

A Career in Technical Communication: What's in It for You?

Who wrote the installation manual for your car stereo? Who created the brochure to market your cell phone? Who designed the help menu on your favorite word processor?

Highly skilled professionals called "technical communicators" produce all of these items. It's their job to make technical information available and understandable to the people who need it. They do this by writing, drawing, programming, and creating manuals, pamphlets, or Web pages. Any medium can be used for technical communication, and technical communicators use them all. They work in a challenging field that continually tests their imagination.

What does a career in technical communication have to offer? Here are some things you can count on.

» Using Both Sides of the Brain »

Many people identify themselves as either left brained (logical) or right brained (creative). If you're the kind of person who enjoys both logic and creativity, you may enjoy technical communication.

Technical communicators must analyze and understand science and technology (a logical activity) and then find creative ways to communicate this information. In other words, the profession is the best of both worlds.

» Jobs in Almost Every Industry »

No matter which industry you're considering for a career, it probably employs technical communicators. Technical communicators work in computer science, medicine, environmental studies, electronics, government, cinema, the aerospace industry, and just about any field in which people must interpret and use technology. They are an indispensable part of today's technological society.

» Using a Variety of Skills »

Do you dread having a job where you do the same thing over and over? If so, technical communication may be the field for you.

If you like the challenge of writing for an audience, technical communication offers you the chance to make money while doing just that. But employers turn to technical communicators for help with *all* communication tasks, in every medium. In addition to writing, technical communicators do the following:

- » Create videos and films for corporations and industries
- » Help design products, such as software programs and Web sites
- » Conduct studies of the people who use their companies' products
- » Act as advocates for user needs
- » Ensure that products and instructions are understandable to people in other cultures (an essential task in today's global economy)

Technical communicators play many roles in a company. They are educators and language experts who use all of their varied skills in the service of communication.

» Expanding Your Knowledge »

Technical communicators work in a challenging, exciting field that tests their ability to adapt to new situations and learn new skills. People who enjoy learning new things will find technical communication a stimulating career.

Technical communicators take knowledge from engineers, scientists, doctors, and other experts and render it into forms that lay people can understand. To do this, they must have the willingness to continually learn about new subject matter. And they must know how best to present information to different audiences – from technically trained people to the general public – in different media, from print to multimedia to the Internet.

A career in technical communication also allows you to pick up skills in programming and Web design that will broaden your knowledge while making you a more valuable employee and a more marketable job candidate.

» A Strong Job Market »

Because technology is everywhere in our world, technical communication has become one of the fastest growing professions – a profession that offers a variety of career options. And the pervasiveness of technology ensures that there will always be a need for technical communicators.

There are many college programs in technical communication that help prepare students for today's workforce. For a head start on a career in technical communication, find out if your college offers degree programs in this field. If not, contact your college English department for information about courses in technical communication.

» A Professional Organization to Guide You »

The Society for Technical Communication (STC) is the world's oldest and largest professional organization for technical communicators. Since 1953, STC's mission has been to advance the arts and sciences of technical communication. The Society offers a number of programs and services of interest to college students, including a jobs database, information on colleges that offer technical communication courses, honor societies for technical communication students, and scholarships. You can find more information on these programs on the Society Web site, www.stc.org. To learn more about colleges that offer programs and classes in technical communication, search the STC Academic Programs Database at www.stc.org/academic_database.asp.



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