

Authoring for Translation and Localization

To avoid confusion when translating content to other languages, follow these writing tips.

TIP	EXAMPLE
Be consistent in terminology and phrasing	Avoid using the same word for different purposes. For example, the word <i>Shift</i> can mean: a change in state, a physical movement or a period of work time. When using a word, only use it in one context.
Avoid micro-level changes during update efforts. Changes on this level often add little value, will cause inconsistencies across content and affect translation memory negatively.	Does the word "large" really need to be changed to "big" from one document to the next? Assess the importance and value of your edits.
Create a dynamic term base and provide client-approved word order in target languages	Establish terminology and include part of speech, contextual references and definitions whenever possible. <i>Print: p.o.s. - verb, command; context - button, screen text</i>
Use words that reflect the object's purpose	<i>Evaporation Cap</i> - Does this mean that the cap allows or prevents evaporation?
Repeat nouns vs. pronouns	In many languages, nouns have different cases. Therefore "it" can represent a word in two, three or up to six different cases. Make it clear what the object is. This is better for content reuse and clarity for the user.
Avoid excessive use of adjectives (Avoid modifier stacks)	<i>-long-term surveillance test planning</i> - Word order changes in many languages making it difficult to know what the object of a phrase like this is.
Use commands consistently - same term, same tense	<i>Okay, Save, Continue, Submit</i>
Use conditional clauses consistently	<i>...vs. ..., for example, ...generally...</i> Also, decide if they will be at the beginning or end of sentences. In some languages, there isn't an option. Make sure translators know what to look for.
Use complete clauses or sentences in lists	<i>*If the machine is not working, you may find that it has:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •gone into sleep mode •lost power •run down the battery •been disconnected Word order changes in many languages which would make this list impossible translate without modifying the initial clause.
Avoid homographs: Words with the same spelling and different meanings cause confusion in translation	<i>minute: very small OR unit of time</i> <i>row: line OR propel a boat</i> <i>wound: past tense of wind OR an injury</i> <i>tear: fluid from the eye OR pull apart</i>
Avoid the overuse of synonyms: There may not be as many different ways of saying the same thing in other languages	<i>Small, little, petite, tiny...etc.</i> In some languages, there may only be one option. If like adjectives are used together, translators may not have the option of differentiating them.
Keep word selection clear and use words in the context of their most common definition	<i>Avoid</i> as opposed to <i>Eschew</i> .
Avoid the use of certain symbols that may not apply in other languages	<i>/, -, \$</i>

Avoid slang, jargon and idioms	<i>Thinking out of the box, A drop in the bucket, Head on, Rule of thumb, Wear and tear.</i>
Avoid contractions	Use <i>Do not</i> instead of <i>Don't</i>
Do not use negative words to express a positive idea.	<i>Don't add water if the light isn't on vs. Add water only when the light is on</i>
Watch for words that can be read as both verbs and nouns	<i>File, Post, Input, Screen, Map</i>
Follow standard capitalization and punctuation rules	Establish preferences for headings, tables, software references, etc. Style guide, standards, etc.
Include optional hyphens in compound words where ambiguity may occur	<i>This is a client-approved translation.</i>
When to use Gerunds and when to use Imperative or Infinitive	Best to use the imperative for headings, titles, and commands. <i>Print Your Document</i> vs. <i>Printing Your Document</i> It is appropriate to use the gerund in English and give the instruction to use the imperative in other languages. Establish it in a style guide.
Keep punctuation consistent	<i>Red, white, and blue</i> vs. <i>red, white and blue</i>
Avoid sentence fragments	<i>Now, connect it.</i> Connect what to what? If this clause is in your translation memory, it may or may not be grammatically correct depending on context.
Consider the following: dates/times, numbers, currencies, colors, sounds, icons, measurements, product names, envelope formats, addresses, phone numbers. Talk with your LSP about how information should display in the target languages.	For example, do you need to provide users with both the US customary system and Metric measurements? If so, in the US document it may appear like this: <i>1 in. (2.54 cm)</i> But in Europe, the order may be reversed: <i>2,54 cm (1 in.)</i> Consider the target audience for each document.