

Handbook for Judges



Online Communication Competition

November 2008



SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Boston and Northern New England Chapters

www.stcboston.org

www.stc-nne.org

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Progress Software Corporation for its support of the Boston and Northern New England Online Communications Competition Judge's Orientation night.

We also wish to thank RSA, The Security Division of EMC, for hosting the Consensus Day activities at their site in Bedford.

We sincerely appreciate the support shown by both of these companies for our local STC chapters and this competition that has become such a significant event in our annual calendar.

Thanks, too, to the STC International Online Communication Competition Committee and members (past and present) of the Boston and Northern New England Online Communications Competition Committee for their contributions to this document.

Contact Information

2008 Boston and NNE Online Communication Competition Coordinators

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About the STC Competitions

Each year the STC sponsors local and international competitions in which technical communicators have the opportunity to receive recognition for their work. These competitions cover online communications, technical art, and technical publications.

Preliminary competitions are held by STC chapters to award recognition to technical communications on a local or regional level. Recipients of the Distinguished Technical Communication award in those competitions are eligible to advance to the international level. You are judging in the Boston and Northern New England regional Online Communication Competition (OCC).

Entrants submit their work to STC competitions not only with the hope of receiving an award, but also with the expectation of receiving a thorough critique and constructive feedback from knowledgeable professionals. *All of the evaluation forms that you prepare are returned to the entrants.* Your judging comments, although anonymous, reflect the credibility of STC competitions and our profession.

While the competitions are designed primarily to recognize outstanding efforts of the entrants, there are benefits for all STC members:

- Establish professional standards for our work
- Provide visibility for the profession
- Create leadership and volunteer opportunities
- Provide a forum for sharing ideas and approaches to new technologies and learning from them.

Schedule of Events for Judges

Orientation

Thursday, October 16, 2007; Progress Software, Bedford, MA

Committee arrive to set up	5:30 PM
Judges arrive/food & mingling	6:00 PM
Start program	6:30 PM
End program	9:00 PM

Consensus Day

Saturday, November 1, 2007; RSA Security, Bedford, MA

Entrants deliver and set up, if necessary	7:00-8:00 AM
Judges arrive/coffee and networking	8:00-8:30 AM
Welcome meeting/last minute instructions	8:30-9:00 AM
1 st team judging session	9:00-10:45 AM
2 nd team judging session	10:45 AM-12:30 PM
Working lunch	12:30-1:00 PM
3 rd team judging session	1:00-2:45 PM
Team judging wrap-up (revisit entries, reach consensus, finalize judging form, print judging form, preview Best of Show nominees)	2:45-3:00 PM
Group consensus (review Best of Show nominees; select winner)	3:00-4:30 PM
Entrants pickup	5:00-5:30 PM

Directions to Progress Software

14 Oak Park Drive

Bedford, MA

Call Ellen Lidington at 339-225-5846 for help

From the North:

1. Take Route 3 South toward Burlington, MA.
2. Take Exit 26.
3. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left on Route 62 East.
4. Turn left at the next intersection. This is Crosby Drive. Go 1.3 miles to the end.
5. At the end of Crosby Drive, turn left onto Middlesex Turnpike.
6. Turn left onto Oak Park Drive, proceed into a rotary, and exit half way around.
7. Travel about .01 mile to Progress Software's **#14** Oak Park Drive location (there are other Progress locations on this road). Look to your left for the Progress Software sign and concrete stairs leading to a main entrance.
8. Sign in at the security desk, and proceed to the Judge's registration table.

From I-95/Rt 128:

1. Take I-95/Route 128 to Route 3 North (Exit 32A).
2. From Route 3 North, take Exit 26.
3. At the end of the exit ramp, proceed straight across the intersection of Route 62 onto Crosby Drive. Go 1.3 miles to the end of Crosby Drive.
4. At the end of Crosby Drive, turn left onto Middlesex Turnpike. Go 0.4 miles to Oak Park Drive. (It's shortly after you pass over a narrow river.)
5. Turn left onto Oak Park Drive, proceed into a rotary, and exit half way around.
6. Travel about .01 mile to Progress Software's **#14** Oak Park Drive location (there are other Progress locations on this road). Look to your left for the Progress Software sign and concrete stairs leading to a main entrance.
7. Sign in at the security desk, and proceed to the Judge's registration table.

Directions to RSA, The Security Division of EMC

174 Middlesex Turnpike

Bedford, MA

Call Ellen Lidington at 339-225-5846 for help

From the North:

1. Take Route 3 South toward Burlington, MA.
2. Take Exit 26.
3. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left on Route 62 East.
4. Turn left at the next intersection. This is Crosby Drive. Go 1.3 miles to the end.
5. Turn left onto Middlesex Turnpike.
6. Take a left at the first traffic light – this is RSA.
7. Sign in at the security desk, and proceed to the Judge's registration table.

From I-95/Rt 128:

1. Take I-95/Route 128 to Route 3 North (Exit 32A).
2. From Route 3 North, take Exit 26.
3. At the end of the exit ramp, proceed straight across the intersection of Route 62 onto Crosby Drive. Go 1.3 miles to the end of Crosby Drive.
4. Turn left onto Middlesex Turnpike.
5. Take a left at the first traffic light – this is RSA.
6. Sign in at the security desk, and proceed to the Judge's registration table.

Defining Technical Communication

STC generally does not place restrictions on the content of materials submitted to its technical communication competitions, provided the entry meets the criteria for the specific category. Because questions do arise, STC has established guidelines for determining whether an entry qualifies as “technical” communication.

STC recommends a liberal interpretation in which “technical” encompasses any entry having to do with a mechanical or scientific topic, or with practical, detailed methods, processes, or means of accomplishing objectives. Such entries will typically contain specialized information in a variety of subject areas for audiences that might range from lay people to subject matter experts. Under this definition, the content might seem to be non-technical (cooking is an often-cited example), and yet the communication about it would be technical if the intent is to inform or instruct.

Note the important distinction that “technical” applies to the content of an entry, not to the tool used to produce an entry. That is, the tool used to produce an entry (for example, a sophisticated drawing application) is not enough to qualify an entry as technical. A book of fairy tales produced on the most elaborate publishing system is still a book of fairy tales.

If you have doubts about whether an entry qualifies as technical communication, consult a committee member.

General Guidelines

Confidentiality

While it is acceptable to show other technical communicators the entries you are judging, please keep your evaluations and personal opinions about them confidential. If you have any questions concerning confidentiality while judging, contact your team leader.

Conflict of Interest, Personal Feelings

When you look over the entries you are assigned to judge, you might recognize the work of friends or employees, or of companies with which you have a previous or current business relationship. If for any reason you feel you cannot evaluate a specific entry due to a conflict of interest or personal feelings, please notify your team leader immediately. No explanation will generally be required.

Miscategorizations

If you feel that an entry is categorized incorrectly, complete an evaluation form for it anyway. Discuss your concern with the other members of your team to discuss your concern. If your team agrees, the team leader will discuss the matter with a committee member.

Judging Guidelines

Judging Principles

Two judging principles are fundamental in the Online Communications Competition.

- Judge the work the contributors actually did.
- Judge how well the work does what it is intended to do.

In a scholarly/professional article, the writing ought to be the focus. But a judge whose specialty is information design and who doesn't really understand Biology might fault a well-written, nicely argued scholarly paper on cell temperature because it doesn't look glossy, unless the judge is very careful.

Judge how well the entry's creator appears to have organized and presented the information, and judge the quality of the writing itself. Technical communications rarely have imaginative graphics and designs, and the authors don't have any control over the quality of the output. Focus on the work that contributes to the purpose of the entry. Avoid downgrading an entry for lack of exciting graphics or design, when those elements are not especially relevant.

The technical complexity of the content must be considered in judging. The more complex the subject matter, the more difficult a task the creators have to deal with that subject matter successfully. Not that you should be judging "good" science versus "bad" science, but that you should factor in the difficulty of the task faced by the entry's creators and how well they dealt with the difficulties.

You will probably not be able to judge the accuracy and completeness of an entry unless you are actually working with the product or have a sound background in the subject matter. It is okay if you can't verify accuracy or don't understand the complexity of the content. Judge it by how well it serves its purpose and how well it meets the judging criteria.

Judging Tactics

- Be objective, impartial, and helpful.

Make detailed comments on the evaluation forms, and include specific examples. Remember that your comments will be mailed to the entrant, and that this feedback is often shared with the entrant's employer. Be frank, but tactful. Constructive criticism is valued, especially when a work has been given a below-average evaluation.

- Look for effectiveness, appropriateness, and professionalism.

Try not to be swayed solely by production qualities, such as color, animated graphics, and so on. Read all comments made on the attachment to the entry form (if an attachment has been written), particularly those covering the production of the entry or other pertinent considerations.

- Your comments should correspond to the award level.

You might have very few suggestions for improving an entry you recommend for Distinguished, but you should have several suggestions for improving an entry you recommend for Merit or no award.

- There is no minimum or maximum number of awards you can give at any level (except Best of Show, of course).

Awards are not given by level or category. They are given by entry. If an entry deserves to receive a Distinguished, Excellence, or Merit award, give it that award. If you evaluate it thoughtfully and decide not to give an award, that's fine. But give it plenty of tactful, constructive feedback.

Recommendations for Reviewing Entries

- Evaluate the work itself, not the subject matter. Don't make negative comments simply because you disagree with the contents.
- Beware of "reviewer syndrome," which is the preoccupation with finding small flaws. Concentrate on performing a balanced and perceptive evaluation of the "accomplishment of the whole" as well as its parts.
- Don't be influenced by your own company's standards for design and format, or by ways of doing things that you have come to prefer personally. Companies set standards to be effective for their particular use, and the standards will vary based on company need. In addition, your personal preferences may simply be a matter of taste.

Judging Instructions

Judges are responsible for providing fair, impartial, and constructive evaluation of each entry that they judge. Even when there are many entries from the same company that look very similar, you cannot assume they were produced by the same individuals. Each entrant paid the fee to enter the competition and deserves the same, full evaluation as any other entrant.

Using the Judging Criteria Tables

To help you evaluate your entries, the Online Communications Committee has developed a judging criteria table. All judging teams use the same criteria, which helps to make the judging more consistent and focused. Please refer to the table as you evaluate each aspect of an entry and write your comments. See *Judging Criteria Tables*.

Using the Evaluation Forms

Electronic evaluation forms will be e-mailed to team leaders before competition day to load onto their laptops. The forms will be available onsite at the competition (be sure your laptop has a CD drive, or a USB port, if you need to obtain them onsite).

The forms have four sections.

- Audience and Goals
- Writing and Content
- Organization and Navigation
- Presentation and Design

Your team will enter comments, suggestions, and examples into the evaluation forms as you review entries on consensus day. You can rate each section as you go, or at the end of the judging period. Highlight one of the options in the “Section Rating” field at the bottom of the form.

- Distinguished
- Excellence
- Merit
- No Award

Writing Evaluation Comments

- Write useful comments for all entries, even if they do not win an award. Many technical communicators enter the competition not only with the hope of winning an award, but also to receive a meaningful critique of their work from respected peers.
- Try to include at least three compliments and three suggestions for improvement, no matter how good (or bad) you judge the entry to be. (One or two short comments make it difficult for submitters to justify the cost of the entry fee to management.) The more comments you write, the easier it is to determine the winners. The more constructive and concrete your critique, the easier it will be for the contributors to acknowledge and incorporate your suggestions.
- List the high points first.
- Use specific examples.
- Keep your comments to the point. Don't lecture or go off on tangents.
- Give the location of any problems so the author can find them easily.
- Keep comments on the positive side—that is, phrase your criticism in a constructive way.
- Do not try to be humorous. Some people may take offense to this style and it may be considered frivolous.
- You have been chosen as a judge because of your expertise and the entrant expects to get expert advice. Please provide it. For example, if the entrant clearly has no idea how to index a manual, go ahead and give some tips and rules of thumb.
- Check your comments for spelling and grammar. 😊

The Evaluation Process

1. Read the scenario and examine the entry to get a general impression of the work.
 - If you feel that you cannot be impartial about a particular entry, notify your team leader (or, if a team leader, notify a committee member).
 - Don't be too strongly influenced by this initial pass. It often turns out that the entries you liked best at first glance have problems that become apparent later. Keep an open mind throughout the evaluation process.
 - Set a time limit for reviewing the entry during the evaluation timeframe, so you won't be rushed at the very end.

2. After the initial review, begin evaluating the entry in detail.
 - Complete an evaluation form, even for entries you believe are miscategorized.
 - Complete all information at the top of the form. Use the exact entry title that is on the entry form attached to the entry. Use your assigned judge/team number—***never record your name on any of the forms.*** Team and judge numbers will be assigned on judging day.
 - Don't be overwhelmed by the size or extent of an entry. Look at one area at a time and use the evaluation form as a checklist. You don't have to read every word in a large publication or follow every path in a complex online entry. However, you do want to acquire a solid understanding of the entry and its effectiveness.

Lead Judge's Responsibilities

The Lead Judge is additionally responsible for:

- Making sure the team evaluates all of its assigned entries.
- Bringing a laptop to the competition (or making sure a team member brings one) with the electronic evaluation form loaded on it.
- Resolving questions about miscategorizations.
- Answering team member questions.
- Making sure that judge evaluation forms have the essential identifying information on them and that the comments are thorough and professional.
- Making sure the OCC committee receives printed copies of the evaluation forms and a list of awards.
- Making sure the team decides whether any of the entries should be considered for Best-of-Show.

Team Judging Process

Remote Judges

Web Judges review their assigned entries in advance of consensus day. Assignments are made approximately two weeks before consensus day. Depending on the size and complexity of an entry, you might find yourself spending one to two hours per entry. Please schedule your time accordingly.

Onsite Judges

Onsite Judges view their assigned entries for the first time on consensus day. The Consensus Day schedule shows the time your team has for judging each entry. Since time is limited, please use your time efficiently and plan to give each entry sufficient time.

Onsite, we judge in teams, which means that the consensus is typically built as the judges review each entry. In general, this is what you will do during the judging sessions:

Discuss each entry and come to consensus about whether it should receive an award.

Surprise!

As your team discusses the entries, don't be surprised if you find:

- Wide differences in ratings
- Healthy disagreements
- Evaluations that place emphasis on very different things than you did
- Yourself reevaluating an entry in light of the other judges' opinions
- Yourself learning new things

From among your Distinguished winners, decide if you want to recommend one for Best of Show. If so, mark it with an indicator dot placed on the tent card beside the entry.

On the awards summary form, list the agreed-upon award level (if any) for each entry you judge.

Team leader: Make sure you have printed a complete set of all evaluation forms for each entry. Check that comments are professional and adequately thorough. Hand in the list of awards and evaluation forms to the OCC committee.

Awards

Awards do not represent first, second, and third places, but instead are levels of accomplishment with reference to a standard. The award-for-accomplishment model is appropriate for this competition because entries are evaluated against STC standards. See *Judging Criteria Tables*. If we used the first, second, and third place award model, Judges would be instructed to compare one entry to another. Judges in this competition are explicitly instructed to avoid comparing any entry to another.

Award Levels and Definitions

An entry must be above average to receive an award. There are three levels of awards (see the descriptions in the following table). In descending order the awards are:

- Distinguished
- Excellence
- Merit

Award Level	Definition
Distinguished	Clearly superior in all areas. The entry contains <i>no major</i> flaws and few, if any, minor flaws. It applies the principles of technical communication in an outstanding way, particularly in the way that it anticipates and fulfills the needs of its audience.
Excellence	Consistently meets high standards in all areas. The entry <i>might contain a single major flaw or a few minor flaws</i> . The entry clearly (if slightly imperfectly) demonstrates an exceptional understanding of technical communication principles.
Merit	Consistently meets high standards in most areas. The entry <i>might contain a small number of major or minor flaws</i> , but still applies technical communication principles in a highly proficient manner.
No award	Contains work that is of average or less-than-average professional quality. The entry is average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.

Judging Best of Show

How do you compare the best online Help system with the best marketing web site?
How do you compare the best apple with the best orange?

The answer is that you don't compare the best of one category with the best of another. Instead, you compare it to the ideal in its own category. That is, the best online Help system is compared with the ideal online Help system, the best marketing web site with the ideal marketing web site.

In the Boston/Northern New England competition, all judges work together to come to agreement on which entry is Best of Show. The entry that comes closest to the ideal for its category is the Best of Show.

Major and Minor Flaws Quick Reference

Major Flaws

Major flaws substantially hinder the user.

- Any component which, when invoked, causes the online document or its associated application to crash.
- Navigation functionality that consistently or frequently takes the users to a “dead end” and does not allow them to retrace their steps or return to a central starting point (for example, a home page).
- Material is not chunked appropriately for online: there is a consistent pattern of long topics and tables without subheads or other devices to break them up.
- Help file does not have a TOC, Index, or Search feature but clearly needs one or more of those features.

Minor Flaws

Minor flaws might cause a momentary stumble, but do not slow the user down much.

- A few misspelled words and/or grammatical errors that do not hinder the user.
- Excessive graphics with no useful purpose (for example, the Microsoft Paperclip).
- Long topics that require the user to scroll, but which are complete and contain the necessary information.
- A few links are broken, but there are alternative ways to find information.

Non-flaws

Non-flaws are facets of the entry that you might disagree with, but are not to be considered as flaws.

- Entry is not using cutting edge technology or is not “creative,” but it serves its users’ needs.
- Help file does not have a TOC, Index, or Search, but the amount or type of information does not require one or more of those features.
- Irritating background music/noise that does not impede the search for information.

Judging Criteria Tables

For any entry to receive an award, it must be thorough, accurate, useful, appropriate, and well executed. Note that the size of an entry might affect whether a flaw is major or minor; for example, misspelling a client's name in a short marketing brochure would be a major flaw.

Award Level	Definition
Distinction	Clearly superior in all areas. The entry contains no major flaws and few, if any, minor flaws. It applies the principles of technical communication in an outstanding way, particularly in the way that it anticipates and fulfills the needs of its audience.
Excellence	Consistently meets high standards in all areas. The entry might contain a single major flaw or a few minor flaws. It clearly (if slightly imperfectly) demonstrates an exceptional understanding of technical communication principles.
Merit	Consistently meets high standards in most areas. The entry might contain a small number of major or minor flaws. It applies technical communication principles in a highly proficient manner.
No award	Contains work that is of average or less-than-average professional quality. The entry is average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.

Audience and Goals

Judging Form Category	Summary Ratings and Award Levels			
	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
	Exceptional work in most areas.	Some parts very good; other parts excellent.	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.
Audience Definition	Highly appropriate for its intended users. Has consistent focus. Section subtopics support section topics. Info layering is appropriate.		Usually appropriate. Focus is usually evident. Section subtopics usually support section topics.	Often appropriate or not appropriate. Focus is not evident. Section subtopics frequently do not support section topics.
Goals or Purpose	Amount and type of information is appropriate for intended users. Key content elements are included where appropriate (index, TOC, glossary).		Generally appropriate for intended users. Index could be more thorough, have more task-oriented entries, or reference more layman's terms if necessary for the audience.	Too detailed or general for intended users. Index, TOC, and/or glossary are not present, even though needed.

Writing & Content

Summary Rating and Award Level				
Judging Form Category	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
	Exceptional work in most areas.	Some parts very good; other parts excellent.	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.
Writing	<p>Sentences always have a clear structure.</p> <p>Technical content is consistently clear, direct, and concise.</p> <p>Content is very easy to read.</p> <p>Wording is always or almost always clear and concise.</p>	<p>Sentences usually have a clear structure, with few exceptions.</p> <p>Technical content generally clear, direct, and concise.</p> <p>Content is generally easy to read.</p> <p>Wording is mostly clear and concise, with the exception of some sections.</p>	<p>Sentences vary between being clear and confusing.</p> <p>Technical content frequently unclear.</p> <p>Content is hard to read.</p> <p>Wording is frequently unclear with a number of wordy sections.</p>	
Content Design	<p>Sentence length is very appropriate and readable, both for the content level and the target audience.</p> <p>Only necessary jargon (technical terms known by a limited audience) is used and is always defined. No unnecessary jargon is used.</p> <p>Long units of text are consistently broken up by headings/subheadings</p> <p>Headers clearly describe or indicate section contents.</p>	<p>Sentence length is usually appropriate and readable, with only a few overly long sentences.</p> <p>Necessary jargon is used and but not always defined. Occasional use of unnecessary jargon.</p> <p>Most long units of text are broken up by headings and subheadings.</p> <p>Headers usually describe or indicate section contents.</p>	<p>Sentence length often inappropriate and unreadable.</p> <p>Necessary jargon is used but rarely defined. Frequent use of unnecessary jargon.</p> <p>Contains many long units of text that are not broken up by headings and subheadings.</p> <p>Headers frequently inaccurate or misleading.</p>	
Overall Quality	<p>Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are always or almost always used correctly and consistently.</p> <p>Spelling is always or almost always correct.</p> <p>Groupings of series or pairs are always or almost always logical and grammatically similar.</p> <p>Comparable sentence components are always or almost always in the same form.</p> <p>Headers are always or almost always in parallel form.</p> <p>If needed, glossary is complete.</p>	<p>Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are usually correct with a few errors.</p> <p>Spelling is usually correct with just a few errors that have minimum impact on understanding the technical content.</p> <p>Groupings of series or pairs are usually logical and grammatically similar, with few exceptions.</p> <p>Comparable sentence components are usually in the same form.</p> <p>Headers are usually in parallel form.</p>	<p>Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are frequently incorrect.</p> <p>Spelling is frequently incorrect. Spelling errors in technical terms make comprehension difficult.</p> <p>Groupings of series or pairs are frequently not logical and/or grammatically similar.</p> <p>Comparable sentence components are frequently not in the same form.</p> <p>Headers are frequently not in parallel form.</p>	

Organization and Navigation

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
Judging Form Category	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
	Exceptional work in most areas.	Some parts very good; other parts excellent.	Very good with no major, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.
Organization/Integration	<p>Organization logical and consistent, as shown in use of headings and development of various sections.</p> <p>Topic length is appropriate for intended users.</p> <p>Overviews and summaries are used where appropriate.</p> <p>Information is easy to find.</p> <p>Information is ordered and presented information in order of importance.</p> <p>Information is given appropriate emphasis: for example, reference material is de-emphasized in user procedural help.</p> <p>Information is easy to find.</p>		<p>With one or two exceptions, logical and consistent.</p> <p>Well-balanced, except a few sections that are needlessly long or could be combined with other sections.</p> <p>Many good overviews; some incomplete.</p> <p>Obvious questions are occasionally neglected; sometimes less important information is given prominence.</p> <p>Most information is easy to find.</p>	<p>Organization is confusing; too many or too few headings.</p> <p>Information is hard to find.</p> <p>Less useful information is given priority in topics.</p> <p>Important topics are hard to find.</p>
Table of Contents (or navigational equivalent)	Table of Contents exists and is useful, complete and correct, with few exceptions.			<p>Lacks a Table of Contents, or the TOC is incomplete or wrong.</p> <p>Less useful information is given priority in TOC.</p>
Index	<p>Index is comprehensive, cross-referenced, and useful.</p> <p>Index provides functional as well as syntactical entries.</p>		<p>Index could be more thorough, have more task-oriented entries, or reference more layman's terms if necessary for the audience.</p>	<p>Insufficient or missing index or the index is incomplete or wrong.</p>
Search	<p>Search and Favorites features exist and are complete and correct.</p> <p>Generally, information can be found in as few steps as possible</p>		<p>Generally, information can be found in a reasonable number of steps, but sometimes it takes more steps than necessary</p>	<p>Lacks a Search or Favorites features. or has these features but they are incomplete or wrong.</p>

Organization and Navigation (cont.)

<p>Navigation</p>	<p>Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality exists and works.</p> <p>Location identifiers consistently and effectively show users where they are, using the standard colors for the medium.</p> <p>Always intuitive (very easy to locate and understand); appropriate for user needs at particular locations.</p> <p>Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them.</p> <p>All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be.</p> <p>All links work and go to the correct topic.</p> <p>If a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, it is always linked at the first instance.</p> <p>Consistently complete address information provided with easy links to more details.</p> <p>Every page shows where to find the address (home page or origination point) and whom to contact with feedback or questions.</p>	<p>Generally, users can access Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality.</p> <p>Location identifiers generally show users where they are and use standard colors for the medium.</p> <p>Generally easy to locate and understand; results of use are generally predictable.</p> <p>Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them.</p> <p>All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be linked.</p> <p>Links work in most cases and go to the correct topic, no more than 1 – 2 broken links</p> <p>If a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, it is usually linked at the first instance, with few exceptions.</p> <p>Mostly complete address information with easy links to more details.</p>	<p>Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality completely missing.</p> <p>Location identifiers are absent; for example, users cannot find out where they are. Non-standard colors are used for location identifiers.</p> <p>Information is difficult to find. Many topics are too long that could be split up.</p> <p>Frequently hard to locate or understand; results of use are unpredictable</p> <p>Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them.</p> <p>All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be linked.</p> <p>More than 2 broken links or links that go to the wrong topic.</p> <p>When a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, the actual link might be any instance of the phrase, instead of the first instance.</p> <p>Repeatedly incomplete or incorrect address information.</p>
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Presentation

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
	Exceptional work in most areas.	Some parts very good; other parts excellent.	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws.
Platform Conventions/Features	<p>Conforms very well.</p> <p>Always makes it possible for intended users to use any add-on programs or tools.</p> <p>Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) consistently add to usability and comprehension; do not detract from compatibility.</p>	<p>Mainly conforms.</p> <p>Occasionally requires add-on programs or tools; usually provides them or explains how to get them.</p> <p>Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) mostly add to usability and comprehension; do not detract from compatibility.</p>	<p>Frequently does not conform; operates in an unusual manner.</p> <p>Often requires add-on programs or tools that users are unlikely to have and does not provide them or explain how to get them.</p> <p>Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) repeatedly detract from usability, comprehension, and compatibility.</p>	
Speed	<p>Response is always fast.</p> <p>Designed to optimize performance.</p>	<p>Response is usually fast, with a very occasional slowdown.</p> <p>Designed to perform well within the known constraints.</p>	<p>Entry is slow or hangs for significant periods of time.</p> <p>Not designed to perform well in the prescribed environment.</p>	
Interactivity	<p>The user has choices at all times and can control the pace of the session.</p> <p>The user can easily exit at any time.</p>	<p>The user usually has options regarding speed and direction.</p> <p>The user can usually exit at will.</p>	<p>The user can be trapped with no obvious escape.</p> <p>Escape is hidden or forbidden at times.</p>	

Presentation (cont.)

<p>Screen Design and Accessibility</p>	<p>Text size is consistent and easy to read; layout greatly enhances comprehension.</p> <p>Consistent use and placement of design elements.</p> <p>Users with different sizes of monitors can consistently use the information effectively.</p> <p>Background, foreground, and text colors are conducive for reading and take into consideration colorblind users.</p> <p>Screen design is appropriate for the resources of intended audience.</p> <p>Automatically changes to an excellent alternative interface for text-only and graphics-off browsing</p>	<p>Text is generally easy to read; layout enhances comprehension.</p> <p>Consistent use of design elements aids navigation and/or understanding.</p> <p>Interface is generally neat and inviting and supports display of different information types.</p> <p>Users with different sizes of monitors can mostly use the information effectively.</p> <p>Background, foreground, and text colors are acceptable for reading and take into consideration colorblind users.</p> <p>Screen design is usually appropriate for the resources of intended audience.</p> <p>Appropriate alternative interfaces are provided for text-only and graphics-off browsing.</p>	<p>Text is hard to read; layout of text is hard to comprehend.</p> <p>Frequent, inexplicable changes in interface design.</p> <p>Interface is generally disorganized, overcrowded, uninviting.</p> <p>Users with different sizes of monitors will have problems using the information effectively.</p> <p>Background, foreground, and text colors are hard to read. Color schemes would not be readable by colorblind users.</p> <p>Screen design is rarely appropriate for the resources of intended audience.</p> <p>Poor alternative interfaces provided for text-only and graphics-off browsing.</p>
<p>Graphics</p>	<p>Graphics and color contribute to topic comprehension.</p> <p>Text, graphic elements, and layout used creatively and effectively throughout to enhance comprehension for intended users.</p> <p>Charts, diagrams, and illustrations support the information appropriately.</p>	<p>Graphics and color generally contribute to topic comprehension.</p> <p>Text, graphic elements, and layout generally used effectively.</p> <p>Graphics are generally clear and appropriate; some are distracting or not useful.</p>	<p>Graphics or color are over- or under-used; their purpose is frequently not clear.</p> <p>Text, graphic elements, and layout are uninformative, inappropriate, or distracting.</p> <p>Graphics are unclear, distracting, or confusing. Space is taken up by graphics that serve no purpose.</p>
<p>Media</p>	<p>Media contribute to topic comprehension.</p>	<p>Media generally contribute to topic comprehension.</p>	<p>Media are over- or under-used; their purpose is frequently not clear.</p>