Technical writing: describing a mechanism

Andrea Duff, Helen Johnston and Kirsten Wahlstrom

CIS Research Methods
Three types of technical writing (Woolever, 2008)

• Describing a mechanism
• Describing a process
• Summarising what has or will be done
Describing a mechanism
(Woolever, 2007 p. 247 – 248)

• Providing detail about the design and function of the whole object and its parts.

The arm support assembly, which is attached to the drive shaft, is the main turning mechanism of the filament-winding machine. This support assembly consists of three main components: the arm support itself, the bearings and the spring plungers. The bearings and the spring plungers serve as a connection to the plate arm (see figure 1).
Describing a mechanism
(Woolever, 2007 p. 247 – 248)

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Reminder: Fundamentals of technical writing
(Woolever, 2007)

• Front-load the first paragraph with the most important information.
• Follow the important information with the detail.
• A report can involve description (which is external to people’s actions) or a ‘summary of actions’ (which is a narrative of what was done)
• Descriptions and Summaries are persuasive documents.
• Be wary of too much information; too many lists and inconsistent use of terminology.
Exercise  (Woolever, 2007)

In small groups, write a one-page description of a common technical object, without naming the object, giving its function or including any graphic illustrations.

Be as precise as possible. Ask another group to draw the object you are describing.