



Topic-based Authoring

Version 1.0



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Introduction

Topic-based documentation or writing or authoring is a modular approach to content creation where stand-alone pieces of content is structured around topics that can be restructured and reused in different contexts.



This modular writing approach to content defined in contrast with book-oriented or narrative content, written in the linear structure of written books.

What is Topic?

A topic is a discrete piece of content that is about a specific subject (answers one question), has an identifiable purpose, and can stand alone. Topics are also reusable. We enable organizations to ensure a wider reuse of the technical information through topic-based way of writing.

Stand-alone topic

A topic constructed in way that does not need to be presented in context for the target audience to make sense of the content. Once constructed properly (without reliance on other content for its meaning), the topic be reused in any context anywhere needed.



Types of topics

There are four types of topics listed as follows.

- Description
- Procedure
- Reference
- Example

• **Description**

A description topic is intended for information that is objective and is used to explain concepts, definitions, and overviews.

Examples

- System descriptions
- System connections
- Product overviews
- Working principles

Use

Descriptions are used for descriptive text about systems, components, application areas and similar topics. Descriptive text is used to explain or define a certain topic. It preferably contains both images and text as aids for clarifying the topic.



Structure

Use the logical principles such as chronological order, alphabetical or top-down order etc., to help the user in understanding the concept of the topic.

Level of detail

Depends on the topic and the defined need of detailed information.

• Procedure

A procedure topic is intended for an instruction that describes how to accomplish a task. A Procedure topic lists a series of steps that the user follows to produce an intended outcome.

Examples

- Installation steps
- 'How to' content
- Step-by-step instructions

Use

Procedures are used for step-by step instructions. They may contain both images and text that relate to each other.

The target group is mainly personnel with minimum experience (persona) who needs step-by-step instructions, guidelines or directions to perform the required task. Experienced personnel may likely read through it once to make sure they understand the procedure and afterwards only refer or glance the step-by-step images when performing the task

Structure

Split-up the overall procedure into logical steps. If the procedure is still lengthy, divide it into separate sub-procedures (as topic!). In many cases the instructions are preceded by descriptive topics such as 'List of Required Tools ' and 'Prerequisites'.

- Keep each step simple.
- Write only one instruction in each step.
- Write more than one instruction per step only when two actions have to be done at the same time.



Level of detail

- Content needs to be detailed enough to ensure that the even the personnel with no experience can successfully perform the procedure.
- The illustrations should always be self-contained, that is contain all necessary information required to perform the procedure.
- Any issues that need clarification in the text should be depicted with an information symbol.
- The text written with the instructional images should clarify issues that cannot be correctly depicted in the illustration, for example how fast a procedure should be performed or how firm grip should be used.
- The text should never contain any article numbers, they should only be included in the illustration.

• Reference

A reference topic is intended for developing reference information.

Examples

- Component and function lists (Refer to topic “Component and function lists” for further information on component and function lists).
- Parameters seen by user on a screen (Refer to topic “Parameters and events list” for further information about parameters).
- A table with a product technical data (Refer to topic “Technical data information” for further information on how to write a technical data topic).

Use

Table format specifying technical data as reference.

Structure

Table

Level of detail

Data and metadata level detail.



- **Example**

An example is used to explain the features and working principles, and instructions of products.

- Examples are a great way to show how to use the products.
- Examples enhance the user understanding on how they can utilize the features.

Hope you enjoyed the reading. Thank you!