***How to Write Better Instruction Manuals***

If you know how to do something—and can do it well, almost without thinking—it makes sense that you'd want to share this information. What better way to do it than with an instruction manual. Writing an instruction manual may seem complicated and overwhelming, but it is easier than you think. The following tips will instruct you what to do and how to do it.   
  
OUTLINE YOUR TOPIC   
  
Before you can teach someone how to do something successfully, you need to conceptualize which aspects of the project they need to know. If your topic is complicated, such as how to play the piano, list each chapter and outline the points you need to make. If it's simpler, such as the task of changing a tire, briefly jot down all the steps that come to mind. Don't worry about the details or if you list the steps out of order; we will fix these things later.   
  
START WITH THE SUPPLIES   
  
The most logical way to start an instruction manual is to list the supplies the reader will need for the project. Be as exhaustive with this as possible; your students will thank you. If any of the supplies are expensive or difficult to find, list alternatives or stores that carry the item.   
  
MOVE STEP BY STEP   
  
Instead of explaining the task in long paragraphs, break your instruction manual into specific, detailed steps. Give as much direction as possible; if one step requires slightly different tasks, create sub-steps. Think of these as an outline; number or letter the steps accordingly (and logically).   
  
DO THE PROJECT   
  
If your instruction manual details a tangible project, then complete it using only your written guide. Don't improvise and don't go on your prior knowledge. If it's difficult for you to do this (subjectivity is sometimes next to impossible to ignore), ask a friend to use your manual to complete the project. Look carefully at the finished product; did it turn out as you'd envisioned? Did you miss something important? Continue to revise and describe until your written words encompass every step in the most detailed and effective way possible.   
  
KEEP IT SIMPLE   
  
Writing an instruction manual is different from writing literary fiction; creative wordiness isn't important here—it's clarity you're after. Use short sentences and simple words. Make sure your manual is clear and readable; if the reader can't understand what you're saying, they won't be able to complete your project.   
  
[By Brian Konradt](http://www.LousyWriter.com" \t "blank)