CurricUNET Users Group Conference 2009

CurricUNET User Quick Guides & Online Tutorials

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Quick Guides

• What is a quick guide?
• When are they useful?
• Technical Writing
• Designing a Layout
• Results
• Resources
What is a Quick Guide?

One or two page document that provides the essential information needed to complete a task.
When are they useful?

- One-time setup
- Limited functionality
- Core tasks
- User roles ✔
- Transition from legacy systems
- Large documentation set ✔
- Busy Users ✔
User Roles

• Software role-based and/or process.
• Roles may perform more than half-a dozen tasks considered to be essential or common.
• How many core tasks are there per role?
  – Six or fewer, a quick guide is a good solution.
Large Documentation Set

• Dozens or hundreds of topics in a help system or pages in a manual
• Set of information most important for users.
Busy Users

- Users are busy people
  - Faculty
  - Administrators
  - Staff

- The quick reference guide is usually a format that fits them perfectly.
Good Tech Writers Practice

- Planning
- Clarity
- Brevity
- Simplicity
- Word Choice
- Active Voice
- Committing to Writing as a Process
Planning: Before You Begin

• Identify your audience and their expectations
• Know your purpose
• Know your material
• Understand the writing task at hand
• Organize your thoughts and materials
• Budget adequate time to write, review, revise and edit
Technical Writing

**Brevity**
- Use Words Efficiently
- Less is More
- Most Important Info First
- Remove Redundancy

**Clarity**
- Avoid Jargon
- Define the Unfamiliar

**Simplicity**
Use Details Wisely - Specific details are desirable, but be careful to balance detail with audience needs for clarity—significance is more important.
**Word Choice**

- **Ambiguity** - Choose words whose meanings are *clear*

- **Weak vs. Strong** - *Avoid excess words*, which slow comprehension of the main point. (i.e.: made arrangements for vs. arranged)

- **Active Voice** - Technical writers want to communicate as efficiently as possible, and *active voice is more straightforward* and is stronger than passive voice.
• Identify Steps
• Determine Appropriate Software
• Create Samples
• Select Format
• Refine, Refine, Refine!
Results

- Check Status
- Course Activation
- Department Chair
Quick Guides
Information from Tom Johnson’s blog, I’d Rather Be Writing
Quick Reference Guides: Short and Sweet Documentation

Technical Writing
Sentence Structure of Technical Writing
Nicole Kelley
Program in Writing and Humanistic Studies @ MIT 2.671, Fall 2006
Online Tutorials

- Determine Modules - Based on need
- Write Scripts - Using Quick Guides
- Choose Software - Camtasia Studio - easy to use
- Record Audio/Video - Separately is easier to edit
- Finished Product - Check Proposal Status
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