Writing Inclusive Documentation

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WHAT WE'LL COVER

Topics

Why?

Don't Make Assumptions

Don't Exclude

Dos & Don'ts

Accessibility

Writing & Content

Design

Why?

Documentation should make people feel supported.

Don't Make Assumptions

Documentation exists to teach.

WRITING INCLUSIVE DOCUMENTATION

Don't Make Assumptions

DEFINE EVERYTHING

Don't assume a user knows what tools and programs you're talking about. Define or link them.

BE COMPREHENSIVE

If you mention it, cover it.

MEET USERS AT THEIR LEVEL

Don't assume your users at advanced. Your docs should allow them to start from nothing.

Don't Exclude

WRITING INCLUSIVE
DOCUMENTATION

Don't Exclude

Be aware of your word choices.

Language Pitfalls

ABLEISM

- Your code isn't "driving you crazy."
- You're not "OCD" about tabs vs spaces.
- You don't need a "sanity check," and your app isn't "cripplingly slow."
- You're not "triggered" by writing in a language you don't like.
- Avoid "dummy variable."

GENDER

- Avoid it.
- Speak directly to the user. Use "they."
- Never "he/she."
- Avoid "man-hours" or "mankind."

OTHER

That old spaghetti code is not "ghetto."

Avoid jargon & idioms

CONSIDER A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

THEY MAY HAVE OFFENSIVE OR RACIST ORIGINS

We use jargon to create a comfortable setting - but it can have the opposite affect.

FOLKS FROM OTHER CULTURES AND LANGUAGES MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THEM

This may lead to them misunderstanding content and/or feeling excluded.

MANY USERS ARE NOT FROM THE U.S.

You may be writing for a lot of people whose first language is not English - keep this in mind.

WORD CHOICES

Don't describe things as "easy," "simple," or "obvious."

ACKNOWLEDGE WHAT'S HARD

Is a concept complex? Say so.

AVOID "JUST"

Telling users to "just" install something, for example, may make them feel inadequate if they run into trouble.

Don't Condescend

IT'S NOT EASY FOR EVERYONE

■ KEEP YOUR DOCS
UPDATED

■ MAKE YOUR DOCS
SEARCHABLE

■ GIVE EXAMPLES, WITH USE
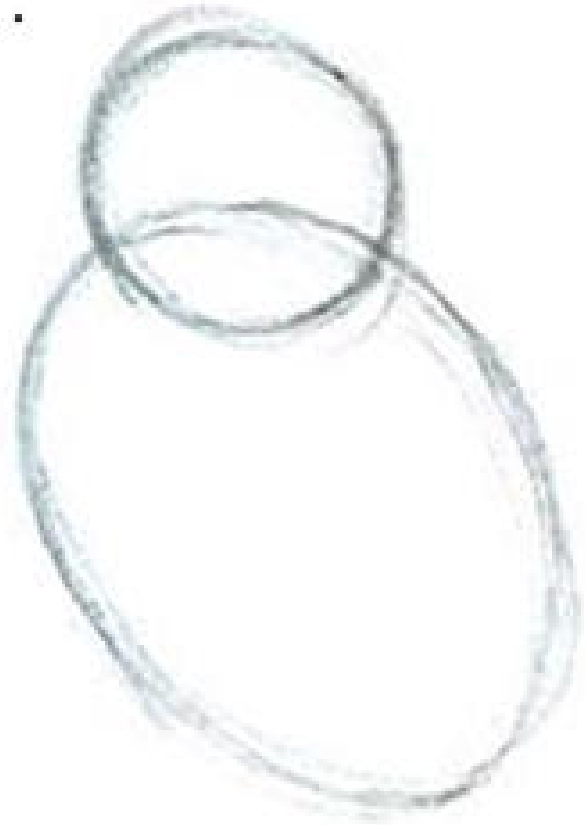CASES

Do

MAKE PEOPLE DOWNLOAD
SOMETHING

HIDE YOUR
DOCUMENTATION LINKS

ONLY USE VIDEO

Don't

How to draw an owl

1.

2.

1. Draw some circles   2. Draw the rest of the   owl

Don't Skip Steps

GUIDE USERS THROUGH EACH STEP

Accessibility

Don't ignore the principles you apply to your website! They apply here, too.

Accessibility

IMAGES

Use them when needed, ensure they are large enough (or link to a larger version), and have a description. Diagrams should be explained in text.

VIDEOS

Must be captioned or have a transcript.

LANGUAGES

Can your documentation be translated? Is it available in other languages?

Writing

READABILITY

Keep it a grade 9 or below.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Keep them short.

WORDS

Avoid big words and technical jargon where you can.

Design

MAKE IT READABLE

Use white space, break up paragraphs. No one will read a wall of text.

SEMANTIC MARKUP

Use it properly! It's not for design, but should make your text flow nicely.

BE CONSISTENT

Keep your text, headers, fonts, etc consistent.

Resources

HEMINGWAY APP

http://www.hemingwayapp.com/

GRAMMARLY

https://www.grammarly.com/

CONSCIOUS STYLE GUIDE

https://consciousstyleguide.com/