



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



KNOWMAN

Document writing style: towards standardization

TAL
TECH



UNIVERSITA
DELLI STUDI
DI PADOVA



4EXPERIENCE



National University of Political Studies and Public Administration

This knowledge pill examines the issue of document writing style that facilitates understanding (and reuse) of knowledge in a document by others.

Document writing: why to write and document Knowledge?



Source: Bram Naus
(<https://unsplash.com/photos/n8Qb1ZakK88>)

- Critical knowledge is at risk when it's only stored in employees' heads.
- Documentation is one of the approaches for capturing and transferring critical knowledge
- Documentation is codifying knowledge into written, audio, visual, and/or video assets
- Documentation represents a core element of the «organizational memory»
- Need to properly write company's' knowledge in a document



Critical knowledge is at risk when it's only stored in employees' heads.

Knowledge management (KM) offers a variety of approaches for capturing and transferring critical knowledge through documentation.

Documentation is the process of codifying knowledge into written, audio, visual, and/or video assets. When knowledge is in the form of content, it can be transferred to others at any time and is safely secured should it be needed in the future.

Documentation represents a core element of the «organizational memory». For its effective use, there is a need to properly write companys' knowledge in a way that facilitates understanding (and reuse) of knowledge in a document by others.

Ineffective document writing



Source: Pexels (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/black-text-on-gray-background-261763/>)

- Inadequate Information
- Language and use of jargon terms
- Accuracy of the content and uninviting appearance
- Confusing structure
- No Visual Aids when readers needs them
- Lack of uniformity

What are the factors that cause inefficient document writing?

Some of the major factors in document writing that make your document unreadable by a targeted audience and fail to meet the objective includes:

- 1. Inadequate Information:** Having more (or less) information than required is probably the top reason of inefficient writing. Writers often do not equate audiences needs and create documents which have either too much or too less information which does not meets their audiences requirement. For instance, for the reason of conciseness, the sentence may be short but still unclear specially for new employees.
- 2. Language and use of unnecessary jargon term:** the grammar and use of too technical words affects the reader. Terms which makes perfectly sense to authors may not be clear to others. Also, in using jargon terms, people may understand it differently based on their perceived context, specially in case of abbreviations and acronyms.
- 3. Accuracy of the content and uninviting appearance:** When you write information, you need to write great content (technically) and also need to make it look attractive so that your document get readability and achieve the aim of the document.
- 4. Having confusing Structure in a document** is another prime reason for inefficient writing which leads readers get confused instead of getting informed. It's important to make sure that the content in your knowledge pill is logically organized into categories and collections.
- 5. Lack of visual aids** (e.g., pictures, charts, infographics, video clips, etc) in the document makes it less readable and attractive. Even it is true that pictures explain well than statements in some cases. User will get tired of reading long paragraphs.
- 6. Lack of uniformity in formatting and writing style** impacts the readability of the document.

How to write standard documents ?



Source: Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com/vectors/clipboard-data-science-chart-908886/>)

- Have a writing style and pre-defined style guide or template
- **Writing style:** how you deliver information—*the voice, tone, mood of your writing, too technical or general, etc.*
- **A style guide template:** a manual with a set of standards and best practices for writing, formatting and design of documents



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



So, how can knowledge documents be written?

A knowledge document, such as knowledge pill isn't useful if people can't first find the right information, understand it, and apply it to their questions. Following some simple document writing style and guidelines can greatly increase the usability of your knowledge document.

-Writing style: How you deliver information—the voice, tone, mood of your writing, too technical or general (content)—is the “style.” It affects how well your audience will understand and respond to the information you are trying to communicate in the document. Since writing style affects how your reader responds, be aware of and use it to help you achieve your purpose. For instance knowledge documents for new hires should not be written as concise and too technical as used by senior experts.

-A style guide template, a manual with a set of standards and best practices for the writing, formatting and design of documents is required so that company documents will have uniformity and standard. A style guide establishes standard style requirements to improve the message and communication across an organisation by ensuring consistency both within a document, and across multiple documents. Because practices vary, a style guide helps to set out standards to be used in areas such as writing style, page structure, formatting, certain procedures and other areas. The style guide may require certain best practices in usage, language composition and visual composition.

Basics in writing a knowledge document



Source: Aron Burden
(https://unsplash.com/photos/y02jEX_B000)



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



- Readability
- Clarity
- Engagement
- Value
- Utility

You want to be sure your content is easy to understand and that your SMEs provide that content in an efficient manner. To do both, writing directions that cover the following listed basics is important:

- **Readability:** Readers prefer content that provides information at-a-glance. That means paragraphs should be short and blocks of text should be broken up with headings, subheadings, bullets or numbered lists where applicable. Also, it should be written in a common language used by the company to create clarity around the organization.
- **Clarity:** Use action-based headlines and not too long titles to help your audience know at-a-glance what the content will explain. Explain all jargon or technical terms in clear language.
- **Engagement:** Include [images](#), [charts](#), [infographics](#), or [videos](#) within content or as stand-alone content to increase engagement.
- **Value:** Every piece of content in your knowledge document should offer a valuable solution or insight.
- **Utility:** Be sure to link to related sources within your knowledge document. This will help your audience easily find other resources that fully answer their questions.

Final tips



Source: Visual Tag Mx (<https://www.pexels.com/photo/top-view-photo-of-3-men-in-front-of-laptop-2566581/>)

- Determine the topics that you need to cover
- Structure the documents in an easily consumable format
- Write the documents with the average user in mind
- Add pictures, infographics, screenshots and videos especially when you explain something complex
- Be detailed as well as specific to help all kinds of users
- Format your documents
- Interlink them
- Get feedback from readers and improve the document



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union



Here are the main steps and checklists you need to follow to write a knowledge document:

- Determine the topics that you need to cover
- Structure the documents in an easily consumable format
- Write the documents with the average user in mind, in terms of content, language and etc.
- Add pictures, infographics, screenshots and videos especially when you explain something complex
- Be detailed as well as specific to help all kinds of users (including new hires)
- Format your documents
- Interlink them
- Finally, it is important to get feedback from readers and improve the document

Sources and find out more!

- Mercer S. (2022), Tips & Templates for Writing Great Knowledge Base Articles <https://www.helpscout.com/helpu/knowledge-base-article/>
- American Productivity & Quality Center, (2016), Keys to Writing Process Definitions <https://www.apqc.org/resource-library/resource-listing/keys-writing-process-definitions>
- How to Create a Style Guide for Your Knowledge Base, <https://herothemes.com/blog/knowledge-base-style-guide/> , accessed 01/03/2023



KNOWMAN

More about the project:
knowmanproject.eu

This project has been funded with support from the European Union. This document and all its content reflect the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.