

Documentation and AI

How to Write Right Now

Me as baby writer



Things I learned as a technical writer



Most people
reading docs
are already frustrated



Most people
writing docs
are also frustrated



Tech writing is
boring
on purpose



So we should
automate it, obvs



We think of writing as content

Ideal line length for legibility is about 66 characters

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago - never mind how long precisely - having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off - then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can. This is my substitute for pistol and ball. With a philosophical flourish Cato throws himself upon his sword; I quietly take to the ship.

Indented paragraphs are ideal for extended prose

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary.

I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

Generous leading often improves legibility

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago - never mind how long precisely - having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically

Spaced paragraphs are often used for technical docs

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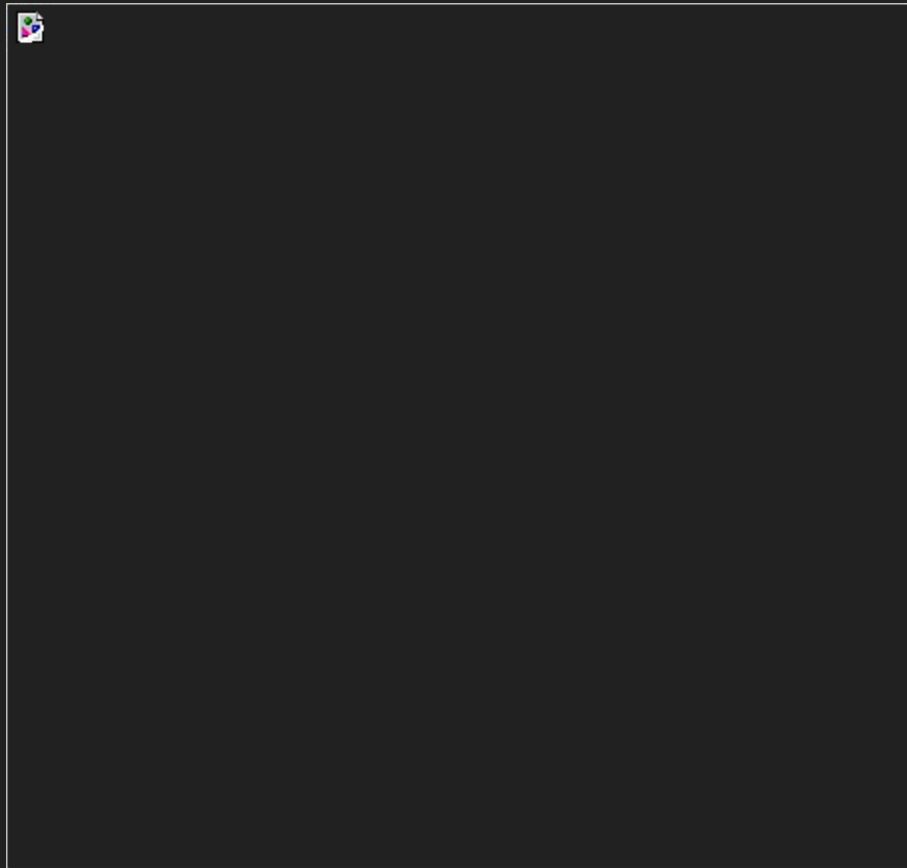
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But context is just
as crucial



Throwback: Contextual help



Docs for Developers



Docs for Developers

An Engineer's Field Guide
to Technical Writing

—
Jared Bhatti
Sarah Corleissen
Jen Lambourne
David Nunez
Heidi Waterhouse

Foreword by Kelsey Hightower

apress®



Robots are
here to help



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What would an ideal
docs AI provide?

**MARY
POPPINS**



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What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil

**MARY
POPPINS**



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What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil
- Understand code

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What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil
- Understand code
- Capture business logic

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What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil
- Understand code
- Capture business logic
- Organize itself

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What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil
- Understand code
- Capture business logic
- Organize itself
- Perfect synchronicity

**MARY
POPPINS**



What would an ideal docs AI provide?

- Reduce toil
- Understand code
- Capture business logic
- Organize itself
- Perfect synchronicity
- Accessible
- Cheap
- Accurate
- Never feed us cod liver oil

**MARY
POPPINS**



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What if we live in an
imperfect world?



In the imperfect world,
no androids,
only robots



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Extract

- Discovery
- Content collection



Glean, Algolia, Unblocked, Swimm, Mintlify, Documatic, Slackbots

Keyword: Enterprise search software



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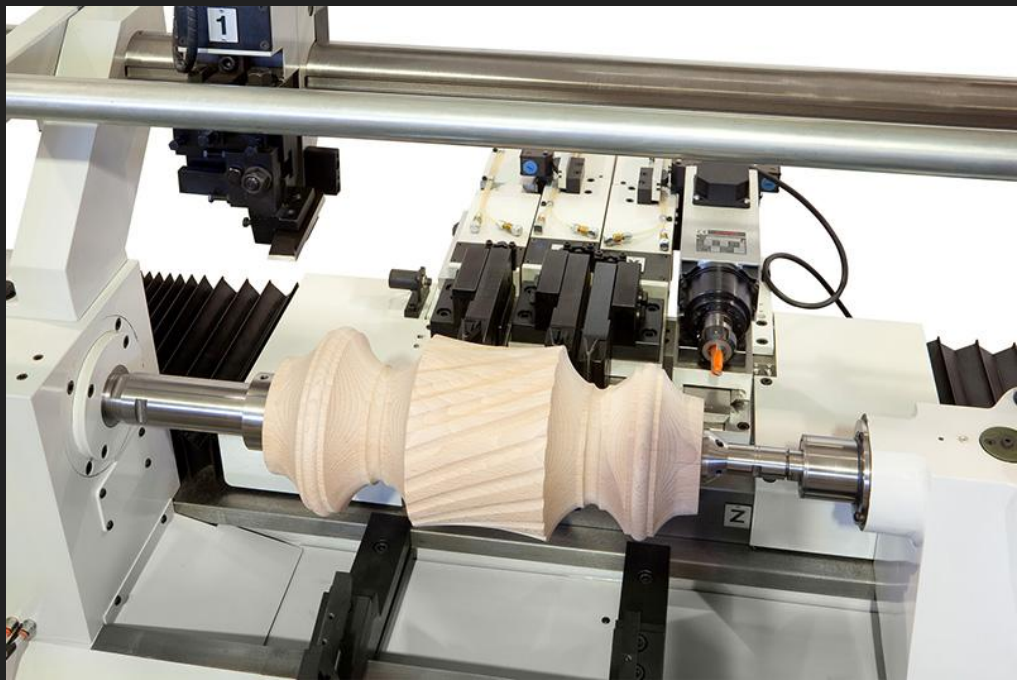
Refine

- Grammar and spelling checkers
- Linters

Acrolinx, DocRock, Sikich, Relevance

Keywords:

- Knowledge/Content management
- Writing refinement



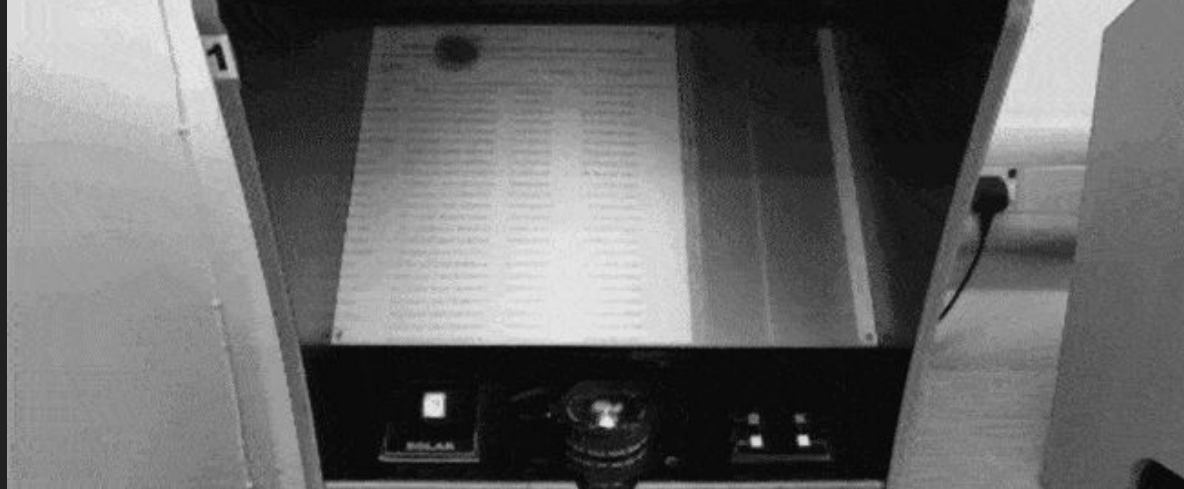
Present

- Context
- Accessibility
- Translation

GitHub, ClickHelp,
Doxygen,
Docusaurus,
Sharepoint,
Confluence

Keywords:

- Information Architecture
- Content Management
- Knowledge Hub



Iterate

Only half robot, sorry.

Did this doc help you?



When the user click either the *thumb up* or *thumb down* button, nothing is sent yet. Instead, a small form appears. A textarea where the user can type on optional message and an email field. Both are optional to fill before sending the feedback.

Did this doc help you?



Let us know what we do well Optional

If we can contact you with more questions,
please enter your email address Optional

If you need a reply, please contact support
instead.

[Cancel](#)

[Send](#)



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Tool Must-Haves

Export text, meta-text, context

Audit

Integrate



Where does AI help?

- Raw power
- Rote tasks
- Predictable contexts



Where is AI an impediment?

- New things
- Weird contexts and crossovers
- Business decisions
- Feelings



AI cannot understand
But it is a good machine
at what it does



Progressive Delivery

<https://tinyurl.com/PD-mailing>



James Governor, Kim Harrison,
Heidi Waterhouse & Adam Zimman

PROGRESSIVE DELIVERY

Build The
Right Thing

For The
Right People

At The
Right Time

Resources

<https://youtu.be/6p6LttjaSNM>

[Contextual Help, and how it can lead to happier users](#)

