

Top-Down Technical Writing Tips

Trying to hack a document is like trying to hack code. Eventually, after a lot of painful time at the word processor, the document “works”. Here are some tips on writing a document in a top-down manner. Hopefully, these tips reduce the amount of time spent writing a document.

1. Write the outline first.
2. Use headers to define the important topics that are going to be covered.
3. Use bullets to add in important ideas at first and then refine the technical writing.
4. Once the outline and the main bullets are in place, focus on writing and refining one section at a time.
5. Within each section, write about general concepts first to provide context and then move into a detailed discussion.
6. Keep track of the complete references as you work. NB. The format of each kind of reference is different. Look up the correct format for each type of reference and put a fake example in your working document.
7. Tidy up for consistency in verb tense (present), voice (active), and person (third) as you write and revise.