

WRITING PROJECT 3

DOCUMENTATION

Final Documentation + Project Evaluation Memo Due Wednesday, 7/29, at 11:59pm

OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

All people who write professionally need to create documentation at some point—not just technical and scientific writers! **Professionals have to document the work that they do, give instructions to others on how to complete tasks, and assist different audiences in procedures or processes.** Most documentation that you encounter in your life comes in the form of instructions: these could be lab protocols, help manuals, user guides, task lists, etc. You're asked to write instructions for this project, but “to document” is an act of communication and design that is broader than just instructional text. In other words, while you might think of documentation in terms of instructions, documentation is used to do lots of other things. Documentation can be used...



- To teach or train
- To guide (procedures)
- To support the work of others (reference)

Therefore, the purpose of this assignment is not just to teach you how to write documentation, but also to understand how to research and get inside the minds of *users*—your audience when creating these types of writing.

GETTING STARTED

To determine the scope of your work for this project, **think about a need that documentation can fill, or a problem that documentation can solve.** You could focus on...

- Using or setting up computer software or an app (e.g., removing the background of an image using Adobe InDesign, completing a task in a virtual lab, beating a level in a video game, etc.)
- Doing something physical (e.g., using a piece of exercise equipment, installing furniture, putting on a spare tire, etc.)
- Completing a task related to your major or discipline (writing a press release in AP style, potting plants in your biology lab, using a simulator, etc.)
- Or processes and activities in some other aspect of your life!

Think about possibilities in your working life (Do you need to document the job that you do as an intern or research assistant?) and your life outside of school and career (Is there something that you

wish you had instructions for? Do you know how to do something that others could learn from?). Whatever you choose to pursue here, the problem you identify should be **real and well-defined**. You need to have a clear issue or exigency that creates the need for documentation. For example, while “buying your first home” is a broad and ill-defined topic to document, “completing the bidding process for a home-building project” is narrower and thus easier to create instructions for.

After you have selected your issue, you’ll need to develop and implement a research plan to understand users, activities, contexts, cultural issues, contingencies—whatever seems relevant to your ability to produce documentation as a solution to a problem. This planning is important and will guide your work on the project. Then you’ll have to conduct your user research and integrate the results of that research to create documentation that you believe to be effective. This documentation should combine text and images (e.g., graphics, diagrams, pictures, illustrations, etc.) in order to reach the target user(s) you’ve identified for your scenario.

WHAT WILL I TURN IN?

The deliverables and deadlines for WP3 are...

Week 6	Weds 7/22	Draft of documentation due for peer review by 11:59pm
	Fri 7/24	Peer review feedback on classmates’ drafts due by 11:59pm
Week 7	Weds 7/29	Final documentation due (with project evaluation memo) by 11:59pm

WHAT WILL I BE GRADED ON?

- Following the three-step **documentation process**, which includes 1) staging the work done by the end user, 2) coaching that user through the steps, and 3) alerting the user to issues and providing them with adequate explanations
- Demonstrating **attention to the end user** of the documentation you’ve written, through both your content and its formatting/presentation
- An understanding of **genre conventions**: the documentation should be presented in a linear technical instruction format, reflecting the expectations that users have
- Clear attention should be paid to **visual design principles and usability**
- **Document preparation** that includes attention to detail, consistency, and careful editing/proofreading
- A completed **project evaluation memo** explaining the goals you had for this project and the deliberate rhetorical, visual, and methodological choices that you made in service of those goals.

WP3 meets Purdue Professional Writing Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 5. For more information, see the [Professional Writing Program website](#). “Rules of the Game” icon by Noun Project contributor Till Teenck.