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Strategies for Technical Communication

IN THE WORKPLACE

THIRD EDITION

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LAURA J. GURAK ■ JOHN M. LANNON



A Topical Guide to the STRATEGIES Boxes

GENERAL SKILLS

Global Technical Communication	13
Analyzing Your Audience	50
Persuasion	55
Proofreading	62
Avoiding Ethical Abuses	72
Outlining	82

TEAMWORK

Organizing a Team Project	14
Running a Meeting	17
Managing Team Conflicts	18
Peer Review and Editing	19

DOING RESEARCH

Thinking Critically about Research	26
Researching Online	29
Informational Interviews	38
Surveys	40

STYLE

Deciding about Tone	105
Nonsexist Usage	106
Unbiased Usage	107

VISUALS AND DOCUMENT DESIGN

Creating Tables	116
Creating Graphs	118
Creating Charts	121
Illustrations, Diagrams, Photographs, Videos, Icons, and Symbols	125
Designing: Consistency and Cohesiveness	139
Designing: Navigation and Emphasis	144

GETTING A JOB

Creating a Résumé	158
Application Letters	161
Digital Job Application Materials	162
Dossiers, Portfolios, and E-portfolios	165
Interviews and Follow-up Letters	170

MEMOS AND LETTERS

Memos	185
Letters in General	192
Inquiry Letters	195
Claim Letters	198
Sales Letters	200
Adjustment Letters	201

REPORTS AND PROPOSALS

Progress Reports	284
Periodic Activity Reports	287
Trip Reports	289
Meeting Minutes	292
Feasibility Reports	294
Recommendation Reports	296
Peer Review Reports	298
Formal Reports	312
Proposals	335

OTHER PRINT DOCUMENTS

Definitions	217
Descriptions	235
Specifications	238
Achieving Readability	255
Creating an Accessible Design	258
Instructions and Procedures	263
Summaries	278

DIGITAL MEDIA AND PRESENTATIONS

Email	356
Text Messages	358
Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages	371
Social Media	383
Preparing Oral Presentations	398
Using Presentation Software and Video Conferencing	400
Delivering Oral Presentations	402


AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Taking Notes	407
Quoting the Work of Others	409
Paraphrasing the Work of Others	410
Summarizing the Work of Others	411



A Guide to the CHECKLISTS

CHECKLIST for Effective Technical Communication	22
CHECKLIST for Doing Research	41
CHECKLIST for Usability	63
CHECKLIST for Ethical Communication	72
CHECKLIST for Structuring Information	90
CHECKLIST for Style	107
CHECKLIST for Using Audience-Centered Visuals	128
CHECKLIST for Document Design	145
CHECKLIST for Résumés	171
CHECKLIST for Job Application Letters	172
CHECKLIST for Supporting Materials	172
CHECKLIST for Memos and Letters	203
CHECKLIST for Definitions	218
CHECKLIST for Descriptions and Specifications	239
CHECKLIST for Instructions and Procedures	265
CHECKLIST for Summaries	279
CHECKLIST for Informal Reports	300
CHECKLIST for Formal Reports	324
CHECKLIST for Proposals	347
CHECKLIST for Email and Text Messages	360
CHECKLIST for Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages	373
CHECKLIST for Social Media	384
CHECKLIST for Oral Presentations	402



STRATEGIES FOR
**Technical
Communication
in the Workplace**

THIRD EDITION

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BRIEF CONTENTS

Detailed Contents vii

Preface xvi

PART 1	Foundations 1
	1 Technical Communication: Global, Collaborative, and Digital 2
	2 The Research Process in Technical Communication 25
	3 Providing Audiences with Usable Information 44
	4 Recognizing Ethical Issues in Technical Communication 66
PART 2	Blueprints 75
	5 Structuring Information for Your Readers 76
	6 Writing with a Readable Style 93
	7 Using Audience-Centered Visuals 111
	8 Designing User-Friendly Documents 131
PART 3	Documents 149
	9 Résumés and Other Employment Materials 150
	10 Memos and Letters 175
	11 Definitions 205
	12 Descriptions 220
	13 Instructions and Procedures 242
	14 Summaries 267
	15 Informal Reports 281
	16 Formal Reports 302
	17 Proposals 326
PART 4	Digital Media and Presentations 349
	18 Email and Text Messages 350
	19 Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages 362
	20 Social Media 375
	21 Oral Presentations and Video Conferencing 386

Appendices

A Documenting Sources 405

B A Brief Handbook 439

Works Cited 462

Photo Credits 462

Index 463

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DETAILED CONTENTS

Preface xvi

PART 1 Foundations 1

1 Technical Communication: Global, Collaborative, and Digital 2

What Is Technical Communication? 3

Main Features of Technical

Communication 4

Focus Is on the Reader, Not the Writer 4

Document Design Is Efficient and Accessible 5

Writing Style Is Clear and Relevant 5

Information Is Persuasive, Truthful, and Based
on Research 5

Three Primary Purposes of Technical

Communication 6

Informational Purpose 6

Instructional Purpose 6

Persuasive Purpose 9

Common Types of Technical Documents 9

Technical Communication Is Global,
Collaborative, and Digital 12

Technical Communication Is Global 12

STRATEGIES for Global Technical
Communication 13

Technical Communication Is Collaborative 14

STRATEGIES for Organizing a Team
Project 14

Running Successful Meetings 15

Identifying and Managing Group Conflicts 15

STRATEGIES for Running a Meeting 17

STRATEGIES for Managing Team Conflicts 18

Reviewing and Editing the Work of Others 19

STRATEGIES for Peer Review and Editing 19
Technical Communication Is Digital 20

CHECKLIST for Effective Technical
Communication 22

APPLICATIONS 23

2 The Research Process in Techni- cal Communication 25

Thinking Critically about Research 26

STRATEGIES for Thinking Critically about
Research 26

Primary versus Secondary Sources 27

Exploring Secondary Sources 28

Online Secondary Sources 28

STRATEGIES for Researching Online 29

Hard-Copy Secondary Sources 34

Exploring Primary Sources 37

Unsolicited Inquiries 37

Informational Interviews 38

STRATEGIES for Informational Interviews 38

Surveys 39

STRATEGIES for Surveys 40

Observations and Experiments 41

CHECKLIST for Doing Research 41

APPLICATIONS 42

3 Providing Audiences with Usable Information 44

Analyze the Document's Audience 45

Primary and Secondary Audiences 45

Relationship with Audience 46

Audience's Technical Background 47
 Audience's Cultural Background 47
STRATEGIES for Analyzing Your Audience 50

Determine the Document's Purpose 50
 Primary and Secondary Purposes 51
 Intended Use of the Document 51

Know How to Be Persuasive 51
 Using Claims as a Basis for Persuasion 52
 Connecting with Your Audience 52
STRATEGIES for Persuasion 55

Create a Task Analysis for the Document 56

Consider Other Related Usability Factors 57
 Setting 57
 Potential Problems 58
 Length 59
 Format 59
 Timing 59
 Budget 59

Develop an Information Plan for the Document 59

Write, Test, Revise, and Proofread the Document 61

STRATEGIES for Proofreading 62

CHECKLIST for Usability 63

APPLICATIONS 64

4 Recognizing Ethical Issues in Technical Communication 66

Ethics, Technology, and Communication 67

Types of Ethical Choices 67

How Workplace Pressures Affect Ethical Values 69

Recognizing and Avoiding Ethical Abuses 69

STRATEGIES for Avoiding Ethical Abuses 72

CHECKLIST for Ethical Communication 72

APPLICATIONS 73

PART 2 Blueprints 75

5 Structuring Information for Your Readers 76

The Importance of an Understandable Structure 77

Outlining 80
STRATEGIES for Outlining 82

Chunking 83

Sequencing 83

Paragraphing 84
 The Topic Sentence 84
 Paragraph Unity 85
 Paragraph Coherence 85

Clarifying Headings 86

Providing an Overview 87

CHECKLIST for Structuring Information 90

APPLICATIONS 92

6 Writing with a Readable Style 93

The Importance of a Readable Style 94

Writing Clearly 95
 Avoiding Ambiguous Pronoun References 95
 Avoiding Ambiguous Modifiers 96
 Using Active Voice Whenever Possible 96
 Using Passive Voice Selectively 97
 Avoiding Nominalizations 98
 Unstack Modifying Nouns 99
 Avoiding Unnecessary Jargon 100

Writing Concisely 100
 Avoiding Wordiness 100
 Eliminating Redundancy and Repetition 102

Writing Fluently 102
 Combining Related Ideas 103
 Varying Sentence Construction and Length 103
 Using Parallel Structure 104

- Writing Personably** 105
 Adjusting Your Tone 105
STRATEGIES for Deciding about Tone 105
 Avoiding Sexist and Biased Language 106
STRATEGIES for Nonsexist Usage 106
STRATEGIES for Unbiased Usage 107
CHECKLIST for Style 107
APPLICATIONS 108

7 Using Audience-Centered Visuals 111

The Importance of Using Audience-Centered Visuals 112

- When to Use Visuals** 113
 Using Visuals to Support Text 113
 Using Visuals on Their Own 115

Types of Visuals 115

- Tables 115
STRATEGIES for Creating Tables 116
 Graphs 116
STRATEGIES for Creating Graphs 118
 Charts 119
STRATEGIES for Creating Charts 121
 Illustrations and Diagrams 122
 Photographs 123
 Videos 124
 Icons and Symbols 124
STRATEGIES for Illustrations, Diagrams, Photographs, Videos, Icons, and Symbols 125

Special Considerations When Using Visuals 126

- Selecting Appropriate Visuals 126
 Placing, Cross-Referencing, and Presenting Visuals 127
 Using Color in Visuals 127
 Using Visuals Ethically 128

CHECKLIST for Using Audience-Centered Visuals 128

APPLICATIONS 129

8 Designing User-Friendly Documents 131

The Importance of User-Friendly Document Design 132

Characteristics of Well-Designed Documents 133

- Specific Design Elements** 135
 Designing for Consistency and Cohesiveness 136
STRATEGIES for Designing: Consistency and Cohesiveness 139
 Designing for Navigation and Emphasis 140
STRATEGIES for Designing: Navigation and Emphasis 144

CHECKLIST for Document Design 145

APPLICATIONS 146

PART 3 Documents 149

9 Résumés and Other Employment Materials 150

LET'S GET STARTED Résumés and Application Letters 151

Assessing Your Skills and Aptitudes 152

Researching the Job Market 153

Résumés 154

- Parts of a Résumé 154
 Organizing Your Résumé 156
STRATEGIES for Creating a Résumé 158

Application Letters 158

- Solicited Application Letters 159
 Unsolicited Application Letters 159
STRATEGIES for Application Letters 161

Digital versus Print Job Application Materials 161

- STRATEGIES** for Digital Job Application Materials 162

Dossiers, Portfolios, and E-portfolios	163
Dossiers	163
Portfolios and E-portfolios	165
STRATEGIES for Dossiers, Portfolios, and E-portfolios	165
Interviews and Follow-up Letters	167
Interviews	167
Follow-up Letters	168
STRATEGIES for Interviews and Follow-up Letters	170
CHECKLIST for Résumés	171
CHECKLIST for Job Application Letters	172
CHECKLIST for Supporting Materials	172
APPLICATIONS	173
10 Memos and Letters	175
LET'S GET STARTED Memos	176
LET'S GET STARTED Letters	176
Memo Basics	177
Memo Parts and Format	178
Memo Tone	178
Types of Memos	181
Transmittal Memo	181
Summary or Follow-up Memo	181
Informational Memo	182
STRATEGIES for Memos	185
Letter Basics	185
Letter Parts and Formats	185
Parts of a Letter	185
Formats for Letters	188
Letter Tone	188
Establishing and Maintaining a “You” Perspective	188
Being Polite and Tactful	191
Using Plain English	191
Considering the Needs of International Readers	192
Being Direct or Indirect	192

STRATEGIES for Letters in General	192
Types of Letters	193
Inquiry Letters	193
STRATEGIES for Inquiry Letters	195
Claim Letters	195
STRATEGIES for Claim Letters	198
Sales Letters	198
STRATEGIES for Sales Letters	200
Adjustment Letters	200
STRATEGIES for Adjustment Letters	201
CHECKLIST for Memos and Letters	203
APPLICATIONS	203

11 Definitions 205

LET'S GET STARTED Definitions	206
Audience and Purpose of Definitions	207
Legal, Ethical, and Societal Implications of Definitions	208
Types of Definitions	209
Parenthetical Definitions	209
Sentence Definitions	209
Expanded Definitions	210
Methods for Expanding Definitions	210
Etymology	211
History	211
Negation	212
Operating Principle	212
Analysis of Parts	212
Visuals	213
Comparison and Contrast	213
Required Conditions	214
Examples	214
Using Multiple Expansion Methods	214
Placement of Definitions	216
STRATEGIES for Definitions	217
CHECKLIST for Definitions	218
APPLICATIONS	218

12 Descriptions 220

LET'S GET STARTED Descriptions 221

Audience and Purpose of Descriptions 222

Objectivity in Descriptions 222

Elements of Descriptions 223

Title 223

Introduction 223

Sequence of Topics 224

Visuals 224

Conclusion 224

Product and Process Descriptions 225

A Complex Product Description 228

A Complex Process Description 232

STRATEGIES for Descriptions 235

Specifications 236

STRATEGIES for Specifications 238

CHECKLIST for Descriptions and

Specifications 239

APPLICATIONS 240

13 Instructions and Procedures 242

LET'S GET STARTED Instructions 243

Audience and Purpose of Instructions 244

Types of Instructional Formats 245

Instructional Brochures 245

User Manuals 246

Quick Reference Materials 246

Web-based Instructions 247

Online Instructions 250

Ethical and Legal Implications 251

Elements of Effective Instructions 251

Title 251

Overview or Introduction 252

Body 252

Conclusion 252

Visuals 252

Notes, Cautions, Warnings, and Danger

Notices 252

Content, Style, and Design Considerations 254

Detail and Technicality 254

Style 255

STRATEGIES for Achieving Readability 255

Design 256

STRATEGIES for Creating an Accessible

Design 258

Procedures 261

Audience and Purpose Considerations 261

Types of Procedures 261

Usability Testing 263

STRATEGIES for Instructions and Procedures 263

CHECKLIST for Instructions and Procedures 265

APPLICATIONS 265

14 Summaries 267

LET'S GET STARTED Summaries 268

Audience and Purpose of Summaries 268

Elements of Effective Summaries 269

Accuracy 270

Completeness 270

Conciseness 270

Nontechnical Style 270

Writing Summaries Step by Step 270

Step 1: Read the Original Document 271

Step 2: Reread and Mark Essential Material 271

Step 3: Cut and Paste the Key Information 271

Step 4: Redraft the Information into Your Own

Organizational Pattern and Words 271

Step 5: Edit Your Draft 271

Step 6: Compare Your Version with the Original

Document 271

Special Types of Summaries 273

Closing Summaries 275

Informative Abstracts 275

Descriptive Abstracts 275

Executive Summaries 276

Ethical Considerations in Summarizing

Information 276

STRATEGIES for Summaries 278

CHECKLIST for Summaries 279

APPLICATIONS 279

15 Informal Reports 281

LET'S GET STARTED Informal Reports 282

Two Categories of Reports: Informational and Analytical 283

Progress Reports (Informational) 283

STRATEGIES for Progress Reports 284

Periodic Activity Reports (Informational) 287

STRATEGIES for Periodic Activity Reports 287

Trip Reports (Informational) 287

STRATEGIES for Trip Reports 289

Meeting Minutes (Informational) 292

STRATEGIES for Meeting Minutes 292

Feasibility Reports (Analytical) 293

STRATEGIES for Feasibility Reports 294

Recommendation Reports (Analytical) 296

STRATEGIES for Recommendation Reports 296

Peer Review Reports (Analytical) 298

STRATEGIES for Peer Review Reports 298

CHECKLIST for Informal Reports 300

APPLICATIONS 300

16 Formal Reports 302

LET'S GET STARTED Formal Reports 303

Audience and Purpose of Formal Reports 304

Comparative Analysis 305

Causal Analysis 305

Feasibility Analysis 306

Elements of Effective Formal

Reports 306

Accurate, Appropriate, and Clearly Interpreted Data 307

Clearly Identified Purpose Statement 307

Understandable Structure 308

Readable Style 308

Audience-centered Visuals 308

User-friendly Design 308

Parts of Formal Reports 309

Letter of Transmittal 309

Front Matter 310

Text of the Report 311

End Matter 311

STRATEGIES for Formal Reports 312

A Sample Formal Report 313

CHECKLIST for Formal Reports 324

APPLICATIONS 325

17 Proposals 326

LET'S GET STARTED Proposals 327

Audience and Purpose of Proposals 328

Types of Proposals 328

Planning Proposals 329

Research Proposals 329

Sales Proposals 332

Organization of Informal and Formal

Proposals 332

Clear Title or Subject Line 332

Background Information 334

Statement of Problem or Situation 334

Description of Solution or Resolution 334

Costs, Timing, and Qualifications 334

Conclusion 334

STRATEGIES for Proposals 335

A Sample Formal Proposal 336

CHECKLIST for Proposals 347

APPLICATIONS 347

PART 4 Digital Media and Presentations 349

18 Email and Text Messages 350

LET'S GET STARTED Email and Text Messages 351

Email 351

- Audience and Purpose of Email 352
- Components and Organization of Email 353
- Appropriate Style for Workplace Email 353
- STRATEGIES** for Email 356

Text Messages 357

- Audience and Purpose of Workplace Text Messages 357
- STRATEGIES** for Text Messages 358

Comparing Email and Text Messaging 358

Copyright and Privacy in Digital Communication 358

Be Prepared for Technology to Fail 360

CHECKLIST for Email and Text Messages 360

APPLICATIONS 361

19 Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages 362

LET'S GET STARTED Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages 363

Internal Blogs 363

External Blogs 364

Internal Wikis 365

External Wikis 365

Web Pages 365

Audience and Purpose of Web Pages 366

Elements of Effective Web Pages 367

- Structure 367
- Style 370

Visuals 370

Design 370

Ethical Considerations 371

STRATEGIES for Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages 371

CHECKLIST for Blogs, Wikis, and Web Pages 373

APPLICATIONS 374

20 Social Media 375

LET'S GET STARTED Social Media 376

Considering Audience and Purpose 377

Audience as Contributor 379

Social Media in Technical and Workplace

Communication 379

Customer Review Sites 379

Facebook 380

Google+ 380

LinkedIn and Other Job Sites 380

Twitter 381

YouTube 382

Ethical and Legal Issues 382

STRATEGIES for Social Media 383

CHECKLIST for Social Media 384

APPLICATIONS 384

21 Oral Presentations and Video Conferencing 386

LET'S GET STARTED Oral Presentations 387

Audience and Purpose of Oral Presentations 388

Types of Oral Presentations 388

Informative Presentations 388

Training Presentations 390

Persuasive Presentations 390

Action Plan Presentations 390

Sales Presentations 391

Parts of Oral Presentations 391

- Introduction 391
- Body 392
- Conclusion 392

Preparing Oral Presentations 392

- Research and Connect the Topic to Your Audience 392
- Create an Outline or Storyboard 393
- Determine a Delivery Style 394
- Choose Your Technology 396
- Plan the Use of Visuals 396
- Practice the Presentation 398

STRATEGIES for Preparing Oral Presentations 398

Using Presentation Software 399**Video Conferencing** 400

STRATEGIES for Using Presentation Software and Video Conferencing 400

Delivering Oral Presentations 401

STRATEGIES for Delivering Oral Presentations 402

CHECKLIST for Oral Presentations 402**APPLICATIONS** 403

STRATEGIES for Paraphrasing the Work of

Others 410

Summarizing the Work of Others 410

STRATEGIES for Summarizing the Work of Others 411

Documentation: The Key to Avoiding Plagiarism 411

Why You Should Document 411

What You Should Document 412

How You Should Document 412

MLA Documentation Style 413

MLA Parenthetical References 413

MLA Works Cited Entries 414

APA Documentation Style 425

APA Parenthetical References 425

APA Reference Entries 426

Other Documentation Styles 436**Recognizing Copyright Issues** 436

Works in the Public Domain 437

Fair Use 437

The Difference between Plagiarism and Copyright Infringement 438

B A Brief Handbook 439**Grammar** 440

Sentence Fragments 440

Run-on Sentences 441

Comma Splices 441

Faulty Agreement—Subject and Verb 442

Faulty Agreement—Pronoun and Referent 443

Faulty Coordination and Subordination 443

Faulty Pronoun Case 445

Punctuation 445

Period 446

Question Mark 446

Exclamation Point 446

Semicolon 446

Colon 447

Comma 447

Appendices 405**A Documenting Sources** 405**What Is Plagiarism?** 405**Identifying Sources and Information to Be Documented** 406**Taking Effective and Accurate Notes** 406

STRATEGIES for Taking Notes 407

Quoting, Paraphrasing, and Summarizing Properly 408

Quoting the Work of Others 408

STRATEGIES for Quoting the Work of Others 409

Paraphrasing the Work of Others 409

Apostrophe	450	Usage	456
Quotation Marks	451	Transitions	456
Ellipses	452	Use Transitional Expressions	456
Brackets	452	Repeat Key Words and Phrases	459
Italics	452	Use Forecasting Statements	459
Parentheses	453	Lists	460
Dashes	453	Embedded Lists	460
Mechanics	453	Vertical Lists	460
Abbreviation	453	Works Cited	462
Hyphenation	454	Photo Credits	462
Capitalization	454	Index	463
Numbers and Numerals	455		
Spelling	456		

PREFACE

OVERVIEW

In today's workplace, professionals in all fields are expected to adapt to a variety of communication situations. Virtually everyone must be able to write routine workplace documents such as memos, emails, letters, and informal reports. In addition, employees must create more complex forms of communication such as formal reports and proposals, instructions, definitions and descriptions, Web pages, oral presentations, video presentations, and more. All the while, these professionals must also negotiate technological innovations, communicate in a global marketplace, work in teams, write persuasively, research effectively, and understand the ethical implications of the documents they produce.

We wrote *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace* as a medium-length textbook that covers all the preceding topics thoroughly and concisely. Like the first two editions, this third edition text draws on the strengths of our other two technical communication books: the best-selling *Technical Communication*, 13th edition, and *Concise Guide to Technical Communication*, 3rd edition. We hope that students and faculty alike will appreciate the new edition of this distinctive textbook.

NEW TO THE THIRD EDITION

In addition to streamlining the text and thoroughly revising the model documents and pedagogical features throughout, we have made the following key changes for the third edition of *Strategies*:

Thoroughly Revised Introductory Chapter

Chapter 1 (now re-titled as “Technical Communication: Global, Collaborative, and Digital”) continues to provide a clear definition of technical communication, an introduction to its main features, and an exploration of the three main purposes of technical communication. In addition, the chapter incorporates Chapter 2 from the second edition and has been reorganized to place special emphasis on the global, collaborative, and digital nature of technical communication.

Updated Coverage of Using Digital Writing and Presentation Technologies

We have kept current with changing technologies by revising our coverage throughout the book. Changes include a new section on digital versus print job application materials, with a revised section on e-portfolios (Chapter 9); updated coverage

on memos and letters, including using PDF attachments in relation to email (Chapter 10); the latest on writing Web-based and online instructions (Chapter 13); up-to-date coverage of documenting electronic sources in both MLA and APA styles (Appendix A); and new Digital and Social Media Applications at the end of every chapter. In addition, Part IV of the book, “Digital Media and Presentations,” has been thoroughly revised to include updated coverage of email and text messages in the workplace, including discussion of appropriate style (Chapter 18); a new section on using external wikis and streamlined coverage of writing and designing Web pages (Chapter 19); a new chapter on social media in workplace communication (Chapter 20—more information below); and updated material on oral presentations, with a new section on video conferencing (Chapter 21).

New Stand-Alone Chapter on Using Social Media in the Workplace

Now its own chapter with thoroughly expanded coverage, Chapter 20 covers a wide variety of social media being used in the workplace. Social media sites explored in depth include customer review sites such as Yelp and TripAdvisor, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn and other job sites, Twitter, and YouTube. The chapter also includes advice on audience and purpose considerations when using social media on the job as well as ethical and legal issues.

KEY FEATURES

To help you get a better idea how *Strategies* works as a whole, following is a point-by-point discussion of the key features of this book.

Complete but Streamlined Coverage

Strategies includes all topics essential for an undergraduate technical communication course in a compact yet thorough format. The book covers everything technical communicators need to know—from writing basic letters and memos, to writing complex proposals and formal reports, to delivering oral presentations and writing for the Web—in roughly 500 pages. In addition, *Strategies* offers innovative coverage of emerging technologies used in the workplace, including text messages, social networks, and online videos.

Emphasis on Student Practice

This book is guided by the idea of providing students with practical, accessible concepts that are easy to follow and that get students writing and designing documents immediately. One key feature, as the title suggests, is the Strategies box,

which provides step-by-step advice to follow in writing and discussing a given document. In addition, chapters in Parts 3 and 4 emphasize the importance of “doing” immediately via the Let’s Get Started feature; students are asked to draft their best version of each chapter’s document type or communication situation before they read the chapter. Then, as they work through the chapter content, students are encouraged to review and revise their original work. Finally, every chapter, including the foundational and “blueprints” chapters in Parts 1 and 2, includes Applications exercises, grouped into general, collaborative, global, digital, and social media categories.

Clear Explanations and Straightforward Organization

As we wrote and organized this book, we kept in mind five essential questions students most frequently ask: “What needs to be done?”, “What should it look like?”, “How do I do it?”, “What should be avoided?”, and “How well have I done it?” The features described previously focus on these questions. Also, marginal notes summarize and reinforce main points in each chapter.

The chapter sequence in *Strategies* proceeds from general foundational concepts and blueprints in Parts 1 and 2 to cumulatively more complex writing and communicating situations in Parts 3 and 4.

Practical Pedagogical Features

Strategies includes several practical, easy-to-access pedagogical tools. These features include:

- **Chapter Outlines and Learning Objectives.** On the opening page of each chapter, the outlines provide a quick orientation to the chapter topics and sequence, and the learning objectives emphasize the practical skills students can expect to acquire.
- **Let’s Get Started boxes.** At the beginning of each chapter in Parts 3 and 4, the Let’s Get Started boxes encourage students to begin “doing” immediately by producing the type of draft document or communication product discussed in each chapter based on their prior knowledge. Then, as they work through the chapter, students can refine their draft.
- **Strategies boxes.** Featured in every chapter, the Strategies boxes summarize key strategies discussed in the text and provide additional pointers for approaching each communication situation.
- **Checklists.** End-of-chapter Checklists summarize each chapter, and more importantly, they emphasize “doing” by asking students to check off each item as they review their work.

- **Applications.** Called “applications” rather than “exercises” to emphasize applied learning, the end-of-chapter Applications fall into four categories: General Applications (for individual practice), Team Applications (for pair or group practice), Global Applications (for highlighting global issues in workplace communication), and Digital and Social Media Applications (for highlighting the use of technology in workplace communication).

Realistic and Accessible Annotated Model Documents

Model documents resemble the kinds of documents students will write in the workplace. Accessible, engaging, and easy to emulate, most of these documents are fully annotated.

Consistent Focus on Audience and Purpose

Technical communication in the workplace is more than a mere exercise in “information transfer”; it is also a social transaction involving individuals, teams, companies, and organizations that are national and international in scope. In the contemporary workplace, a one-size-fits-all approach to technical communication doesn’t work. Effective communication must be tailored for different audiences and different purposes. Today’s communicator must be smart about researching, summarizing, and customizing information to meet many different situations. *Strategies* has therefore been designed to provide much more than a “cookie cutter” approach to creating typical workplace documents and making presentations by focusing on key rhetorical principles of audience and purpose.

The Latest Technology and Global Issues Coverage

With the Internet and digital technology at our fingertips and with companies and teams spread across the world, communication reaches a wide audience and often is transmitted instantly. We receive or convey professional information in a variety of ways—handwritten, in word-processed documents, via email or text messaging; in video format; as a Web page; via blogs, wikis, or social networks; or as live presentations—and each medium and potential audience brings with it unique challenges about how to best present the information. *Strategies* incorporates relevant technology coverage and stresses the importance of thinking about global audiences wherever relevant.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

Strategies begins with foundational concepts, then moves to “blueprints,” and then applies the foundations and blueprints to increasingly complex documents and communication situations.

- **Part 1 (“Foundations”)** introduces the underlying concepts for creating effective technical communication. This section provides a definition of technical communication (Chapter 1); coverage of research as a pivotal part of technical communication (Chapter 2); an introduction to the analysis of audience, purpose, and other factors (Chapter 3), and in-depth coverage of workplace ethics (Chapter 4).
- **Part 2 (“Blueprints”)** builds upon Part 1 by discussing four basic considerations for approaching each type of workplace document or communication situation: understandable structure (Chapter 5), readable style (Chapter 6), audience-centered visuals (Chapter 7), and user-friendly design (Chapter 8).
- **Part 3 (“Documents”)** applies the previous foundations and blueprints, presenting increasingly complex types of print documents. This section begins with the types of documents students need to get hired and concludes with the two most complex types of documents: formal reports and proposals. Specific documents covered in Part 3 include résumés and other employment materials (Chapter 9), memos and letters (Chapter 10), definitions (Chapter 11), descriptions (Chapter 12), instructions and procedures (Chapter 13), summaries (Chapter 14), informal reports (Chapter 15), formal reports (Chapter 16), and proposals (Chapter 17).
- **Part 4 (“Digital Media and Presentations”)** provides guidance for creating documents for digital media and for giving oral presentations. Included are chapters on email and text messages (Chapter 18); blogs, wikis, and Web pages (Chapter 19); social media (Chapter 20); and oral presentations and video conferencing (Chapter 21).
- **Appendices A (“Documenting Sources”) and B (“A Brief Handbook”)** offer guidance on citations and grammar. Appendix A includes guidelines for avoiding plagiarism and documenting sources completely and accurately. Appendix B provides a brief handbook of grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and usage. This appendix also includes useful advice on formatting lists and using transitions in written work.

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS

Accompanying *Strategies* is a wide array of instructor and student supplements, most of which are available packaged with this book at a nominal cost.

MyWritingLab™

- **MyWritingLab for Technical Communication** <www.mywritinglab.com/>. In addition to MyWritingLab’s extensive writing, research, and grammar coverage, the new technical communication section offers topics such as: defining technical communication; audience analysis; ethics; collaboration; document design; creating visuals; and each of the major genres of technical

communication, ranging from basic correspondence and job search materials to more complex genres like reports, instructions, proposals, Web pages, social media, and oral presentations. Each topic includes a thorough overview, an animated introduction, glossary terms, recall and post-test quizzes, model-based and case-based activities, and writing prompts.

- **Pearson eText** gives students access to *Strategies for Technical Communication in the Workplace*, Third Edition, whenever and wherever they can access the Internet. The eText pages look exactly like the printed text, and include powerful interactive and customization functions. Users can create notes, highlight text in different colors, create bookmarks, zoom, click hyperlinked words and phrases to view definitions, and view as a single page or as two pages. Pearson eText also links students to associated media files, enabling them to view videos as they read the text, and offers a full-text search and the ability to save and export notes. The Pearson eText also includes embedded URLs in the chapter text with active links to the Internet.

The Pearson eText app is a great companion to Pearson's eText browser-based book reader. It allows existing subscribers who view their Pearson eText titles on a Mac or PC to additionally access their titles in a bookshelf on the iPad or an Android tablet either online or via download.

- **Instructor's Manual**, by **Lee Scholder, University of Minnesota, and Daun Daemon, North Carolina State University**. Available in digital format, the Instructor's Manual includes general and chapter-by-chapter teaching tips, sample syllabi, and additional chapter exercises and quizzes.
- **PowerPoint slides**. Fully revised to accompany the third edition, the PowerPoint presentations provide a wealth of chapter-by-chapter slides that can be projected or printed to enhance in-class instruction or simply used for review and class planning.
- **MyTest**. Pearson MyTest is a powerful assessment generation program that helps instructors easily create and print quizzes, study guides, and exams. Questions and tests are authored online, allowing instructors ultimate flexibility and the ability to efficiently manage assessments anytime, anywhere. To access MyTest, go to <www.pearsonhighered.com/mytest/>, log on, and follow the instructions. You must first be registered.

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—Laura J. Gurak and John M. Lannon

PART

1

Foundations

- 1 Technical Communication: Global, Collaborative, and Digital
- 2 The Research Process in Technical Communication
- 3 Providing Audiences with Usable Information
- 4 Recognizing Ethical Issues in Technical Communication

1

Technical Communication: Global, Collaborative, and Digital



LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CHAPTER

- ▶ Define technical communication
- ▶ Envision how people at work create technical communication
- ▶ Describe the key characteristics of effective technical communication
- ▶ List the primary purposes of technical documents
- ▶ Recognize typical technical documents
- ▶ Understand the global nature of technical communication
- ▶ Organize and manage a team project
- ▶ Run a successful meeting
- ▶ Identify and manage team conflicts
- ▶ Consider the use of digital technologies in technical communication

CHAPTER OUTLINE

What Is Technical Communication? 3

Main Features of Technical Communication 4

Three Primary Purposes of Technical Communication 6

Common Types of Technical Documents 9

Technical Communication Is Global, Collaborative, and Digital 12

STRATEGIES for Global Technical Communication 13

STRATEGIES for Organizing a Team Project 14

STRATEGIES for Running a Meeting 17

STRATEGIES for Managing Team Conflicts 18

STRATEGIES for Peer Review and Editing 19

CHECKLIST for Effective Technical Communication 22

Applications 23

WHAT IS TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION?

Technical communication is the exchange of information that helps people interact with technology, advance workplace goals, and solve complex problems.

We live in a world where many of our everyday actions depend on complex but usable information. For example, when you purchase or install a new device, such as a DVD player or Wi-Fi router, you need clear, easy-to-use instructions. From banking systems to online courses to business negotiations, countless aspects of daily life are affected by technology, and we rely on usable technical information to answer questions such as these:

- How do I access my online bank statement?
- Which cable do I use to connect my computer to a new monitor?
- How do I paste a digital photo into a document and resize the image?

Technical information is also used in more specialized settings. For example, a physician performing heart surgery must have clear information about how to install a pacemaker. A government research scientist must have accurate instructions about how to write a grant or how to perform a particular experiment. An engineer must have access to the correct specifications for designing a bridge or configuring a software application. In specialized settings, technical communication answers questions such as these:

- Do the benefits of the Lyme disease vaccine outweigh its risks?
- What are the technical limits to wind energy?
- How effectively will the new heating system circulate in the top floors of the new office complex?

In the workplace, we are not only consumers of technical communication but also producers. Virtually all professionals, at some point, function as technical communicators. Experts are often required to present their knowledge to nonexpert audiences. For instance, a nuclear engineer testifying before Congress would need to write a report explaining nuclear science in nonscientific language to policy makers and the general public. Nurses and other medical professionals are often required to explain complex medical concepts to patients and families. Writers of instructions for uploading new software need to be sure that a wide range of readers can perform the task without having to call customer service.

In today's networked world, technical communication is global, collaborative, and digital. Technical documents including user manuals, online help, online instructions, and other such materials are accessible by people around the globe, created by teams from different countries and time zones, and available via Web sites, blogs, and wikis and in formats suitable for computers as well as mobile devices. See the last section of this chapter (page 12) and Chapters 18–21 for more on these important topics.

Definition
of technical
communication

Technical
communication
helps us interact with
technology in our
daily lives

Technical
communication
helps specialists
solve complex
problems

Specialized
questions

Technical
communication
helps advance
workplace goals

Technical
communication is
global, collaborative,
and digital

MAIN FEATURES OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Technical communication differs from most academic writing

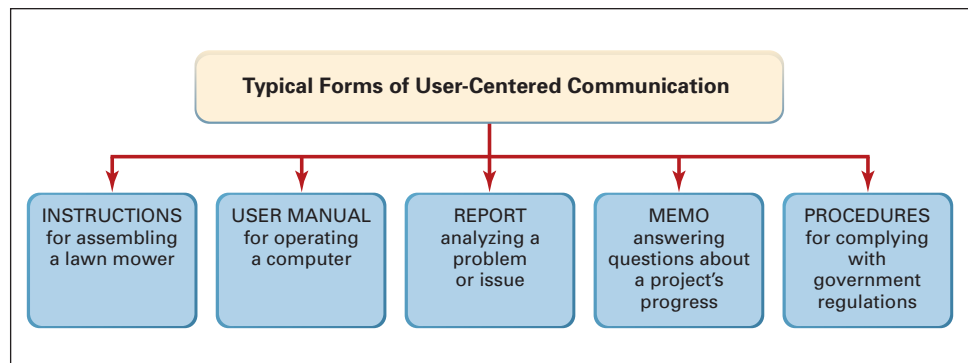
Technical communication differs from other communication and writing courses you take in college. In first-year writing (freshman composition) or expository writing, the emphasis typically is on one type of document, the traditional college essay. As you work on the assignments for this course, the skills you learned in previous writing classes will remain important, but the writing will often be different. Technical documents typically exhibit the following characteristics.

Focus Is on the Reader, Not the Writer

Produce user-centered documents

Unlike poetry, fiction, or essays, technical documents rarely focus on the author's personal thoughts and feelings. This doesn't mean that technical documents should have no personality (or voice), but it does mean that the needs of your readers must come first. Users of technical communication are only interested in you, the communicator, to the extent that they want to know what you have done, what you recommend, or how you speak for your company or organization. This type of communication is called "user-centered communication" (see Figure 1.1). User-centered communication requires a focus on the people who will be *using* the document. What do your readers need to know? What tasks are they trying to perform?

FIGURE 1.1
User-centered communication



Learn to put yourself in the reader's place

Placing the reader's needs and interests first takes practice because many of us are taught to write from our own perspectives. For instance, assume you've been asked to create a set of instructions that explain how people in the community can bring household hazardous waste (gasoline, paint) for recycling. Assume also that you live in the neighborhood near the recycling center and often visit that location. In this instance, you could easily forget to include a map and directions to the center, unless you focus consistently on your actual readers—people who are new in town, people who don't live close to the facility, and so on.

Document Design Is Efficient and Accessible

Unlike college essays, which take essentially one shape (paragraphs of text), technical documents may take the form of a brochure, a memo, a report with different sections, a numbered set of instructions, a Web site, online help, a blog, a wiki, or an email with a PDF attachment. Regardless of format and media, the design must be efficient and accessible, making it easy for readers to find what they are looking for and use the content to perform a task or answer a question.

Produce documents that are easy for readers to use and navigate

Writing Style Is Clear and Relevant

Technical communication uses clear language. For example, the instructions for using a fire extinguisher (Figure 1.4, page 8) are written for a wide range of readers. Likewise, the letter from the company's general manager to a potential client (Figure 1.5, page 10) is another example of clear communication.

Write clearly

Information is relevant if the audience can apply it to the task at hand. Say, for instance, that a person is interested in learning to use Internet service provider (ISP) software to connect to the Internet: In this case, the documentation should explain how to install the software and connect to the ISP instead of digressing into a history of how the Internet developed.

Provide only relevant information

Information Is Persuasive, Truthful, and Based on Research

Persuasion means trying to influence someone's actions, opinions, or decisions. In the workplace, we rely on persuasion daily: to win coworker support, to attract clients and customers, or to request funding. But changing someone's mind is never easy, and sometimes it is impossible. Your success will depend on who you are trying to persuade, what you are requesting, and how entrenched they are in their own views.

All technical documents are persuasive, in some sense. Some documents, such as the letter in Figure 1.5, are explicitly persuasive, in that the writer is trying to convince the reader that the proposed project is the right choice. Other documents, such as the instructions in Figure 1.4, are mainly informative, but they are also implicitly persuasive: The writer is also trying to show readers that the fire extinguisher is easy to use and safe.

All documents are at least in part persuasive

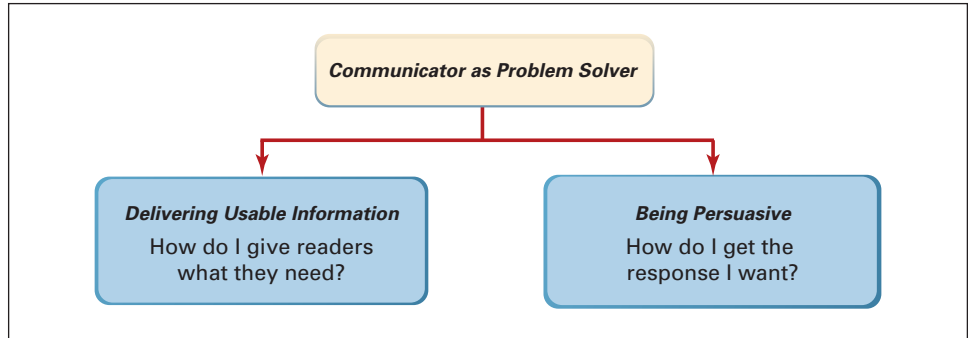
In short, a technical communicator is a problem solver and, as such, must be aware of the best balance between providing readers with the information they need and persuading them to respond as desired, as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Balance information and persuasion

Be careful, though, to not let your persuasive goal prevent you from writing ethically. Even when you need to be overtly persuasive, as in a sales proposal, honesty is essential. A document that is highly persuasive but in some way dishonest may influence readers in the short term but will lead to long-term problems. You will lose credibility with the client or your boss and could potentially damage a working relationship for life.

All documents must be ethical

FIGURE 1.2
Balancing
information and
persuasion



Base your documents on careful research

Even routine technical documents produced on the job are based to some extent on research. For example, though a memo or email may not require extensive searching for data online or at a library, the information must be accurate. Accuracy in this case may only involve double-checking meeting notes or asking a coworker for clarification on some point, but double-checking facts is still research. For more complex documents, the research component of technical communication becomes more obvious.

THREE PRIMARY PURPOSES OF TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Three purposes of technical documents: inform, instruct, and persuade

Most technical communication seeks to address one of three primary purposes: to anticipate and answer questions (inform), to enable people to perform a task (instruct), or to influence people's thinking (persuade). Keep in mind that these purposes often overlap (as in the following sample documents). However, most documents have one *primary* purpose: to inform, to instruct, or to persuade.

Informational Purpose

Informational documents anticipate and answer questions

Figure 1.3 displays an *informational* document created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It is designed for a wide audience of readers who may know little about the topic (bioremediation), but the writer has kept audience diversity in mind by anticipating and answering likely questions.

Instructional Purpose

Instructional documents help people perform a task

Figure 1.4 is an *instructional* document. As we have all experienced, effective instructions can be a pleasure to work with because they help people do what they want to do. But poor instructions can create frustration, often causing people to return the product and to have second thoughts about purchasing that brand in the future.

FIGURE 1.3
An informational document

United States
Environmental Protection
Agency

Office of Solid Waste and
Emergency Response
(5102G)

EPA 542-F-01-001
April 2001
www.epa.gov/superfund/sites
www.cluin.org

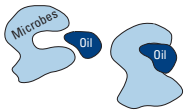
A Citizen's Guide to Bioremediation

The Citizen's Guide Series


EPA uses many methods to clean up pollution at Superfund and other sites. Some, like bioremediation, are considered new or innovative. Such methods can be quicker and cheaper than more common methods. If you live, work, or go to school near a Superfund site, you may want to learn more about cleanup methods. Perhaps they are being used or are proposed for use at your site. How do they work? Are they safe? This Citizen's Guide is one in a series to help answer your questions.

What is bioremediation?


Bioremediation allows natural processes to clean up harmful chemicals in the environment. Microscopic “bugs” or microbes that live in soil and groundwater like to eat certain harmful chemicals, such as those found in gasoline and oil spills. When microbes completely digest these chemicals, they change them into water and harmless gases such as carbon dioxide.



Microbe eats oil



Microbe digests oil and changes it to water and harmless gases



Microbe releases water and harmless gases into soil or ground

How does it work?

In order for microbes to clean up harmful chemicals, the right temperature, nutrients (fertilizers), and amount of oxygen must be present in the soil and groundwater. These conditions allow the microbes to grow and multiply—and eat more chemicals. When conditions are not right, microbes grow too slowly or die. Or they can create more harmful chemicals. If conditions are not right at a site, EPA works to improve them. One way they improve conditions is to pump air, nutrients, or other substances (such as molasses) underground. Sometimes microbes are added if enough aren't already there.

The right conditions for bioremediation cannot always be achieved underground. At some sites, the weather is too cold or the soil is too dense. At such sites, EPA might dig up the soil to clean it above ground where heaters and soil mixing help improve conditions. After the soil is dug up, the proper nutrients are added. Oxygen also may be added by stirring the mixture or by forcing air through it. However, some microbes work better without oxygen. With the right temperature and amount of oxygen and nutrients, microbes can do their work to “bioremediate” the harmful chemicals.

← The title is clear and easy to understand

← User-centered headings are phrased as questions that readers would need answered

← Illustrations combine text and visuals

← Headings and a clean layout make this document easy for readers to navigate

← Text provides the most relevant information without being too detailed

Introduction provides appropriate level of detail for first-time users

A prominent warning box alerts users before they take action

Clearly labeled illustration helps readers understand the product

Numbered steps and a complementary illustration make the instructions easy to navigate and use

How to Operate a Portable Fire Extinguisher

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide portable fire extinguishers in the workplace. This document illustrates the parts of a fire extinguisher and provides instructions for operating the extinguisher safely and effectively using the P.A.S.S. method: Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep.

WARNING: At the first sign of fire, sound the alarm and call the fire department. Before approaching the fire, identify a safe evacuation path. **Never** allow the fire, heat, or smoke to come between you and your evacuation path. **If you have the slightest doubt about your ability to fight a fire... EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY!**

Parts of a Fire Extinguisher

Figure 1 illustrates the parts of a portable fire extinguisher. When the extinguisher handle is compressed, an inner canister of high-pressure gas forces the extinguishing agent from the main cylinder through a siphon and out the nozzle.

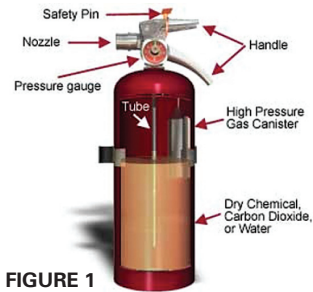


FIGURE 1

Using a Fire Extinguisher with the P.A.S.S. Method

- PULL** Pull the pin. This will also break the tamper seal.
- AIM** Aim low, pointing the extinguisher nozzle (or its horn or hose) at the base of the fire.
- SQUEEZE** Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent.
- SWEEP** Sweep from side to side at the base of the fire until it appears to be out. Watch the area. If the fire reignites, repeat steps 2–4.

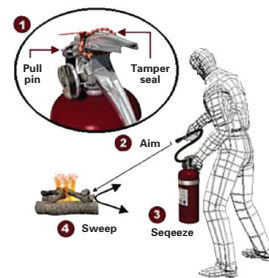


FIGURE 2

FIGURE 1.4 An instructional document

Source: Text and figures from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration <www.osha.gov>.

Persuasive Purpose

Figure 1.5 shows a *persuasive* document, in the form of a letter from a company that distributes systems for generating electrical power from recycled steam. General Manager William Bullock writes a persuasive answer to a customer's question: "Why should I invest in the system you are proposing for my plant?" As you read the letter, note how the writer focuses on reasons that are important to the reader.

Persuasive documents encourage readers to take a desired action

COMMON TYPES OF TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

Many of you probably encounter the following types of documents routinely, either through work or school. You may also be asked to produce such documents for a class, an internship, or your job.

The variety of typical technical documents

- **Memos.** Organizations use memos as the primary means of internal written communication. Unlike a conversation, a memo leaves a record for future reference. An employee might write a memo to a manager requesting a pay raise; a team of students might write a memo to an instructor explaining their progress on a term project; or an office manager might write a memo to company employees to outline the new vacation policy.
- **Emails.** In today's workplace, email messages are far more common than paper memos. People use email to communicate with clients, customers, suppliers, and associates worldwide. Email messages are generally written more informally and hastily than paper memos.
- **Letters.** Letters are the most personal form of technical communication, but they also provide written records and often serve as contracts. As a student you might write a letter to request research data or to apply for a summer internship. On the job, you might write to persuade a client to invest in a new technology or to explain the delay in a construction project.
- **Instructions.** Instructions explain the steps or course of action for completing a specific task, such as how to program a DVD player or how to install system software. Instructions come in various formats: online instructions may be built right into a computer application; brief instructions may be written on single-page reference cards; longer instructions may be assembled in magazine format to be mailed or handed out.
- **Procedures.** Procedures are similar to instructions in that they explain how to perform a task step by step; however, procedures are different in that they always deal with matters of company or organizational policy. Many companies maintain standard operating procedures (SOPs) for tasks such as how to test soil samples or how to access corporate databases.
- **Manuals.** Almost every technology product or service comes with a manual. Manuals may include instructions on how to assemble, set up, and use

FIGURE 1.5
A persuasive document


A nicely designed letterhead creates an effective, professional visual appeal

The opening paragraph is written clearly and in a direct but polite manner

Each item in the writer's list of reasons starts out with "first," "second," and "third," making the document easy to navigate

The writer backs up the first reason with evidence

The writer backs up the second reason with an appeal to shared values and goals

 **Energy Empowerment, Inc.**
2568 Sheridan Avenue
Suite 9
St. Paul MN 55106

May 14, 20XX

Mr. Dean Winfield, President
XPressMart, Inc.
1720 St. James Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55405

Dear Mr. Winfield:

I applaud XPressMart's recent commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability in the retail sector, beginning with your newly-purchased storefront in the Cedar-Riverside area. In our meeting last week, you asked me to follow-up with a detailed explanation as to why we feel energy efficiency is the right decision—both for the environment and your company's bottom line. Below I outline Energy Empowerment's three-point rationale.

First, you and your contractor, Jeff Manko, will find that the process of "going green" is actually quite straightforward, rather than another level of complication to an already complicated renovation process. As you can see from the enclosed chart, we have adapted the guidelines from the EPA's EnergyStar program to make both reconstruction decisions and the purchase of new HVAC systems, insulation, and doors and windows a straightforward process. We will work with Jeff every step of the way to ensure the seamless renovation of the store.

Second, by demonstrating XPressMart's commitment to the environment, you are not only helping reduce your company's carbon footprint, but also attracting today's environmentally-conscious customers. The Cedar-Riverside location, being adjacent to two college campuses, is the perfect place to begin.

1-800-555-3984 www.energyempowerment.com