, creativity, diversity, customization, flexibility, and adaptability. It is in this Media Age that I see this term coming back around to techne and a focus on the art of craft or making.



Technical then refers to . . .

- › a particular work (what the work is),
- › the members (who is involved in that work),
- › the practices (what that work means),
- › the situation & contexts (where that work gets done),
- › the procedures (how that work gets done),
- › the processes (style of that work),
- › the reasons (why that work gets done), and
- › the ethics (what the work is responsible for)

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Fast Facts about

Tech Comm

Technical documents are not read for pleasure nor are they read from beginning to end. Technical documents are **read to accomplish something** (e.g., understand a problem, complete a task, or make a decision).

Technical documents are **reader-oriented**. Everything is written or designed based on the reader's needs.

Technical communication uses an **economic writing style**. No words are wasted or used without specific reason.

Technical documents are **visually directive**, involving rhetorical decisions such as choice of font, inclusion of illustrations, and page design.

Every rhetorical element in a technical document is there because it meets the **needs of the audience**.

Technical documents are more often than not **collaborative** acts of knowledge making.

Technical communicators write and design **genres** such as memos, brochures, fact sheets, reports, white papers, websites, instructions, and proposals.

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