

PWTC Student Guide:

Surviving Technical Writing



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Welcome to PWTC!

So, you've just decided that you want to pursue the PWTC certificate. Though the content of this guide is geared towards English 380, (you'll learn about the classes in here too!) this guide will help you through the process of almost everything the PWTC professors will throw at you. It's all here: from formal grant writing to writing your own user manuals.

The only class this guide really does not cover is English 391c. The students who created this guide (from English 831, Spring 2012) decided that the scope of web design was too much to add into one small-ish guide.

So, as you flip through the pages of this guide, try not to become overwhelmed. Looking at all of the course information, major projects and assignments is going to seem like a lot of work, but it is worth it in the end. The most important thing to remember while taking the PWTC classes is: have fun! It may seem overwhelming at times, but try to have a little fun in the process of learning things like "software documentation".

Good luck, and should you have any questions during any of your classes, it is always the best idea to talk to your professors! They want nothing more than to help you achieve the best education possible, and will make sure that you understand every topic that is learned in classes.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

Welcome!

This chapter focuses on the basic information you need to know coming into the PWTC program, and answers questions like “What is PWTC?”, “What are the required classes?”, and “What will I learn?”.

What is Professional Writing and Technical Communication?

As English majors, students often study the works of many famous authors—striving to understand the world they lived in. These authors write in ink, on paper, published in books, about politics, philosophy, movements and society. But our world is very different than the world those dead authors came from.

We live in a digital world, surrounded by technology. We type on screens and talk about apps, browsers and software. We scan websites not just reading text but listening to podcasts and watching YouTube videos. Professional writing and technical communication is an English major's adaptation to the 21st century—opening up opportunities beyond writing novels and poetry.

Professional Writing

Professional writing uses clear language to convey information in a way that is easily understood by an intended audience.

Technical Communication

Technical communication provides information or instructions for how to use and understand specific technologies. By presenting technical information in an appropriate way, information can be more accessible--making someone's life easier and more productive.

PWTC at UMass

PWTC at UMass Amherst offers students an opportunity to learn about different kinds of software as well as teach and help others through their completed grant proposals, user documentation and personal portfolio websites.

Students challenge their technical skills as well as their writing—constantly learning and pushing their abilities in this digital world.

Professional Writing Genres:

- Grant Proposals
- Software Documentation
- Technical Reports
- Journal Articles
- Project Proposals
- Website Authoring
- Reviews

Modes of Technical Communication:

- Web Pages
- Help Files
- Social Media Sites
- Software Instructions
- User Documentation

Jobs within Technical Communication:

- Technical Writers & Editors
- Information Architects
- Instructional Designers
- Technical Illustrators
- Globalization & Localization Specialists
- Usability & Human Factors Professionals
- Visual Designers
- Web Designers & Developers
- Teachers & Researchers of Technical Communication

Overview of PWTC Courses

All courses are 3 credits. English 379 and English 380 are offered in the fall semesters while English 381, English 382, and English 391c are offered in the spring semesters. Students must be a junior or senior and maintain a 3.0 GPA to be enrolled in the PWTC program.

Eng 379: Introduction to Professional Writing

Major Projects:

- Research Project
- Group Presentation
- Mock Grant Proposal

This class teaches you the basics of Professional Writing. It focuses on technicalities of writing like style and grammar as well as résumé building. Prerequisite is English 112 (or equivalent).

Software used: MS Powerpoint, W.E.B. DuBois Databases

English 380: Intermediate Software Documentation

Major Projects:

- 30-35 page MS Word Manual
- Group Demo

This class focuses on Technical Writing, specifically modular documentation. The production of the final project is a semester long process including planning, writing, editing, user-testing, and professional printing and binding. English 379 must be taken prior to or during the same as English 380. Software used: MS Word

English 381: Advanced Technical Writing I

Major Projects:

- Collaborative PWTC Handbook
- Group Demo

This course builds upon the skills learned in English 380 in order to improve students' level of organization as well as written and graphical talent. The specific software covered is currently used in fields students may enter upon graduation. English 380 must be taken prior to taking this course. Software used: InDesign, Adobe Robohelp, Adobe Framemaker

English 382: Advanced Technical Writing II

Major Project:

- Independent Project of Student's Choice

This class functions as the "capstone" course for the PWTC program, and is therefore geared towards seniors. This course gives students a chance to choose a specific area they may want to specialize in. There will be mock interviews, alumni visits, portfolio workshops and more. English 381 must be taken prior to or simultaneously with this course.

English 391c: Advanced Software for Technical Writers

Major Projects:

- Online Portfolio
- Proto-Site

Focusing specifically on print and web design, this class is the most software-heavy of all five. All of the work completed for this course is showcased in an online portfolio each student creates for his or herself. Upon completion of this course, students will be fluent in use of HTML.

Software used: Adobe Dreamweaver, Adobe Flash, Adobe Photoshop, MS Powerpoint

PWTC Alumni:

Where Are They Now and How Much Do They Make?

It is easy to think of boring car manuals or dull instructions that no one reads when thinking of technical writing jobs. Though those are some of the options, a technical writer has many other opportunities and plenty of career paths to choose from.

Where did they go?

Graduates of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Professional Writing and Technical Communication program have been employed by companies such as Alacatel-Lucent, Hewlett-Packard, IBM Lotus Software, Motorola, Outcome Sciences, RSA Security, Misys Healthcare, Eze Castle Software and Oracle Corporation. Some alumni have gone into the medical field while others continue to work with software. One was offered a job as a technical writer, but ended for a travel agency in Italy. PWTC alumni have also become documentation managers, technical writers, book and journal editors, and trainers. Some of the daily tasks technical writers do include contacting other coworkers to develop different projects, and using the skills learned in the PWTC courses to write/email effective instructions.

What are they making?

An average salary for a technical writer ranges from \$32,000 to \$84,000. A technical editor can make a salary ranging from \$36,000 to \$57,000. A senior technical writer's average salary is around \$56,000 to \$81,000. Overall, it depends on the company you are working for, your position, skills, and years of experience.

*Information concerning the list of PWTC alumni are from LinkedIn.com and from personal emails.

**The average pay for some technical writing positions can be found at payscale.com and poewar.com

Current PWTC alumni and careers:

Kelsey Anderson:

-graduated in 2011,
-User Experience Copywriter at Athena Health.

Michael Fonseca:

-graduated in 2010
-Associate Technical Project Consultant at Outcome Science.

Gwendolyn Gustavson:

-graduated in 2011
-Senior Paralegal at Bergmann & Moore.

Corry Mackin:

-graduated in 2009
-Associate Technical Writer at Oracle.

Gabrielle Segalla:

-graduated in 2010
-Junior Technical Writer at Axeda Corporation

Megan Strathearn:

-graduated in 2010
-Web design/ Developer at the College of Humanities and Fine Arts Information Technology department at University of Massachusetts Amherst
-Research Assistant for 4MAL-ITY (web-based tutoring system, within the School of Education).

Softwares learned in PWTC

The PWTC program has a strong focus in pairing analytic writing with new technologies. As a PWTC student, you will gain experience in specialized documentation and editing software by drafting original content on digital platforms. Here is an alphabetical list of software used throughout the PWTC program:

Adobe Dreamweaver

A web authoring and editing program that provides visual and code-level capabilities for creating standards-compliant XML and HTML websites and designs. You will use this program to build numerous websites in English 391.

Adobe Flash

A creative environment for producing expressive interactive content. You will be introduced to Flash and its built-in programming language called ActionScript 3.0 for coding your own animations and games in English 391.

Adobe FrameMaker

A powerful authoring, managing, and publishing solution for use in consistent creation of template-based technical documents. You will tame your own massive writing projects with FrameMaker in English 381.

Adobe InDesign

A design package used in proofing page layouts before their print or digital distribution. The creative tools in InDesign provide precise control over typography and consistency. You will become familiar with this powerful production tool in English 381.

Adobe Photoshop

The industry-standard digital imaging program. This program includes tools for photography editing and realistic painting. You will design both task-based and free-form PhotoShop projects in English 391.

Adobe RoboHelp

A software solution that creates and organizes help systems, policies, and procedures in an industry-standard format. You will use RoboHelp to create an online help system for a process or procedure of your choosing in English 381.

Microsoft PowerPoint

The leading presentation software for use in illustrative and informative projects. Designed for use in front of an audience, you will use PowerPoint to give presentations on controversial and intriguing topics in both English 379 & English 391.

Microsoft Word

The definitive word processor. Between formatting tips, command shortcuts, and practical demonstrations, you will become intimately familiar with Word's capabilities as you write a software manual on the program in English 380.

Remember to have fun!

Chapter 2

Writing!

This chapter focuses on all the information you will need to know as a PWTC writer, and covers everything from modular documentation to user testing.

Writing Modular Documentation

One of the most critical skills you'll learn in the PWTC program is writing user documentation. Documentation allows a software user to become acquainted with technology by reading simple, concise steps. The most common form of documentation for technical writers and within the PWTC program is called modular documentation.

What is Modular Documentation?

Modular documentation is distinguished from other forms of documentation by its adherence to small, independent documents (or “modules”) that can be accessed based on need and convenience; collectively, they form a software manual or an online help system.

What goes into a module?

While every module will have distinctions based upon its purpose, the core components include:

- A brief, descriptive title
- An introductory paragraph
- Instructional text in a procedural, step-by-step format
- Supplementary images, figures, and charts

What Else Should I Keep in Mind?

A module should not rely upon any outside information; that is, the user should be able to accomplish the stated goal of the module without relying upon anything but the module itself. Similarly, a module should not extend beyond one cohesive visual spread, and a user should never have to flip a page in order to complete it. Finally, it is crucial to use simple, direct sentences that are in the present tense so that you can successfully affect and engage with your audience.

How to write an introduction to your module

What is an Introduction?

After familiarizing yourself with writing an introduction to a module, it progressively becomes a simple process as long as you are paying attention to who your user is. The introduction is straightforward and directions are never included. This section is clear-cut, organized, and enables the user to prepare for the directions. The user has some background knowledge of the module that you are explaining so the introduction is always kept brief in order to avoid redundancy.

Why Write an Introduction?

The overall importance of an introduction is to state the task that is going to be explained in the following set of directions. Mainly, the introduction clarifies any information that can be viewed in the directions. The user can gain a better understanding of basic concepts and can determine if the following set of directions will be beneficial.

What should be Included in an Introduction?

It is crucial to recognize that often users will skip right into the directions so do not make the introduction too long or descriptive. Do not include any information that is crucial to the procedure being documented. Key terms should be introduced with a brief definition so the user will not be confused in the directions. Lastly, slogans and advertisements should not be placed into the introduction statement because the reader has already committed to the product.

Reminders and Tips

- Make sure your phrasing is geared towards the specific user that you are attracting and always keep the introduction as concise as possible.
- Notice that a brief definition is provided as well as the benefits of using the given tool. Examples are included but not in extensive use.

Managing tone in technical writing

An aspect of your writing that your users will very likely scrutinize is the tone. When writing technical documents, your tone will be modified accordingly to best suit your target user audience. For example, if you were writing a technical document for an audience of college students, your tone would differ from that of a technical document for your professors. Despite these minute adjustments, there are key points you should keep in mind when exercising a specific tone in your writing, regardless of your users.

Avoid Condescending Language

Unfortunately, while it might seem that this would be easily avoided, condescension can slip into your tone if you're not careful, especially if you are preoccupied with an overly amiable tone. Your users need guides, not the implication that they're being talked down to.

-**GOOD:** Preheat the oven to 350°. If you are unsure how to do so, please see the Appendix.

-**BAD:** Preheat the oven to 350°. If you are unsure how to do so, please see the Appendix and do not feel badly; as you are new to the kitchen, this is to be expected!

Avoid Exaggeration and Exclamations

Sometimes, we might feel the need to infuse our writing with energy to appeal to our users. Note, however, that exclamation points and bubbly adjectives can give your writing an overall feeling of fake enthusiasm as well as compromise your level of authority as a writer.

-**GOOD:** This user manual will guide you from a beginner's level of expertise to that of an intermediate level.

-**BAD:** This user manual will get you to exactly where you need to be in no time! Soon, you'll be a great chef in your own right!

Avoid Making Assumptions

While you may be able to draw certain conclusions about your users if you're writing to a specific group of users, do not make assumptions about them. In making these assumptions, you may alienate select users of your user audience.

-**GOOD:** A college student's life can be hectic between whatever schoolwork, social life, and extracurricular activities you may have, so this user manual will guide you through the steps of setting up your free UMass blog in a few quick, easy steps.

-**BAD:** As a college student, you're often too busy with partying to pay attention to the finer details of setting up your free UMass blog, so this guide will do all the hard work for you. That way, you can get back to the action as soon as possible.

Writing Callouts

Callouts are pretty simple. Think of them as brief pieces of information that point to an image, or a specific part of an image. They are meant to call attention to an image or part of an image, hence the name “callout.” They are very flexible. You could take a minimalist design and write one word with a thin line, or get more complex and creative, with a few words in a large colorful box, and a line zigzagging across the page.

The two most important things to remember while writing callouts:

1. The shorter the better.
2. Never place a step in a callout. Steps have their own place in a module, and it's not in a callout.

How to make a callout in Word 2010 (for PC):

1. Go to the Insert tab.
2. Click on the Shapes button in the Illustrations group.
3. Pick a callout at the bottom of the drop down list.
4. Click on the area of your document you wish to place the callout.
5. Your cursor is placed in the callout, fill it out appropriately.

Note: Don't limit yourself to just the supplied callouts, Don't be afraid to make your own in different ways.

Creating a callout in InDesign:

There is no “Callout” feature in InDesign, instead, an easy way to create callouts is using the Add Anchor Points Tool.

1. Select the “Rectangle Tool”
2. Create a rectangle on the Document page, or the Paste Board area.
3. At the pen tool, right click and select the “Add Anchor Point Tool”
4. On the side of the rectangle, add three (3) anchor points, the same space apart.
5. Select the “Direction Selection Tool” then click the outside of the rectangle.
6. Select the inside of the rectangle, notice that the anchor points have become small white squares.
7. Select the middle anchor point, and drag out to create the pointer of the callout.

You can make the callout look better by adding round-ed edges, drop shadows. Don't forget to group the rectangle and the text box together so you can move it around more easily.

Concision Tips

When engaging in technical writing, whether in an instruction manual or otherwise, it is important to exercise concision. From consumer manuals to highly trained technician's guidelines, the following guidelines will help you to write effectively.

Use lists.

Lists are easy to read and understand quickly. When using lists, it is important to keep a uniform grammatical structure.

Use the same terminology throughout your writing.

Do not interchange “enter” for “return key”, for example. Choose one and stay consistent to avoid any confusion.

Use the imperative mood.

Users understand the command form best when dealing with instructions.

Examples of the Imperative mood:

-GOOD: “Left click the Orientation button on the Page Layout Menu. Left click the Landscape button. The orientation of the page automatically changes.”

-BAD: “Left click the Orientation button on the Page Layout Menu. You can left click the Landscape or Portrait button and the orientation of the page can automatically change.”

Writing Cover Memos

Cover memos are short letters that typically accompany and introduce a document. Cover memos should be polite and professional, and it is especially important that your memo be concise. This way, your audience can quickly skim the memo and understand its contents.

In the PWTC program, cover memos are an opportunity to explain your work to your instructor. You can use cover memos to ask questions, request feedback, explain your reasoning behind certain choices you made in your work, and more. Students in English 380 are provided with a detailed handout on cover memos, so you can always refer back to that if you have further questions.

Tips for writing cover memos:

-Make sure your professor's name is spelled correctly and you address them by their proper title.

-The subject of the memo should not be more than one line.

-Watch your tone in this section – make sure you're not issuing commands to your instructor.

-If your memo is short, you can combine the "purpose" and the "contents" sections. No need to separate them out if they're each one or two sentences.

-Always end with a positive closing note.

User Testing

Tips for Testing:

- Read Graves' *A Strategic Guide to Technical Communication* for an overview of the different types of users. It is best to have most users come from your "primary" user group; however, don't discount the benefit of having users with multiple ability levels.
- The more users you can test your manual on, the better! Every user will bring a unique set of eyes and skill sets to the table.
- Make your users feel comfortable: this is not the time for a dark holding cell and a single bright overhead light! Invite them to coffee, relax at a kitchen table; wherever they are most comfortable.
- It's best not to overwhelm your users with the entire manual. Pick out a few of your best (or worst!) modules and focus just on those.
- Ask open, leading questions. One example is: What could I improve? You want to encourage conversation about your modules, not yes-or-no answers. Tell your users to feel free to make notes directly on the modules; these marked-up sheets will be valuable resources for future editing.
- Reassure your user: make it clear that you are not testing their skills. Instead, you are testing your skills as a technical writer, and they are doing you a huge favor.
- Thank your testing subjects!

User testing is a critical part of the manual drafting process; a way for the manual author to collect feedback from real users, not just peers.

What is User Testing?

During the drafting process, your manual should be reviewed through a process called "user testing." Your test subjects may point out typos or design flaws in your manual, but more importantly, they are testing the usability of your manual. User testing is more than just getting another set of eyes on your manual before it goes to the printers. Oftentimes, an experienced technical writer can miss some of the finer details that the average user isn't familiar with. User testing provides the opportunity to find these areas where the instructions might be too broad, or more explanation is needed. All manuals benefit from user testing.

The User Testing Memo

Although memos can usually be quite short, the user testing memo is not one where you want to skim on content. Make sure you have full profiles of your testing subjects: age, experience with the program, etc. Highlight both the positive and the negative feedback your manual received: both are crucial for future editing!

Chapter 3

Visual Design!

In this chapter, the focus is all on design: fonts, callouts, and a whole lot more.

What the Font?

In the realm of PWTC, the term typography is used broadly to refer to the practice of designing documents with font. Font is just as much a part of the visual display of your document as choosing a color scheme, and it is important to understand the functions that a font carries out. Font can give users important clues about the structure of your document, and help guide the user across the page.

What Font/s Should I Choose?

When selecting a font, or font combination for your document, keep in mind that less is more. Select a font that is readable in print, and that does not distract the reader from the written content. It can be tempting to design titles in big gaudy font, yet subtlety is most effective.

What are Serifs/Sans Serifs, and How Do I Use Them?

Serifs are “are semi-structural details on the ends of some of the strokes that make up letters and symbols,” and sans serifs are simply typefaces without the fancy flourish. You can mix and match these two classes of typeface within your document to create a sense of logic within the confines of the page. For example, a document with titles in serif typeface and body paragraphs in sans serif typeface illustrates a subtle contrast in font, and helps guide the readers’ eye across the page. Experiment with different serifs and sans serifs to see what kind of meaning it can create on the page.

Using color

More than sixteen million to render, which ones to choose?

Choosing the right color for your project is pivotal. When deciding what kind of color scheme to go with, keep in mind that different colors and shades will evoke different emotions and associations in your audience. For example, the color red can stimulate adrenaline or blood pressure while orange, and because it is rarely found in nature, pops out at us more than other colors. That's why we find it on life vests, hunting vests and in construction work areas.

Here is some vocabulary to help you on your way:

Chromatic Value – The measure of lightness or darkness in a color. Adding white to a color creates what's called "tint" and adding black to a color creates a "shade."

Monochromatic – If a color scheme is monochromatic, it consists of different tints and shades of one color.

Analogous – Analogous colors are those colors that are situated right next to each other on the color wheel.

Complementary – Complementary colors are colors located on opposite sides of the color wheel, like orange and blue.

Saturation – The saturation of a color is how "pure" the color appears.

Color Models:

Additive RGB (Red, Green, Blue) color model – This color model makes up the colors displayed on your computer screen.

Subtractive CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black) color model – This is the color model that computer printers follow.

This is just a small slice of a vast sea of words used to describe varieties of color. Start building your color vocabulary early to start speaking the right language. You'll come across terms like hexadecimal notation, split-complementary, triadic, tetradic, discordants, achromatic and many more. Be prepared!

Color can be the foremost attracting element of a webpage, layout or what have you, so choose wisely and do a little bit of research before you come to a final decision. Check out some alluring color configurations online or on book covers to get a sense of what exactly you'll want to convey in your color schemes. Most importantly, never forget your audience.

Helpful Hints

-When printing out any final draft, prepare for the inevitable. Your colors will look a little different on a physical sheet of paper as compared to your computer screen. Save yourself a huge hassle and some cash by conducting a trial print to make sure your "canary yellow" doesn't print like "macaroni vomit yellow."

-Watch out for simultaneous contrast which is the effect caused when colors placed next to each other make the other appear more vibrant and a war of 'which is brighter' ends in a stalemate. It can be painful to look at.

Alignment and Hierarchy

When designing a document, it is important to consider the alignment and hierarchy. When used correctly, both design elements can make your document look more professional and structured.

Examples

Rufus the Dog. Rufus loves: to jump over fences, to eat his food, to sleep all day, and to wag his tail. Rufus hates: to go to the vet, to take walks, to take a bath, and to be brushed.

Rufus the Dog

- Rufus loves:
 - to jump over fences.
 - to eat his food.
 - to sleep all day.
 - to wag his tail.

- Rufus hates:
 - to go to the vet.
 - to take walks.
 - to take a bath.
 - to be brushed.

Alignment

There are two types of alignment: vertical alignment and horizontal alignment. For example, if your document is left aligned, you should make sure that the text running down the left side of the page lines up, and that the text or images on the top of the page line up. In the image to the left, the text is put into columns, but the designer made sure that each column's text was both vertically aligned and horizontally aligned. This allowed for a neatly organized page, with no ambiguity as to what information went to which person.

Another name for the top and left side of the page is the power zone. Text placed in this area gets more emphasis than the text in the bottom right side of the page.

Hierarchy

Hierarchy is the most basic form of visual design, and makes a document easier to read and understand. The two images to the left, both of the same written text, show the power of hierarchy and what it can do to a page's organization.

In the bottom image, differences in text size and value offer different levels of hierarchy. There are three levels of vertical alignment that further cement the hierarchy of the text. The most important text is seen at the top of the page, while the less important text is seen towards the bottom of the page.

Using white space

Less Is More

Presentation is a valuable tool for drawing in and immersing a reader. It can be easy to place too much emphasis on the packaging. Rather, presentation at its best lets the content shine.

Smallest Effective Difference

In Edward Tufte's writings on data visualization, he insists on smallest effective difference: "Make all visual distinctions as subtle as possible, but still clear and effective." This strategy employs our ability to see just noticeable differences: fine distinctions in line weight and color.

Reducing clutter emphasizes data. Dark, heavy lines in callouts and tables (Word's default settings are often guilty of this) detract from information's visual weight. Could using fine, gray lines in their place simplify the presentation? Could they be eliminated altogether? Using a variety of line-weights and limited inclusion of color are also subtle but powerful ways of differentiating information.

White Space

One may want to crowd information in to get the most out of a module. But a cluttered page does not invite a reader's interest. "White," or "negative," space is any portion of the page that is blank. A designer can deliberately use white space to make a page look clean and polished.

Take care not to create trapped white space. These awkward chunks of negative space might get left over between sections or images in a module.

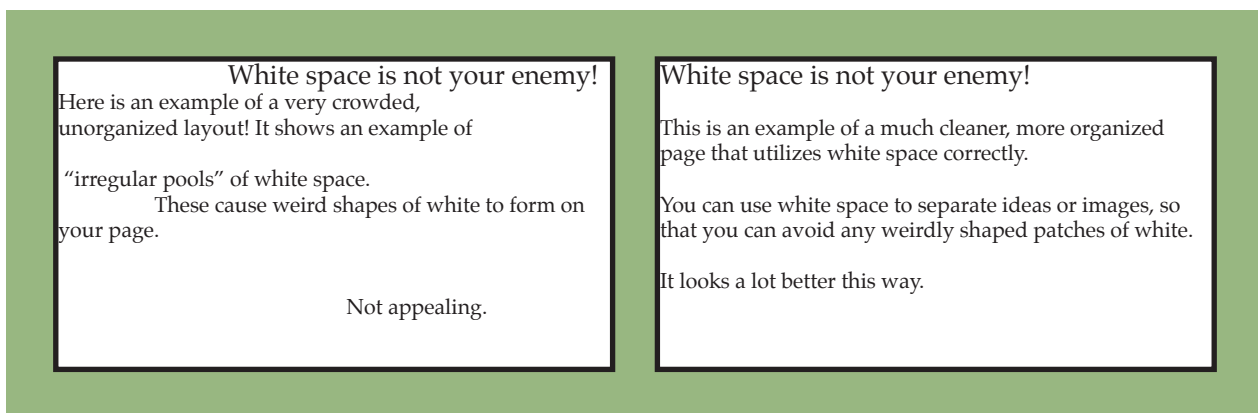


Figure 2: The left-hand image shows us some white space that has been left trapped between objects. In the right-hand image, one of the objects has been shifted to free up this trapped white space.

Chapter 4

Finishing Touches!

This chapter focuses on everything you would need to know about finishing up your technical documents: printing, binding, and a last minute checklist that will prepare you for everything.

Creating cover and front matter

The cover and the front matter are the first pages that your audience will view and thus influences whether they will pick your manual for their needs. The cover should target an intended audience. If it is a professor, the professional look will be more appropriate. If it is a beginner's manual then a laid back design, similar to For Dummies manuals, will work well. For students, either design works.

Front Matter

The front matter is all the material at the beginning of the manual. This includes the cover, the title page, the acknowledgements, the introduction and the table of contents.

The Cover

The cover should include all the necessary text no more, no less. A wordy title is not skimmable and may not be read. A short title may not provide enough information about the manual. The title should be appropriate to the target audience and relevant to the content of the manual. The title, then, should be around 12 words, and your name below it. Next, the cover design should be in congruency with the rest of the manual. If there is a distinct image that appears in every module, then it should be on the cover to indicate the design inside the manual. Consistency is important and helps establish a rapport with the reader. Finally, the cover is standalone without any material on the opposite side.

Title Page

The title page should be in congruency with the cover and can be created by choosing some design elements of the cover art. The design should be a little simpler and text size should be smaller.

Optional but recommended: Acknowledgements

An acknowledgement page is a nice thank you to the professor and can be a considerate gesture to your classmates and professors that helped you. You can also have a simple thank you to the family.

Combining PDF files

Many English 380 PWTC students choose to create and save each module for their final Microsoft Word Manual as different Word documents. Instead of combining these documents in Word, it's much easier and organized to convert them first to PDF files, and then combine the PDF files into one large PDF document. This allows the formatting to be preserved on each individual page, such as if your manual's sections have different header titles for each section.

You can use Adobe Acrobat Pro in the Du Bois Library, to get the job done. You can also use a free online tool called PDFMerge! Do not download anything from the website.

Combining PDF Files with Adobe Acrobat Pro

- Convert your Microsoft Word File to a PDF.
- Open Adobe Acrobat Pro X.
- Click Combine Files into PDF.
- Click the Add Files dropdown menu.
- Select Add Files.
- Find and select all the PDF Files you want to combine.
 - To select multiple files at one time, hold down the CTRL button and click on all the files you wish to add.
- Click Combine Files.

Note: Be sure to save your newly combined PDF file!

Combining PDF Files with PDFMerge!

- Open a web browser.
- Go to the web site: <http://www.pdfmerge.com/>
- Click the Choose File Tab.
- Find and select your file.
- Click Open.
 - Repeat until all files are selected. Click the More Files link to add extra files if you need to.
- Click the Merge! tab.
- Click Save

The Last Minute Checklist!

You can now probably taste the sweet nectar of conclusion, but before you hand in your manual, it is important to go through at the end and make sure you are prepared to print it and pass it in. Here are some quick steps to help you complete your project smoothly.

Have you re-read the Assignment Prompts?

You are going to get a lot of different handouts that specify what each section of your Word manual should include; what modules need to explain, table of contents, front matter etc. Hopefully you have saved these, and now you should take the time to refer back to them and make sure that you have everything that you are supposed to. If you haven't saved them, you can borrow them from a classmate, check the UDrive or class website, or (as a last resort) ask the professor for the electronic PDF files.

Have you proofread & edited your manual?

Editing is extremely important for the successful completion of the manual. No one wants to have to pay for printing more than once. Here are some tips to get the best editing done:

- Print the pages you have so you can see what they look like on paper. Seeing the printed version will allow you to see how the layout will appear on paper, and not just visualize it on the screen. It is easier for a lot of people to see mistakes when they have a piece of paper in front of them.
- Do some user testing. It may sound like a waste of time, but having someone else read your content is beneficial to making sure you are conveying the information the way you want to.
- When you think you are done editing, proofread at least one more time. You will be glad you did.

Have you found where you are going to print?

See this chapter's section on printing and binding information to make sure you know how much it will cost and where and when to bring it.

Have you written your memo?

It is easy to forget this part of the process after focusing so much on your manual. However, sending your completed project in with a memo attached shows professionalism, and it also gives you a medium to convey any thoughts, questions, or concerns about your experience making the manual that you may have for your professor.

Printing and Binding Information

Collective Copies:

Color Printing Costs:

- 10-24 pgs. (color):
\$0.75 each side
- 25-99 pgs. (color):
\$.60 each side

Binding Options:

- Tape binding: \$2.50
- Comb binding: \$2.75
- Coil/Velo binding: \$3.25
- *Prices include printed cardstock cover.

Clear plastic or black vinyl: \$1.00

Campus Design & Copy:

Color Printing Costs:

- Single side \$.60
- Double sided \$1.15

Biding Options:

- Strip Binding: \$1.50
- Comb Binding: \$1.25
- Coil: \$2.00
- Hole Punch: \$0.60

Cover Paper:

- Transparency: \$0.50
- Cover Stock: \$0.10

Staples:

<http://www.staples.com/>
*navigate to the Copy and Print department

For a 32 double sided color pages with vinyl back and clear plastic front - \$23.00**

**Upload your manual to check pricing.

Take a deep breath—you've finished your manual and are ready for the next step: printing, binding, and handing it in! This process is relatively quick, and reasonably inexpensive. There are two local printing options in the Amherst area—Campus Design & Copy (CDC) in the Student Union, and Collective Copies (CC) in downtown Amherst. Or use the Staples copy and printing department. You'll find everything you need to know about printing and binding below.

Where Should I Go?

When choosing a copy shop to go to there are a few things (in addition to cost) to keep in mind. It's important to realize that CDC isn't open on the weekends, and that it can close early (or have reduced hours) during finals week. CC is generally more expensive, but has longer hours. Staples is open 7 days a week, but you won't be able to change your manual once you get there.

What Do I Bring?

Collective Copies: bring a flash drive with your manual saved on it as a PDF. You will be able to explain how you want the final layout to look once your there
Campus Design & Copy: bring a flash drive, or have your manual saved to your UDrive or a site you can access from online. You'll be able to make any last minute changes while you're there.
Staples: prepare your manual beforehand by uploading it to the Staples website. You won't have the flexibility to make last minute changes like you would at a local shop.

How Long Will It Take?

The whole process—if everything goes as planned—shouldn't take more than an hour. However keep in mind that during finals it might be crowded. Also it's a good idea to leave time to reprint a page or two if you catch a typo you missed the first time (it's possible to replace a single page).

Prices - An Overview:

The English 380 class of 2011 spent between \$12 and \$30 on printing and binding. Each manual was a total of around thirty pages, and the prices varied depending on the type of binding and paper used. The cost of various paper and binding options are listed to the left.

Dual-booting your Mac

“Dual Boot” is the term for having two operating systems running on one computer. In 380, you might have to write a manual on Windows specific products, like Word 2010, or later in the Professional Writing and Technical Communication specialization, you might have to use Windows specific products, like FrameMaker and RoboHelp. If you’re a mac user and the idea of continually having to return to school or the PWTC lab to work on homework isn’t appealing to you, you can install a Windows OS right on your Mac computer with these steps. This process requires a legal, physical copy of your preferred Windows OS, (which can be obtained for free at msdnaa.oit.umass.edu), that your computer meets certain requirements, and a bit of patience and bravery.

Checking Requirements

Before you can install a Windows OS on your Mac, you have to make sure your computer can handle it. These steps will guide you through the process of checking your system’s specs to see if they meet the requirements. If by the end, you find that your computer does not have the minimum requirements, do not continue with the dual boot.

- From the Apple in the menu bar, choose About This Mac.
 - The operating system should be Mac OS X Version 10.5 or higher, though 10.6 is recommended. The processor must be Intel.
 - Select the Finder by clicking on the desktop or choosing it from the dock and open a new Finder window. Check that there are at least 10GB of free hard drive space.
- Determine free hard drive space from the bottom of a Finder window.
-Continue to the next section only if the computer meets these requirements.

Burning Windows to a Disc

If you downloaded your copy of Windows (i.e. through the school, through MSDN-AA), you need to burn it to a disk to properly install it. You may skip these instructions if you already have a disk copy of Windows.

- Double click the .iso to mount the disk image to your desktop.
- Insert a blank DVD into your disc drive.
- Right-click (or press control and click) on the disk image.
- Select Burn “[file name]” to disc...
- Eject disc when it has finished writing.

Getting Ready

Now that you know your computer can handle the process, it's time to get ready. Follow these simple, but key steps to make sure nothing goes wrong in the process.

- Back up important files using Time Machine or other backup assistant, or copy them to an external hard drive.
- Log in as administrative user and log out all other users.
- From the Apple in the menu bar, choose Software Update. Install all available updates. After restart (if required), install any additional updates that remain.
- Quit all running applications.
- Plug in the power adapter if the computer is a laptop

Partitioning Your Hard Drive

Now that you're all ready to go, you'll need to partition your hard drive. Partitioning a hard drive is when you break it up into sections to be allocated to different tasks. If this sounds scary, it kind of is – that's why you backed up your important files. With a partitioned hard drive, you can run any operating system you want – Linux, Windows, Mac OS 9 – and still run your current operating system that you know and love. But don't be nervous, we're here to help.

- From the Utilities folder in the Applications folder, open Boot Camp Assistant.
- SUGGESTED: Click Print Installation & Set Up Guide.
*NOTE: This is a thorough guide to installing Windows on the computer, and provides helpful troubleshooting tips.
- Click Continue.
- Make sure the Download the Windows support software for this Mac bubble is selected.
- Click Continue. The Windows Support Software downloads.
- Click Continue.

Notes:

-Your Windows partition can either be FAT or NTFS format. FAT allows you to read and write files on on the Windows partition from the Mac Partition, but must be 32 GB or smaller. NTFS can be any size and provides better security, but it is not readable and writable from your Mac partition. Windows Vista and Windows 7 require NTFS.

-Your Windows partition can either be FAT or NTFS format. FAT allows you to read and write files on on the Windows partition from the Mac Partition, but must be 32 GB or smaller. NTFS can be any size and provides better security, but it is not readable and writable from your Mac partition. Windows Vista and Windows 7 require NTFS.

- Leave Boot Camp running once the partitioning is complete.

Installing Windows Vista or 7 (Ignore if installing XP)

Your hard drive is partitioned, you have your Windows OS CD in hand, what next? Time to install it onto your computer. It is imperative that you follow the instructions exactly or you could lose everything on your Mac. Still not worried? Good. Let's keep going.

- Insert your Windows installation disk.
- Click Start Installation in Boot Camp Assistant. The computer reboots.
- Follow the installer instructions.
*NOTE: If asked to choose between upgrade or custom installation, choose custom installation.
- Select Disk 0 Partition 3 BOOTCAMP from the prompt.
*NOTE: Do NOT delete any partitions or make any changes in this screen. Do NOT Select any other partition other than the one noted or you risk losing all data on your computer.
- Click Drive options (advanced).
- Click Format. Click OK.
- Click Next. The Windows partition is formatted using the NTFS file system.
- Reboot the computer.

Installing Windows XP (Ignore if installing Vista or Windows 7)

Don't have Windows Vista or 7? No problem. Follow these steps instead. It is imperative you follow these instructions exactly to avoid losing everything on your Mac.

- Insert the Windows XP installation disc.
- Click Start Installation in Boot Camp Assistant. The computer reboots.
- Follow the installer instructions.
*NOTE: If asked to choose between upgrade or custom installation, choose custom installation.
- Select C: Partition 3 <BOOTCAMP> [FAT32]. Press return on the keyboard.
*NOTE: Do NOT select any partition other than the one noted or you risk losing all data on your computer.
- Use the arrow keys on the keyboard to select NTFS or FAT format. See note above or printed guide for additional information on each. Press return on the keyboard.
- Reboot the computer.

