

Introduction to technical authoring

Training course outline

Introduction to technical authoring provides a thorough grounding in technical authoring principles and writing styles appropriate to user documentation.



Course summary

Sessions cover:

- Analysing your audience.
- Structuring and designing your documents.
- Writing using plain English.
- Avoiding standard errors in punctuation and grammar.
- Designing an effective layout.
- Reviewing and proof reading documents to improve quality.

Duration

One day.

Who should attend?

New technical authors, and people who are not career technical authors, but who have been asked to carry out technical authoring work.

General information

Armada has been involved in technical authoring for over 20 years. We carry out regular consultancy work and have an in-house authoring team that works on projects for clients.

Training is provided by instructors with over 20 years' experience in technical authoring.

Whilst attending training, delegates have the use of a computer to practice the techniques taught. Refreshments and lunch are also provided.

Course fees can be paid by cheque, electronic transfer or credit/debit card.

Courseware and certificate

Delegates receive:

- Comprehensive training courseware and materials.
- An e-certificate confirming successful completion of *Introduction to technical authoring* training.

Method of delivery

Training is designed for the busy professional, being short and intensive and combining lecture and demonstration. Practical exercises carried out under guidance help delegates learn the techniques taught.

Delegates have ample opportunity to discuss specific requirements with the trainer.

Dates and price

For forthcoming dates and prices see armada.co.uk/technical-authoring-training-course.

After course support

Following technical author training, delegates are entitled to 30 days email support from their trainer to help with any post-course issues.

Course syllabus

See over.

Course syllabus

Topics	Sub-topics
Introduction	Introduction and objectives Recommended reading list Why good writing is important and the costs of documentation
Know your audience	Understand and prioritise the different categories of your audience and handle different levels of reader Research the basic tasks of your audience
How to structure your documents	Understand which sections to include in your manuals and the order in which they should be placed
Write from a design	Use mind mapping techniques for designing a document Learn how to plan the content of your document before you start writing
Skills of writing – 12 golden rules	Learn the 12 golden rules of writing to help you develop a clear and concise style Use readability checking and testing techniques
Punctuation and grammar	Understand the basics of punctuation and grammar Avoid the six most frequently made errors that occur in writing
Document layout	Understand the basics of layout and typesetting Learn how to format your document for maximum impact
Reviewing and proof reading	How to check your documentation to ensure it is error free Use industry standard techniques for reviewing, rewriting and proof reading

Intermediate technical authoring

Training course outline

Intermediate technical authoring builds on the concepts and skills taught in the introductory course, teaching further key techniques that define high quality technical authoring, increasing your ability to create more effective technical documents



Course summary

Delegates learn how to:

- Produce effective technical documents that are easy to read, easy to understand and easy to act upon.
- Use a writing process structured around industry-standard best practice to improve documentation quality.
- Improve the understanding of your documents by structuring information in ways that are helpful to your readers.
- Develop a clear and concise writing style.
- Build readability through effective sentences, paragraphs and sections.

You will also be able to:

- Identify the key international standards in technical writing.
- Identify the most commonly used applications in technical writing.

On completion, you will be able to use a detailed end-to-end writing process to design, draft and improve your technical documentation.

Duration

Two days.

Who should attend?

Those embarking on a career in technical authoring (after attending the introductory course), and existing technical authors who want to improve their skillset.

General information

Armada has been involved in technical authoring for over 20 years. We carry out regular consultancy work and have an in-house authoring team that works on projects for clients.

Training is provided by instructors with over 20 years' experience in technical authoring.

Whilst attending training, delegates have the use of a computer to practice the techniques taught. Refreshments and lunch are also provided.

Course fees can be paid by bank transfer or card.

Courseware and certificate

Delegates receive:

- A training guide and materials.
- An e-certificate confirming successful completion of *Intermediate technical authoring* training.

Method of delivery

Training is designed for the busy professional, being short and intensive and combining lecture and demonstration. Practical exercises carried out under guidance help delegates learn the techniques taught.

Delegates have ample opportunity to discuss specific requirements with the trainer.

Dates and price

For forthcoming dates and prices see armada.co.uk/technical-authoring-training-course.

After course support

Following technical author training, delegates are entitled to 30 days' email support from their trainer to help with any post-course issues.

Course syllabus

See over.

Course syllabus

Topics	Sub-topics
Introduction and overview	
Basics of technical writing	Why don't readers use technical writing? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Five key reader problems• What readers want• Why consistency is so important Writers' problems with technical writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main cause of ineffective writing• Types of writing• Standards for technical writing
The technical writing process	Project managing your writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A process to achieve consistency• The technical writing process• Timings for a writing project Planning your writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setting document objectives• Plan – draft – rewrite! Analysing your audience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding your readers• Audience analysis• Four key audiences• The global audience• The audience you don't support Adding detail to your audience analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using personas• Communication styles• Other communication style issues
Creating effective content and structure	Creating a body of knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining structure and content• Structuring with sections• Topic-based authoring & DITA Topic generation techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions and conclusions• Generating topics for a structure• Structuring with the LATCH principle• Outlining tools Creating an outline prototype <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating headings that work• Writing better headings• Testing the prototype Creating cohesion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Handling repetition and redundancy• Transitions that work• Sentence structure• Sections that work

Topics	Sub-topics
Creating effective content and structure <i>(continued)</i>	The Building Blocks of Content <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic sentence structures• Topic sentences and controlling ideas• Writing a clear topic sentence• Establishing the topic and controlling idea Using paragraphs <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paragraph structure• Linked paragraphs help readers• Creating effective paragraphs
Clarity in technical writing	Clarity issues with English <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language customs• Common writing styles• Simplified Technical English• STE controlled dictionary* Grammar issues affecting technical writers <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronouns• Modifiers• Synonyms
Consistency and correctness	The Importance of consistency <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Achieving consistency• Typographical errors• Spelling forms• Numbering• Capitalisation Punctuation standards <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commas• Colons, semi-colons, ellipses• Hyphens• Apostrophes in action Copy editing and proofreading
Putting it all together	Building readability into your documents from the start <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enough or too much?• Capstone exercise Technical writing tools <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writing tools for technical writers• Image creation tools for technical writers

Advanced technical authoring

Training course outline

Advanced technical authoring teaches further techniques for producing professional standard technical documentation, exploring the range of team roles typically involved in the production of technical material



Course summary

Teaches further techniques for producing professional standard technical documentation that is clear, concise and successfully meets the needs of users. Delegates learn how to:

- Develop a clear writing style.
- Use a writing and editing process structured around industry-standard best practice to improve the quality of your documentation.
- Use fonts, graphics and page layouts to effectively convey information and enhance the look and feel of your documents.
- Explore writing content for multiple platforms.
- Give editorial feedback to help your team improve their performance.

You will also be able to:

- Identify current standards for technical writing (including DITA).
- Create a style guide for documentation.
- Use BSI standard proofing marks.

Duration

Two days.

Who should attend?

Those embarking on a career in technical authoring (after attending the introductory and intermediate level courses), and existing technical authors who want to improve their skillset.

General information

Armada has been involved in technical authoring for over 20 years. We carry out regular consultancy work and have an in-house authoring team that works on projects for clients.

Training is provided by instructors with over 20 years' experience in technical authoring.

Whilst attending training, delegates have the use of a computer to practice the techniques taught. Refreshments and lunch are also provided.

Course fees can be paid by bank transfer or card.

Courseware and certificate

Delegates receive:

- A training guide and materials.
- An e-certificate confirming successful completion of *Intermediate technical authoring* training.

Method of delivery

Training is designed for the busy professional, being short and intensive and combining lecture and demonstration. Practical exercises carried out under guidance help delegates learn the techniques taught.

Delegates have ample opportunity to discuss specific requirements with the trainer.

Dates and price

For forthcoming dates and prices see armada.co.uk/technical-authoring-training-course.

After course support

Following technical author training, delegates are entitled to 30 days' email support from their trainer to help with any post-course issues.

Course syllabus

See over.

Course syllabus

Topics	Sub-topics
Introduction and overview	
Defining readability	The technical writing process <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building readability• How people take on information• Working with how the brain works Given/new and readability <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Given/new – using a universal glossary• Structuring for readability• Reducing inferential load Signalling in your document <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Signalling with headings• 3-step process for effective headings• Signalling with sentences• Customer-focused persuasion
Business and design standards for technical documentation	Standards for technical writing <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Darwin Information Typing Architecture• DITA and XML• Company style guides and standards• External standards Types of style guides <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Example style guide content• Creating a style guide• Using editorial reference guides
Creating better graphics	Designing the page <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How readers process technical documents• Improving your document's functionality Basic rules of graphics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Controlling layout with tables and grids• Microsoft Word vs DTP software Page design: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typefaces, fonts, and white space• Layout and alignment Expressing information with graphics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying what works as a graphic• Getting the right level of detail using, photos, drawings and charts and graphs
Checking document integrity	Formal document structure and templates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Headings and the ToC• Other tables and lists• Checking• Captions and graphics• References and notes Online vs print <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Checklists for print and online• Checklist for online Copy editing and proofreading <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marking up proofs• Using formal proof correction symbols• Checking your text• Checklist: proofreading and copy editing

Topics	Sub-topics
Writing for multiple platforms	Targeting your platforms <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size and shape of the screen• Using responsive design How readers scan pages online <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying what must be written• Building the inverted pyramid Headings, menus, and links <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 3-step process for effective menus:• Menus vs. links• Writing links that work The online hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 key criteria for an effective home page• Creating transitional and content pages Accessibility initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic accessibility guidelines• BBC online rules
Grammar issues	Focusing sentences to communicate to the reader: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting the reader first• Different types of sentence• Making your writing more concrete Key grammar problems in technical authoring <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject-verb agreement• Complete sentences• Missing information• Unreadable text and how to fix it Grammar and syntax <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Usage issues• Creating cohesion terms: redundancy and transitions• Using parallel construction: sentences, tables and lists, headings
Editing and writing with others	Planning to meet your deadlines <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning and estimating• Planning metrics• Meetings: objectives, rules, top ten issues, checklists Feeding back to team members <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SBI model: delivering effective feedback• Questions to ask in difficult situations• People problems: communication styles* Creating communication in the work environment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VAK: seeing, hearing, feeling• Filtering information with VAK preferences• Benefits of VAK preferences• Keeping the team Informed• increasing team involvement Capstone exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting it all together