

# Reading Guide for *The Handbook of Technical Writing*

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This reading guide offers some strategic advice for understanding, reading, and making use of the content in Alred, Brusaw, and Oliu's *Handbook of Technical Writing*. The text is designed to serve as a desk reference for working professionals, as well as a resource for courses. Begin by reviewing the discussions at the beginning of each major content section (e.g., Entries about Writing, Development, and Design; Entries about Document Types and Genre). Those introductions offer a sense of how to prioritize your reading throughout the semester.

## Entries about Writing, Development, and Design

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The entries listed in this section focus on topics related to writing, including strategies for information development and design. **This section should be your early-semester priority. Complete this reading by the end of Week 2.**

### Key Topics in Writing and Design

The entries in this subsection focus on over-arching issues and concerns for information designers, such as understanding audience, or emphasis on remaining ethical during the writing and design process.

- Audience.
- Context.
- Ethics in Writing.
- Layout and Design.
- Note-Taking.
- Plagiarism.
- Purpose.
- Readers.
- Research.
- Scope.
- Usability Testing.

#### Series Title

*Concepts in Technical Communication*

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## Strategies for Writing and Design

The entries in this subsection focus on communication strategy, including issues related to language choices, and writing style.

- Biased Language.
- Conciseness.
- English as a Second Language.
- Gobbledygook.
- Paraphrasing.
- Plain Language.
- Proofreading.
- Revision.
- Style.
- Technical Writing Style.
- Transition.
- Voice

## Important Processes for Writing and Design

The entries in this subsection focus on strategies and processes for developing and organizing content.

- Cause and Effect Method of Development.
- Comparison Method of Development.
- Creating Styles and Templates.
- Definition Method of Development.
- Description.
- Division and Classification Method of Development.
- Document Management.
- Documenting Sources.
- Exposition.
- General and Specific Methods of Development.
- Interviewing for Information.
- Logic Errors.
- Methods of Development.
- Narration.
- Order of Importance Method of Development.
- Organization.
- Persuasion.
- Process Explanation.
- Quotations.
- Selecting the Medium.

## Entries about Document Types and Genres

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The entries listed in this section focus on the standards for different types of documents (e.g., correspondence, reports, manuals). This section should be your second priority. **Complete readings relevant to the documents for which you are responsible as each project becomes your focus.**

### Letters, Memos

The entries in this subsection focus on correspondence. These communication forms are the most common form of communication in any language, culture, profession, or industry.

- Correspondence.
- Email.
- Letters.
- Memos.
- Text Messaging.

### Proposals and Reports

The entries in this subsection focus on proposals and reports. Many documents can be tied back to these important genres.

- Formal Reports.
- Grant Proposals.
- Investigative Reports.
- Laboratory Reports.
- Newsletter Articles.
- Presentations.
- Progress and Activity Reports.
- Proposals.
- Reports.
- Requests for Proposals.
- Trade Journal Articles.
- White Papers.

## Entries about Document Elements and Features

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The entries listed in this section focus on topics related to specific design elements in documents: content sections, special document features. **This section should be your mid-semester priority.** As you refine your vision of documents you construct, pay attention to these deeper details.

## Features for Organization and Navigation

The entries in this subsection focus on common features and content types for technical documents.

- Abstracts.
- Appendices.
- Bibliographies.
- Conclusions.
- Executive Summaries.
- Glossaries.
- Headers and Footers.
- Headings.
- Introductions.
- Lists.
- Literature Reviews.
- Tables of Contents.
- Titles.

## Special Content Features

The entries in this subsection focus on special content forms for technical documents.

- Copyrights, Patents, and Trademarks.
- Mathematical Equations.
- Tables.
- Visuals.

## Final Thoughts on the *HTW*

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This text has been one of the best books on technical communication throughout its lifespan. Examine the way it is set up. Learn how best to integrate it into your design process. Go beyond the assigned reading. Read cross-referenced entries as you see them. Look for more entries that might prove useful. Mark the places that you might need later.