

# 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)

## 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.

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

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.

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.

# TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

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two-year  
program

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## YEAR 1

**Fall 2009**

Digital Literacies

Technical Communication

**Spring 2010**

Information Design

## Learn how to...

- › analyze audience and purpose
- › write clearly & concisely
- › evaluate effectiveness of documents
- › edit for clarity
- › organize content
- › manage genres
- › invent & create graphics
- › collaborate with peers
- › evaluate performance

## YEAR 2

**Fall 2010**

Technical Editing

Advanced Tech Comm

**Spring 2011**

Capstone Course

## Develop competency in...

- › digital literacies
- › effective documentation
- › research & development
- › principles of design
- › image manipulation
- › project management

All courses are offered after 5:30 p.m.  
in a computer classroom.

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