WRITING FOR LEARNABILITY: ESSENTIALS, TIPS, & HACKS

❖ What is "learnability"?

> "Learnability is the ease and speed with which something can be learned, applied, and remembered." - Patti Shank, *Write and Organize for Deeper Learning*, pub. Patti Shank PhD, 2017; https://www.pattishank.com/books-workshops

❖ Who am I writing to?

ESSENTIAL: See your audience as individual people.

HACK: Hang persona photos at your workspace

TIP: Using personas reminds us that we're writing to *people*

Persona: "a fictional character created to represent a user type that might use a site, brand, or product in a similar way" – *Wikipedia*

Links for "personas:"

- https://uxmag.com/articles/personas-the-foundation-of-a-great-user-experience
- https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/article/personas-why-and-how-you-should-use-them
- http://info.alleninteractions.com/learner-empathy-can-save-your-course-design

❖ How do I know what to write?

You can't write what you don't know

ESSENTIAL: Study source materials effectively & efficiently.

HACK: Add the year (20yy) to the file name

TIPS:

Compile relevant source materials into 1 document

Notepad is our friend!

❖ How is the information organized?

Give learners an "On-Ramp"

ESSENTIAL: Outline with empathy

TIP: Card sort

- https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/card-sorting.html
- http://practicaluxmethods.com/product/card-sort/

TIP: Mind Mapping

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_map
- https://www.mindmeister.com/ (online tool; paid)
- https://www.xmind.net/ (freeware tool)
- Visio

❖ How do I write for learnability?

TIP: Leverage verbiage from the compiled source document; modify as needed

ESSENTIAL: It's OK to make stuff up! Make an educated guess.

"SMEs cannot resist correcting you when you're wrong" – *The Lounge* podcast with Jac Hutchinson and Christy Tucker

TIP: Use pre-drafts

ESSENTIAL: Balance your commitment to quality with appropriate "ownership" of your output. There *is* such a thing as caring too much.

TIP: The "ideal" reading ease level is 8th-9th grade
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flesch%E2%80%93Kincaid_readability_tests
- http://www.readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php (online tool)

TIP: Tackle the easiest topic first

TIP: Use Synonyms and/or the Visual Thesaurus
- https://www.visualthesaurus.com/

TIP: Write in a conversational tone (active voice; contractions; short sentences; minimal jargon)
- https://www.copyblogger.com/how-to-write-conversationally/
- https://seopressor.com/blog/write-in-conversational-tone-increase-readership/
- https://www.dummies.com/careers/business-communication/business-writing/achieve-conversational-tone-business-writing/

TIP: Knowing people in similar jobs helps you empathize with learners

TIP: For on-screen text, keep it brief; don't duplicate the audio

TIP: For interaction instructions, be direct; use command verbs

TIP: Address internal team members without confusing other stakeholders

❖ How do I avoid pitfalls?

ESSENTIAL: Prevent distraction by submitting error-free text.

HACK: Invisible characters allow you to investigate

Follow all applicable corporate style guides, especially those that describe "voice" (tone)

TIP: The *Microsoft Writing Style Guide* is a recognized standard for tech content
- https://docs.microsoft.com/en-us/style-guide/welcome/

BONUS LINKS!   Free image source   Age-appropriate names
Branching Scenario Tools: Twine   BranchTrack