



WRITING INSTRUCTIONS

The Problems.

If you are writing instructions then you are probably familiar with the subject of the instructions. This can cause problems.

- a) Remember you do things without even thinking about them. Make sure you do not miss out a small but vital step.
- b) Do not assume previous knowledge.

If you are not familiar with the subject of the instructions then you must try to familiarise yourself with both the procedure and with any problems that may arise.

The Writing

- 1) State the objective goal of the instructions.
- 2) Give warning of dangers or possible problems at the start of the instructions and/or just before the relevant step.
- 3) Make this your first instruction:

"READ ALL THE INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE STARTING"

- 4) Be precise and use clear, simple language.
- 5) Be detailed. Do not miss anything out.
- 6) Keep it short.
- 7) Use pictures, diagrams, or symbols as well as, or even instead of words.

Points five and six sometimes work against each other, so you must balance detail with keeping it short. This will depend on your intended "audience" and their level of expertise.

E.g. For novice mechanics: Loosen the bolt using a ring spanner. Do not remove!

For more expert mechanics: Loosen the bolt.

So the final instruction for writing instructions is

- 8) Know your audience.