

General writing guidelines

Follow these guidelines to ensure your documentation is clear, comprehensible and easy to translate:

Grammar and Usage

- write with the reader in mind
- write self-descriptive topic headings that clearly identify the topic
- use short, simple sentences and words
- start with the most important idea
- be consistent in terminology and spelling: do not call the same thing by different names, and do not call more than one thing by the same name
- use active voice: for example: Use the Save command to save the file, not The Save command is used to save the file.
- use graphics and diagrams where possible
- avoid text in graphics
- avoid double-negatives
- avoid acronyms, but if you must use them, expand the acronym on its first use
- avoid idioms, colloquialisms, and slang
- write each sentence in chronological order
- avoid contractions
- have one idea per sentence
- have one topic per paragraph
- start the paragraph with a topic (introductory) sentence
- use proper grammar
- avoid starting a sentence with a conjunction
- avoid sentence fragments
- be sensitive to other cultures and countries
- avoid gender-specific language (he, she)
- avoid abstract nouns, for example, using capability to indicate you can
- consider generic placement of graphics
- write with accessibility in mind: use tooltips on graphics, font size, alternate text
- avoid deadwood words: for example: Pick a valid code should be Pick a code
- do not write as if things were people, for example, The computer remembers.
- avoid long adjective strings - use prepositions between strings
- if possible, identify which country the topic applies to

Documentation structure

- start with a summary paragraph
- avoid long text blocks
- use bullets, lists, tables and numbering where appropriate
- avoid long paragraphs and sentences
- use headings and white space
- use a glossary to define each terms