

The Elements of Technical Writing

Reviewed by JENNIFER PARKS

**THE ELEMENTS OF
TECHNICAL WRITING**
Gary Blake and
Robert W. Bly
New York, NY: MacMillan
General Reference: 1993.
165 pp. • \$9.95
0-02-013085-6

Gary Blake and Robert Bly, both authorities in the field of business and technical writing, have provided a valuable tool in *The Elements of Technical Writing*. As the cover states, this book is the essential guide to writing clear, concise proposals, reports, manuals, letters, memos, and other documents in every technical field. Not only have Blake and Bly included all the necessary information concerning punctuation, grammar, and tone, they have organized the book in an easy-to-use, precise format.

The first chapter begins with the following quote and serves as a good introduction to the material in the first chapter.

"Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writing. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to the reader."

—Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.

The first chapter, "Fundamentals of Effective Technical Writing," identifies the ten principles that make technical writing good technical writing. These principles include:

1. Technical Accuracy
3. Usfulness
4. Conciseness
5. Completeness
6. Clearness
7. Consistency

8. Correct Spelling, Punctuation, and Grammar
9. A Targeted Audience
10. Clear Organization
11. Interest.

These principles are easily overlooked in business writing. Blake and Bly urge us to remember that our audience is made up of humans, not just technical personnel.

Each chapter in this guide is broken out into sections that clearly outline the information that follows. The format is legible, succinct, and lends itself to easy reference. There are chapters regarding the use of equations and numerals, grammar and punctuation, and principles of communication, as well as a chapter regarding commonly misused words and phrases.

Chapters six through nine break away from the rules of the English language and get down to the specifics of writing proposals, technical articles and reports, letters and memos, and manuals.

Chapter six, "Proposals and Specifications," details the components necessary in a formal proposal. The authors set forth their ten principles of proposal writing, which revolve around the focal point of the client. They are:

1. Learn everything you can about your prospective client and the people who will evaluate your proposal.
3. Sell your ideas by fitting them into your client's needs.
4. Don't just solve the technical problems; empathize with the customer's critical needs.
5. Recognize all critical factors that evaluators will use in assessing the proposal.
6. Make sure your proposal addresses every element mentioned in the RFP.
7. Use appropriate graphics to highlight your ideas and make them easy to visualize.
8. Tailor each proposal to the needs of the specific client.
9. Anticipate and defuse objections.
10. Avoid hedging and subtlety in proposals.



This issue features books on technical writing and statements of work. The opinions expressed by reviewers are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of the Association of Proposal Management Professionals. Book review recommendations are welcomed by book review editors Nancy Brome and Paul Giguere.

11. Make a list of where key resources are located if you do not have a proposal library.

Blake and Bly urge us to learn everything we can about our clients and then tailor our proposals to their needs. For example, the following sentence does not tell the client what we can do for them:

"We have extensive experience in airlines operations and forecasting and evaluating traffic flows."

A better way to make the point is:

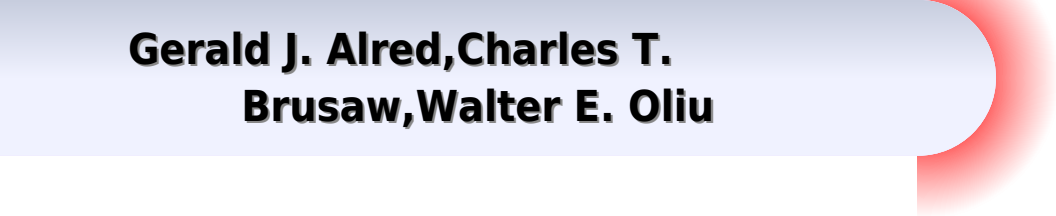
"Our extensive experience in airlines operations and forecasting and evaluating traffic flows gives us insight in to the logistics of your business and will help you respond faster."

The second sentence focuses on what your company can do for the potential client and tells the reader how you will benefit them rather than simply stating your qualifications. The more tailored your proposal is to the reader, the more impact it will have.

Blake and Bly have written a useable, handy, and inexpensive style guide that is tailored to their audience: people who write for business. While the majority of style guides and writer's reference books tend to be very dry, I found Blake and Bly's book to be highly readable. They have practiced what they preach—their writing is clear, and more importantly, interesting. *The Elements of Technical Writing* is written specifically for technical writers, but it is also a very valuable reference guide for other writers. This concise style guide is now an indispensable part of my library.

Technical Writing

**Gerald J. Alred, Charles T.
Brusaw, Walter E. Oliu**



Technical Writing:

The Top Books of the Year Technical Writing The year 2023 has witnessed a noteworthy surge in literary brilliance, with numerous captivating novels captivating the hearts of readers worldwide. Lets delve into the realm of bestselling books, exploring the fascinating narratives that have enthralled audiences this year. Technical Writing : Colleen Hoover's "It Ends with Us" This touching tale of love, loss, and resilience has captivated readers with its raw and emotional exploration of domestic abuse. Hoover masterfully weaves a story of hope and healing, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, the human spirit can succeed. Uncover the Best : Taylor Jenkins Reid's "The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo" This captivating historical fiction novel unravels the life of Evelyn Hugo, a Hollywood icon who defies expectations and societal norms to pursue her dreams. Reid's absorbing storytelling and compelling characters transport readers to a bygone era, immersing them in a world of glamour, ambition, and self-discovery. Discover the Magic : Delia Owens' "Where the Crawdads Sing" This evocative coming-of-age story follows Kya Clark, a young woman who grows up alone in the marshes of North Carolina. Owens crafts a tale of resilience, survival, and the transformative power of nature, entrancing readers with its evocative prose and mesmerizing setting. These popular novels represent just a fraction of the literary treasures that have emerged in 2023. Whether you seek tales of romance, adventure, or personal growth, the world of literature offers an abundance of compelling stories waiting to be discovered. The novel begins with Richard Papen, a bright but troubled young man, arriving at Hampden College. Richard is immediately drawn to the group of students who call themselves the Classics Club. The club is led by Henry Winter, a brilliant and charismatic young man. Henry is obsessed with Greek mythology and philosophy, and he quickly draws Richard into his world. The other members of the Classics Club are equally as fascinating. Bunny Corcoran is a wealthy and spoiled young man who is always looking for a good time. Charles Tavis is a quiet and reserved young man who is deeply in love with Henry. Camilla Macaulay is a beautiful and intelligent young woman who is drawn to the power and danger of the Classics Club. The students are all deeply in love with Morrow, and they are willing to do anything to please him. Morrow is a complex and mysterious figure, and he seems to be manipulating the students for his own purposes. As the students become more involved with Morrow, they begin to commit increasingly dangerous acts. The Secret History is an exceptional and thrilling novel that will keep you guessing until the very end. The novel is a warning tale about the dangers of obsession and the power of evil.

https://archive.kdd.org/results/Resources/Documents/suse_linux_9_3_for_dummies.pdf

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Technical Writing Introduction

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