

So you want to be a Technical Writer

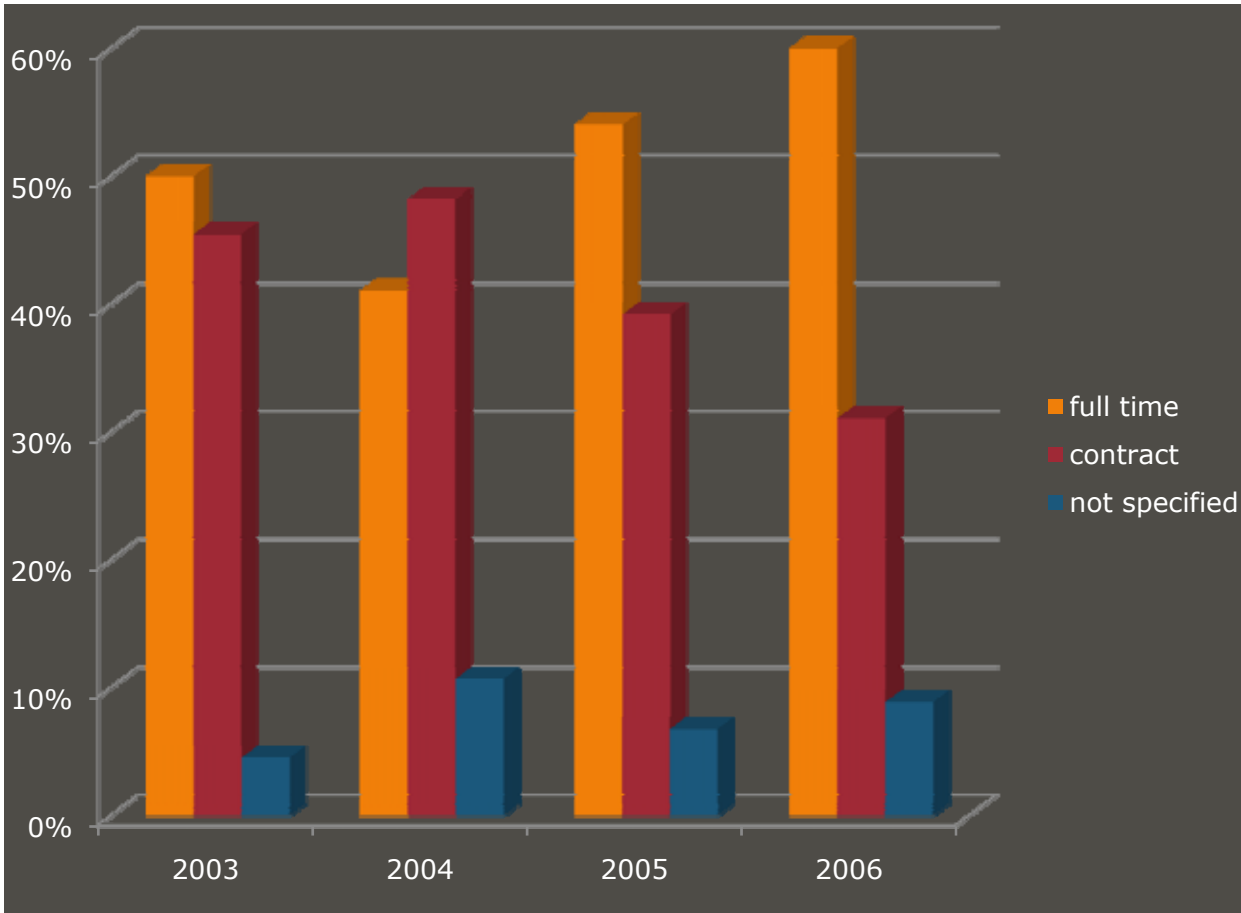
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Mediaville Montreal
2009-10-24

- Write about technical subjects
- Write step-by-step procedures
- Compile and organize reference information
- Edit and rewrite engineering documents to be suitable for customers
- Translate from Geek to Lay
- Organize and structure complex materials
- Format and fix layouts for print and screen
- Contribute to product usability (if it's hard to explain, it's hard to use)
- Create a helpful interface between the user and the user interface
- And much more...

What do Technical writers do?

- When I ran the STC-Montreal job bank (2002-2007), I would post, on average, 1-3 jobs per week, or 80-100 jobs per year
- Over a 3-year (2003-2006), 200-posting sample:
 - 51% of posted jobs were full-time/permanent
 - 41% were contract
 - 8% did not specify
- Full-time, salaried jobs outnumber contracts when the economy is going well
- In a slow economy, employers prefer to take on contractors
- The job bank has presently (late 2009) slowed down to roughly 5 postings or fewer a month

Some Statistics



STC-Montreal job
bank sample (2003-
2006)

Breakdown by salaried/contract

- Industry experience and knowledge
- Education
- Tools and Technologies
- Professional skills
- Aptitudes

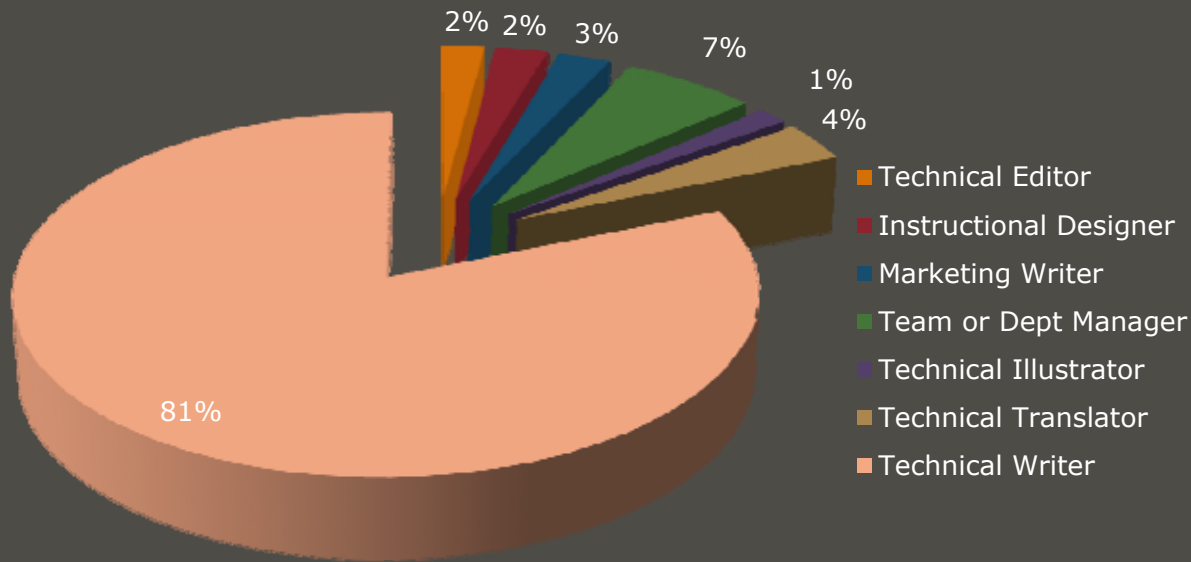
What do employers ask for?

- Software, hardware, security, databases
- Web services, ebusiness
- Telecommunications
- Military, defense, aerospace, public safety
- Forensics, pharmaceutical, medical
- Financial, retail
- Forestry, environment, government
- Manufacturing, materials handling
- International standards (ISO, ITU, ATA, IEEE...)

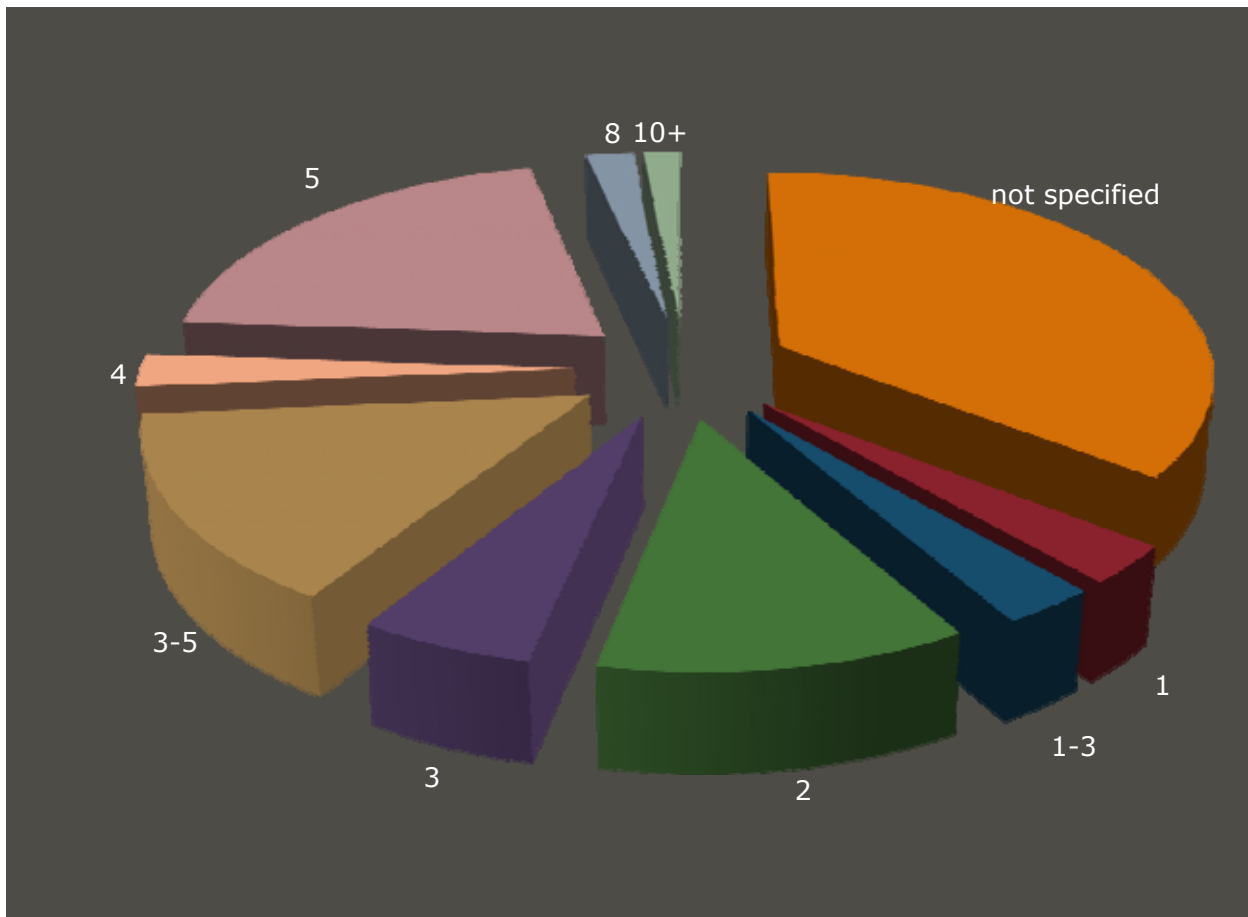
Industry Experience and Knowledge

What are employers looking for?

STC-Montreal job bank sample (2003-2006)



Breakdown by type of work



STC-Montreal job bank sample (2003-2006)

36%	not specified
3%	1
3%	1-3
12%	2
6%	3
15%	3-5
3%	4
20%	5
2%	8
2%	10+

Breakdown by years of experience asked for by employer

- English
- Communications
- Translation
- Engineering
- Electronics
- Education
- Instructional Technology
- Marketing
- Linguistics
- Journalism
- Commerce
- Computer Science

- ...or other relevant discipline or related field
- Junior or Technical college
- Certificate in Tech Writing
- **Employers expect you to have a diploma or degree**

Education

- MS Office (Word, Excel, Visio, Access)
- FrameMaker
- Acrobat
- RoboHelp / WebWorks
- Illustrator / CorelDraw / PaintShop Pro
- DreamWeaver, FrontPage
- Indexing software
- Version control tools
- Defect tracking tools
- CSS / HTML / SGML / XML / XLS
- C, C++, Java, SQL

Tools and Technology

- Superlative English (and/or French)
- Grammar, writing, and editing skills
- Organizational skills
- Analysis skills
- Computer skills
- Research skills
- Interviewing skills
- Presentation skills
- Illustration and layout skills
- Web skills
- Translation skills
- Learning skills
- Time and task management skills

Professional Skills

- Global approach and structured
- Work well in a team
- Technically savvy
- Respect for standards
- Detail oriented
- Autonomous
- Ability to convey the complex simply and clearly
- Creativity

Aptitudes for Technical Writing

Best Jobs in America 2009 - Top 50: Technical Writer - Money Magazine on CNNMoney.com - Mozilla Firefox

http://money.cnn.com/magazines/moneymag/bestjobs/2009/snapshots/28.html

CNNMoney.com
A Service of CNN, Fortune & Money

Home Business News Markets Personal Finance Retirement Technology Luxury Small Business Fortune Video My Portfolio CNN.com

BEST JOBS IN AMERICA Money/Payscale.com's list of great careers 2009

Full List High Pay Job Growth Quality of Life Sectors

28. Technical Writer 28 of 50 Back Next

Top 50 rank: 28
Sector: Information Technology

What they do: Technical writers write technical materials, such as equipment manuals, online help documentation, operating directions and maintenance instructions.



Do Technical Writers have great jobs, or what?

Technical Writer job openings Jobs by simply hired

- Technical Writer Philadelphia, PA - Life Cycle Engineering
- Technical Writer Annapolis Junction, MD - Harris
- Technical Writer Philadelphia, PA - Yoh
- Technical Writer Annapolis Junction, MD - Parsons

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PayScale

MY CAREER PROFILE MY REPORTS TOOLS & CALCULATORS CAREER RESEARCH CENTER CAREER PLANNING EDUCATION

My Current Job: Technical Writer, Montreal VIEW/EDIT SWITCH JOB PROFILES

Salary and Benefits
See how your compensation compares to your peers.

Education
Is more education worth it in your profession?

Job Opportunities
Browse local job listings in your industry.

Anonymous Profiles
See career details about people like you.

GigZig
Glimpse your future with our career path predictions.

Salary and Benefits Free Report Upgrade to PayScale Premium

Your Cash Compensation Summary
My Current Job: Technical Writer

	Reporting Average	10%	25%	50%	75%	90%
Salary	72%	C\$66,057	C\$54,521	C\$59,775	C\$65,697	C\$73,059
Total Cash	72%	C\$67,287	C\$55,109	C\$60,809	C\$66,921	C\$74,497
Hourly Rate	28%	C\$31.50	C\$21.66	C\$25.13	C\$30.56	C\$39.75
Bonus	44%	C\$2,671	C\$532	C\$1,255	C\$2,522	C\$4,385
Profit Sharing	17%	C\$2,084	C\$425.40	C\$933	C\$1,910	C\$3,585

Currency: Canadian Dollar (CAD)

Charts in This Report

- Salary
- Total Cash
- Hourly Rate
- Bonus
- Profit Sharing
- Health Benefits
- Vacation
- Report Summary

Upgrade to PayScale

Find: thetfor Next Previous Highlight all Match case Reached end of page, continued from top

Done

Pay is good...

- Are you both creative and analytical?
- Are you attentive to both details and 'the big picture'?
- Can you balance jargon and plain language?
- Are you a quick and motivated learner?
- Do you love to figure out how stuff works?
- Do you love to explain things to people?

Could you be a Technical Writer?