ENG206

**Instruction Manual**

An important form of technical communication is explaining to an audience how to perform a task or procedure. Clear and accurate instructions are essential for the safety of employees, clients, and customers. This assignment asks you to practice this skill by writing an instruction manual for a procedure that requires at least three major steps and a series of sub-steps.

Your purpose is to explain to a targeted audience how to complete a step-by-step procedure. The audience should be someone who wants to learn the task, but who has limited knowledge of the task and no direct experience doing the task. For example, a work-related duty might call for an audience of new employees who will need to perform the task as part of their job duties. The document should enable the reader to do the task with little- or no-other instruction.

The manual should be approximately 4–6 pages, single-spaced, with illustrations. Follow the general model for instructions outlined in Chapter 7 in *Technical Communication Strategies for Today.* See also Chapter 13, “Designing Documents and Interfaces” for help with creating a visually appealing document. You may use the template at the end of this document to help you format your instruction manual. However, you may create your own format.

**CAUTION**: If instructions already exist for the task, use them as a reference, but don’t simply reconfigure them. Be sure to acknowledge any sources you use.

**Content and Organization**

Introduction

The introduction should include a product summary and a complete list of materials and tools needed to do the task. It should also define the task precisely and explain when, where, and why the task is performed.

* Body (Required Steps)

The steps should be in a list, using subheadings to separate major stages of the process. The steps themselves should be phrased as commands: “Turn the red handle clockwise” NOT “The user should turn the red handle” or “The red handle should be turned clockwise.”

Use parallel structure: Be sure that each item in a list is in the same grammatical form.

* Conclusion. Options include:

1. Review major steps (for a complex procedure)
2. Describe the results of the procedure
3. Offer follow-up advice
4. Provide troubleshooting advice

**Format**

Reader-friendly design:

1. Headings
2. Numbered list of steps
3. Single-spacing within steps, double-spacing between
4. Appropriate use of white space
5. Notes, cautions, and warnings, as needed
6. A minimum of two visuals, appropriately referenced (figure number, title, and source)

**NOTE:** See the template below to get you started. Adjust the format and headings to fit the audience and purpose but be sure to include all the points listed above.

# **Instruction Manual GUIDELINES**

# **Introduction**

The introduction for the instruction manual states the topic and purpose of the manual and provides a product summary. It may also explain the expected users of this information and the reasons for using the manual. The last sentence might preview the contents of the manual.

# **Materials, parts, or supplies** (Use the most appropriate heading)

Introduce the materials needed with an introductory sentence.

* List all parts and tools needed
* Be sure to specify sizes
* List all miscellaneous items
* Be sure to consider space requirements as a condition
* Use a bulleted list
* Set off “Notes” from the text by placing them in a box or highlighting them in some way

**NOTE:** Use this template to get you started. Adjust the format and headings to fit the audience and purpose, but be sure to cover all the requirements listed in the assignment.

**PRECAUTIONS**

Some procedures may need a section prior to the required steps, such as precautions or preparation.

**Operating Instructions** (This section can also be called required steps)

**Step One—XXXX**

1. Use at least three major steps.
2. Use a major heading for each unit.
3. Number steps in each unit, beginning with one.
4. List all steps in command form.

# **Step Two—XXXX**

1. If more than ten steps are involved, consider dividing into two units.
2. If only one to two steps and involved, consider combining with another unit.
3. Explain any modifications needed for specialized uses.
4. Give warnings, cautions, or danger signs for misuse in text, where appropriate, using the following designations.

**🛆Danger = serious injury or death *will* occur**

**🛆Warning = serious injury or death *may* occur**

**🛆Caution = possible damage to equipment**

**Step Three—XXXX**

1. Categorize all graphics as either tables or figures.
2. Use diagrams and pictures wherever possible.
3. Format your figures as follows.
4. Label the box Figure # (under box at left side).
5. Give the box a descriptive name (after Figure #).
6. Give the source of the info in the box (if you made it, use Author).
7. Place each box immediately after its reference in the text. (See Figure 1)

|  |
| --- |
| #1🡪 🡨# 3  🡨#4  #2🡪  🡨#5 |

Figure 1. Parts for Gyro

# **CONCLUSION**

Options for the conclusion include the following:

* State, “Following the above steps will enable you to build a \_\_\_\_\_.”
* List possible problems.
* Tell the user what to do or refer to a troubleshooting chart.