



HEALTH CAREER OPTIONS GUIDE

for internationally educated health professionals

Technical Writer

This profession is also known as:

- manual writer
- medical writer
- scientific writer
- self-instruction manual writer
- support materials writer
- technical writer
- technical writer - pharmaceutical industry
- medical text book editor



What is a technical writer?

Technical/Medical writers are responsible for converting complex technical information into simpler language so that individuals who do not have a technical background can easily understand it. They must shape and deliver information to meet the needs of a target audience.

What are the main duties of a technical writer?

Technical writers

- Compose articles or features related to technological advancements or innovations within a specified field
- Write content for on-line help files, reference materials, educational materials, procedural and policy manuals, user guides, proposals, technical reports and instructional materials that explain the installation, operation and maintenance of mechanical, electronic and other equipment
- Consult product or systems experts in order to gain an understanding of the subject of the composition
- Research subject of article or feature by analyzing reference materials, such as blueprints, reports, diagrams or maintenance manuals
- Select the appropriate media by which to present the article or feature
- Create additional resources for the article or feature, such as diagrams or interactive learning processes, if applicable
- Ensure the work adheres to in-house style formatting and guidelines

What personal characteristics or desired traits do I need for this work?

You need:

- Advanced time management skills
- Keen interest in technology
- Able to adapt to the utilization of new technologies
- Have a sharp eye for detail
- Able to meet the needs of the audience; both in content and presentation
- A good grasp of grammar, and the ability to express ideas clearly in writing
- The ability to deal with and learn from criticism

- Methodical approach to compiling information
- Very persistent, objective, creative and resourceful
- Knowledge of technology that ranges from basic to expert, depending on the project

Where do technical writers work?

Technical writers may be employed full time, part time or on a freelance basis by organizations and businesses such as:

- Colleges and universities
- Software development companies
- Internet design firms and multimedia content providers
- Corporate communications and human resource departments
- Construction and safety companies
- Private research organizations
- Oil, gas companies and mining companies
- Military contractors
- Federal, provincial/state and municipal government departments
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Medical technology firms
- Insurance companies
- Pharmaceutical companies

What typical work conditions should I expect?

Technical/Medical Writer can be a full-time employment or an entrepreneurial opportunity. Writers will be required to meet deadlines set by clients.



What qualifications do I need?

- A university degree in a field related to the area of specialization is usually required to enter technical writing positions.
- Creative writing training is an asset.
- Employers sometimes offer internal creative writing training.
- Membership in a professional association can be an asset.
- Many employers require their medical writing candidates to have a professional degree in one of the following areas (or similar areas): Biology, Microbiology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Medicine, Pharmacy, Nutrition & Dietetics

What communication skills do I need?

You need:

- Excellent communication skills using a variety of mediums, such as graphics, video, text and audio
- Good Interpersonal skills
- Ability to develop rapport
- Interviewing and listening skills
- Networking skills
- Multi-lingual ability can be an asset

For a full list of the essential skills you may need for this work, view http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/es_view_profile-eng.do?prof_id=263&lang=eng

What wage may I be paid for this work?

Typical Canadian hourly wage Low 13.46 Median 28.00 High 42.31
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?noc=5121&reportOption=wage

Career Outlook
http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?noc=5121&reportOption=outlook

Are there opportunities for advancement?

Success and advancement depend directly on outputs. One successful project will lead to the next one.

Learn more about technical writers by viewing these sites

- National Occupation Code 5121
 The government of Canada has given a code to each occupation/profession. Use this code to learn more about technical writers.
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/QuickSearch.aspx?val65=5121>
- Service Canada
 There is a demand for technical writers in technology-related fields such as computers, pharmaceuticals, medical, scientific, engineering etc. Employers prefer to hire university graduates or people who have experience in fields related to the proposed documents and who have writing skills. They sometimes recruit editors, journalists or translators when they are not able to find technical experts with sufficient writing ability. Self-employment is very common in this field, but some employers offer permanent positions rather than entrust the work to freelancers.

References

- Outline from CSMLS webpage, accessed 3/25/2016
<http://altcareers.csmls.org/careers/assayer/>
- Government of Canada (NOC 5121)
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/Welcome.aspx>
- Government of Canada, Job Bank
<http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/report-eng.do?area=25637&lang=eng&noc=5121&action=final&ln=n®ionKeyword=Saint+John%2C+New+Brunswick&s=1&source=2&titleKeyword=technical+writer#wages>
- Monster
http://jobview.monster.ca/v2/job/View?JobID=172302604&WT.mc_n=sk_feed_jobBank