Fundamentals of Document Design

This course provides an introduction to the basic elements of document design, including layout, color, and typography for technical documentation. Students will gain hands on experience applying document design principles to develop a Quick Start Guide or User's Manual for a technical subject. The finished document will meet the professional standards of the technical communications field.

Who should take this course?

This course is intended for aspiring and experienced technical writers and editors who want to develop the fundamental skills required to begin or to advance in a technical communications career.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Identify elements of the four design principles in a technical document: contrast, proximity, alignment and repetition.
- Design a poster for a specific audience by applying the four design principles.
- Design a Quick Reference guide using a grid, heading, subheadings, graphics and other design elements.
- Apply appropriate typefaces, color and graphics as design elements in a technical document to increase readability.
- Identify appropriate printing and binding methods based on purpose, audience, and budget.

Course Details

- Length: 15 hours
- Classroom Type: Lecture and activities in classroom
- Prerequisites: Strong Microsoft Word skills. Experience with page layout, styles and fonts.

*The above prerequisites are considered to be the basic skills and knowledge needed prior to taking this class. Instructors will assume your readiness for the class materials and will NOT use class time to discuss prerequisite materials.*
Course Contents

Identify elements of the four design principles in a technical document: contrast, proximity, alignment and repetition.

- Define elements of design and how they apply to a technical document.
- Identify six categories of technical documents and common design characteristics.
- Identify the audience and how a technical document meets their needs.
- Define the needs of the audience to increase usability.
- Check documents using the four design principles.

Design a poster for a specific audience by applying the four design principles.

Design a Quick Reference guide using a grid, heading, subheadings, graphics and other design elements.

- Apply page grids to a design.
- Apply the four design principles, audience information and page design elements to the guide.

Apply appropriate typefaces, color and graphics as design elements in a technical document to increase readability.

- Describe typography, fonts and typefaces.
- Identify characteristics of letters and numbers that affect readability.
- Use color and graphics to enhance a technical document.

Identify appropriate printing and binding methods based on purpose, audience, and budget.

- Explain how to prepare your document for printing.
- Compare three different printing processes; desktop, digital and offset.
- Label six different binding techniques used to present technical documents: spiral, comb, wire, saddle, perfect tape and case.