Vestas style guide for technical documentation

How to write technical documentation at Vestas Wind Systems A/S

Technical Documentation team
Denmark: 14 employees

India: 10 employees

+ currently 16 consultants

Wind. It means the world to us."
Technical Documentation team

• Functions in the Technical Documentation team:

• Technical writing
  – Production documentation
  – Service documentation
• Editing
• Illustrating/Illustrated Parts Catalogues
• Translation
Language at Vestas

- Vestas Wind Systems A/S:
  - Corporate language policy
    - Corporate language is UK English.
    - Must cover the entire organisation

- Technical Documentation department:
  - Different (more specific) set of rules
  - Style guide
    - Vestas – How to Write
      - Initial (light) version
    - Technical Documentation Style Guide
      - Current version
Technical Documentation Style Guide
Technical Documentation Style Guide

• Why have a style guide
  • Safety.
  • Uniform documentation across manual types and technical writers. (Quality and professionalism).
  • Cost savings (also with a view to translation). (Economy)

• Working with a style guide
  • All technical writers and editors have been introduced to the Technical Documentation Style Guide and must adhere to it at all times when writing technical documentation.

  • The editor group enforces the rules in the Technical Documentation Style Guide when making the editorial review of the technical documentation. If it is found that the document does not live up to the needed standards, the work can be returned to the technical writer for rewriting.
Technical Documentation Style Guide

- Indexed book
- Print-friendly layout
- 1st copy printed and distributed in the technical writer/editor group
- Primary work tool
- Deeply rooted in the daily work
Technical Documentation Style Guide

• All users of the Technical Documentation Style Guide can suggest changes, corrections, and improvements to it at all times.

• All input is collected and evaluated by a style guide team which comprises technical writers and editors.

• The editors update the Technical Documentation Style Guide and review it.

• The Technical Documentation Style Guide is updated 1-2 times a year. Only on rare occasions, would it be updated more often (error corrections).
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

• The Technical Documentation Style Guide contains:

  • An introduction to technical documentation
  • Guidelines for technical writing
  • Appropriate use of language
  • Illustrations
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

• An introduction to technical documentation
  – Product naming
  – Heading and titles
  – Tables and lists
  – Referenced information

When writing the turbine type in the provided table and anywhere in the documentation, follow these guidelines:

• Do not put spaces around the hyphen in a turbine name. Use a non-breaking hyphen to prevent the turbine type and the power output value from being split between lines.

• Write the full turbine name.
  – Correct: V90-1.8 MW
  – Incorrect: V90

• Do not combine multiple turbine types.
  – Correct: V80-1.8/2.0 MW and V90-1.8/2.0 MW
  – Incorrect: V80/V90-1.8/2.0 MW
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

- Include enough detail to summarise the information in each section. Avoid ambiguous single-word headings or titles. In addition, keep reuse in mind. The heading or title must be clear enough and generic enough to be used in multiple places.
  - Correct: Inspecting the Fall Arrest Equipment
  - Incorrect: Inspecting
  - Incorrect: Overview

List types and the way they are used are limited in Vestas documentation. When writing, look for ways to use bullets to help the user. For example, if a comma-separated list in text is four items or more, consider whether a list would present the information more clearly.

These guidelines for cross-references and external references are intended to maximise cost-savings in translation and create consistency for the user. Follow these writing guidelines:
  - When referencing information in text, use a full sentence and start the sentence with See.
  - Do not use the word refer. The word see translates more clearly.
  - If more information is necessary, put it at the end of the sentence
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

- Guidelines for technical writing
  - Styles (writing styles and formatting styles)
  - Punctuation
  - Non-breaking characters
  - Articles
  - Voice
  - Trademarks and product names
Use Vestas-approved template styles to support usability and corporate branding. Using the provided template styles promotes the following:

- Documentation that is easy for the user to navigate and search.
- Documentation that is consistent in design and adheres to company branding.
- Simplifies document creation and maintenance.

Use active voice in most cases.

Use active voice when writing procedural text such as work instructions. In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action. The following are examples of active and passive voice:

- Correct (active): Store tower sections in the original transport equipment.
- Incorrect (passive): The tower sections are stored in the original transport equipment.
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

- Appropriate use of language
  - Conventions of UK English
  - Correct use of verbs
  - Abbreviations
  - Conventions for numbers and units
  - Punctuation
  - Vestas Term

Use the conventions of UK English for consistency and clarity.
The Vestas corporate language is UK English. In addition to using the conventions of UK English, follow these guidelines:

- Do not create terms. Use approved terminology.
- Do not use US English terms in documents in addition to or in place of the UK English term. For example, avoid such constructions as f/s (feet per second), torch/flashlight, earthing/grounding, or earthing (grounding). If additional clarification of a term is required, put it in the ‘Abbreviations and Technical Terms’ section of the template.
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

Use the correct verb for clarity and to ensure translation accuracy.
Use these approved verbs and do not use the not-recommended verbs listed. Writers and editors are responsible for using the correct verbs in technical documentation.

Follow these guidelines for proper abbreviation selection and use:

- Do not create abbreviations. Abbreviations that engineers create do not necessarily belong in the documents.
- Do not use contractions such as isn’t, can’t, or wouldn’t. These expressions are informal and must be avoided.
- Do not use abbreviations in the plural form unless it is absolutely necessary. Restructure the sentence instead.

Wind. It means the world to us.”
Examples from the Technical Documentation Style Guide

- Illustrations
  - Illustration format, size, and resolution
  - Photographic composition
  - Callouts for illustrations
  - No text in illustrations

Callouts (arrows or numbered arrows) are used for pointing out one or more details in an illustration.

Arrows

There are two types of callouts allowed in Vestas illustrations: arrows and arrows with numbers. Arrows are used in an illustration to point at a single item or multiple occurrences of the same item.

⚠️ Use numbers and legends to explain if text is needed. Do not use text in pictures, it will cause translation problems.
Thank you for your attention