

# William Murdick and Jonathan C. Bloemker

## *The Portable Technical Writer*

### Book Review

—Reviewed by  
KIM TAYLOR

*Manuscript received November 2, 2001; revised November 5, 2001. The reviewer is in the Graduate Program in English, University of Charleston, Charleston, SC 29424 USA (e-mail: ktaylor@techlink.groopx.com). IEEE P/N S 0361-1434/02/02335-4.*

*Book Publisher:*  
Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.  
326 pp., with index

**Index Terms**—*Technical communication, technical writing, writing pedagogy.*

**W**hen an English professor and a working technical writer collaborate, the result—at least in theory—should be a textbook with the strengths of both perspectives. William Murdick and Jonathan Bloemker's *The Portable Technical Writer* is the product of such a collaboration. The book's stated goal is to provide concise yet comprehensive coverage of major concepts in technical writing, emphasizing real-world application. Although the intended audience is introductory-level technical writing students in college, the book's no-nonsense approach to content and organization makes it a viable reference tool in the workplace. Similarly, because the authors envision an interdisciplinary college audience ranging from technical writing majors to business and science majors, the theoretical component so prominent in many other technical writing manuals is notably absent. *The Portable Technical Writer* is designed to be used rather than studied, and instructors who emphasize a hands-on approach to learning technical writing will find this textbook invaluable.

The book's coverage, neatly summarized in a one-page overview on the inside cover, is comprehensive. Murdick and Bloemker develop the subject from a student's perspective, establishing a clear, sequential connection between classroom and corporate writing environments in the first two chapters, "Technical Writing in College" and "Technical

Writing on the Job." Both chapters stress the interactive nature of technical writing, underscoring the human variables to be factored into the writing process. Chapter 3 adds another layer of complexity, by exploring "Collaborative Writing." The authors define this activity broadly, encompassing everything from actual group writing to scenarios where the writer collates and edits information from several sources. Thus, the first three chapters are devoted to the many contexts where technical writers may work, acknowledging both the teachable skills of the classroom and the critical variations on those skills in the workplace.

Beginning with Chapter 4, "Rhetoric," the book shifts its emphasis from general concepts to specific strategies. In keeping with the authors' focus on usability, there is no discussion of classical or historical models. Rather, information is presented in compact, often bulleted discussions of "how-to." The chapter on rhetoric, for example, describes how to inform, instruct, persuade, request, document, assign, report, sell, and promote ideas through effective choices in tone, point of view, and organization. Subsections dealing with common rhetorical pitfalls and the special challenges of cross-cultural communication help students identify oversights that could undermine a document's success with readers. This theme of choice-and-implication is further explored in the next chapter, "Technical Writing Style."

# Portable Technical Writer

**N Noddings**



**Portable Technical Writer:**

## Decoding **Portable Technical Writer**: Revealing the Captivating Potential of Verbal Expression

In an era characterized by interconnectedness and an insatiable thirst for knowledge, the captivating potential of verbal expression has emerged as a formidable force. Its ability to evoke sentiments, stimulate introspection, and incite profound transformations is genuinely awe-inspiring. Within the pages of "**Portable Technical Writer**," a mesmerizing literary creation penned with a celebrated wordsmith, readers embark on an enlightening odyssey, unraveling the intricate significance of language and its enduring affect our lives. In this appraisal, we shall explore the book's central themes, evaluate its distinctive writing style, and gauge its pervasive influence on the hearts and minds of its readership.

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