

Technical writing: describing a mechanism

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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).

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(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.