

Writing as an Endeavor

Speaking and writing skills make or break any professional career (technical expertise a bonus)

Writing has a lot of similarities to programming

Tools of the trade:

- Compiler manuals, language manuals, programming guides
- Compilers
- CASE tools
- Organizational skills, discipline
- User interface
- Debugging

General Advice

How to begin: Just type. Don't worry about quality to start.

Keep your writing simple. Aim for economy of words.

The purpose of writing is to convey something
TO A READER.

How to learn how to write

- Write. A lot.
- Have a good writer edit your work.
- Study writing. Read manuals. Pay attention to good/bad writing in what you read.

Syntactic consistency is vitally important

- Carelessness kills

Mechanics: Writing at a keyboard vs. writing on paper

Page Layout

How do you go about designing a page layout?

Question: Are you an expert in page layout?

The correct answer is almost certainly “no.”

Most people don't design/manufacture their own pharmaceuticals, their own aircraft, their own numerical or security software, or other critical systems their lives depend on.

So don't try to design your own page layouts. Leave it to an expert.

Ideally, your software gives you a suitable page layout. If not, you probably will be following some specified standard.

Software Support

Writing a major document (dissertation, book) can be made much easier (or possible) by appropriate automated tool support

- Page layout support
- Typesetting support (tables, figures, mathematics)
- Rich ability to incorporate figures
- Table of contents, figures, etc
- Index
- Cross referencing
- Spell checker
- Style checker

Contrast MS Word to \LaTeX for these tasks