Tip Sheet: Instructions

The table below outlines the organization of your instructions.. Page numbers refer to *Technical Communication*, 13th ed., by Markel & Selber.

Document Title

- Focuses on the same item that you chose for your Technical Description assignment.

- Choose a title that indicates the task the reader will complete.

- Start your title with a how-to phrase (e.g., How to Make a Strawberry Kiwi Smoothie) or an -ing verb (e.g., Preparing a Strawberry Kiwi Smoothie).

- Avoid using the assignment name as the title.

Introduction

Provide an overview of the document with this information:

- Explain the purpose of the activity in a sentence or two.

- Explain relevant safety warnings and/or ethical concerns.

- Add the tools and supplies needed in a bulleted list.

- See "Drafting Introductions for Instructions," on p. 581 for help.

Body

Explain how to complete the task using these guidelines:

- Organize the steps chronologically, from the beginning to the end of the task.

- Place each action that the reader completes in a separate step. Each step should cover only ONE action.

- Include feedback statements (e.g., The webpage will load in a new tab.) with the steps they refer to. Feedback should never begin a step or be a separate step.

- Number the steps, beginning with the number 1.

- Start each step with an action verb in the imperative mood.

- Use visual illustrations for each step to show the reader what to do.

- See "Guidelines: Drafting Steps in Instructions," on pp. 582–583 for help.

Conclusion

Finish the instructions with the following information:

- Explain what the reader should do next (e.g., analyze another webpage).

- Provide any additional follow-up advice.

- Add troubleshooting information explaining what to do if something goes wrong.