

# ENGL 308

## Technical Description Project

### Fall 2024

A **technical description** is a part-by-part explanation of an item. Technical descriptions provide users information about a product's features and capabilities and explain how that product works. Technical communication relies heavily on descriptions for a variety of documents, such as manuals, procedures, reports, and white papers. For this assignment, your task is to **write a technical description of an item**, including what it is, what it does, and how it works.

**Choose an item related to your Instructions Project that performs a task.** Choose something relevant to your instructions that provides a challenge but is also manageable. A tool used in one or more of the steps in your instructions, for example. Be sure to be **objective** in your description; in other words, don't give your opinion on the item.

**Step 2: Research the item.** Find out what the parts are called and what task(s) the item performs. Note the terminology used, and make use of this terminology in your description (be sure to cite your sources when necessary).

**Step 3: Your audience.** If you were doing this for the workplace, you would determine who your primary audience is. Are you writing to the general public or to a specific audience? What does your audience know already? What do they need to know? Why should they care? As the audience for our Instructions Project technical description draft 42.8 points is your fellow students at NIU, this is your audience for your technical description.

**Step 4: Write a description of the item** (350-500 words). Successful descriptions will include:

- A clear **technical definition** (written *in your own words*), which is a one- to three-sentence definition of what the item is.
- A discussion of the item's **purpose** and **importance** (or context);
- An overview of the item's **appearance** (size, weight, color, etc.), including its major components;
- A **logically-organized description**—organized either **spatially** (moving from top to bottom or front to back, for example) or by **function** (looking at the item's different components or features or looking at what the item does overall);
- A clear understanding of the relationship of each of the components to the others (if applicable);
- **Clear and concise writing** throughout.
- No visual aids should be used for this assignment.

Your finished draft will be evaluated based on how well your writing follows the guidelines for successful technical communication as we have discussed in class this semester.

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## Class Calendar

### Week 13 November 18 – 22

- M 11/18: Technical descriptions

**Homework:** complete assigned readings on and begin writing draft of technical description

- W 11/20: A critique of a technical description draft.

**Homework:** Continue work on instructions and technical description projects; complete a draft of your technical description project, submit to Blackboard and bring at least two paper copies to class Monday.

### Week 14 November 25 – 29

- M 11/25: Workshop drafts of technical descriptions.
- W 11/27: No class – Thanksgiving break

**Homework:** Revise drafts of paper-based instructions and technical descriptions and begin / continue work on video instructions.

### Week 15 December 2 – 6

- M 12/2: Semester review fun and games.

**Homework:** Keep working on your projects!

- W 12/4: Meet with instructor on projects.

Technical description project due at the end of this week. Complete instructor evaluation by this week.