

## General Information and Competition Rules

### Rules for all Entries

#### Entries in all categories must:

- Contain sufficient technical, scientific, medical, or similar content to qualify as technical communication.
- Have been produced or substantially revised within 24 months prior to September 1 of the current year.
- Have been originally prepared (and accepted) for publication by a client, employer, or publisher.

The competition organizers reserve the right to reject any entry for any reason.

Entries must be suitable for public display. Entries that contain classified or proprietary information or that violate copyright laws are not acceptable. It is the responsibility of the submitter, and not of STC, to determine that entries do not contain classified or proprietary information and to obtain permission for submission of the entry from the holder of all copyrights. Neither STC nor anyone associated with the competitions can be held responsible for loss of or damage to an entry.

Materials prepared for STC purposes are not eligible for entry in the competition. Examples of these materials include STC Publications books *Intercom* and *Technical Communication* articles; and STC community websites, brochures, and newsletters. Community newsletters are entered in the STC Communications Competition.

Multilingual entries are acceptable with prior approval from the competition manager. An entry must not have been entered in a previous STC competition and may be entered in only one suite of local or regional competitions. **Duplicate entries are disqualified.**

Entries can be made only within a single local or regional competition. For example, if an entry is made to the Boston/Northern New England regional competitions, it cannot be entered in the South Carolina competition.

A single entry can be entered in only one category.

The submitter must certify that the entry represents the actual work of the contributors named on the entry form and that the entry qualifies for submission. The submitter must also certify that the copyright holder permits the submission of the entry. The submitter receives all official correspondence relating to the entry. The submitter is responsible for **all** communication with the entry's contributors and for distributing any awards.

### STC Summit Awards Categories

The STC Summit Awards, which take place after the local and regional competitions, use the following categories for judging and awards. Local and regional competitions may use a shortened list, depending on the variety of entries that they anticipate.

Entries that are submitted to the STC Summit Awards must adhere to the STC Summit Award guidelines and be submitted using the STC Summit Award Entry Form.

#### NOTES for online entries

- Entries can be submitted to any category as they will be judged based on the use of the material and not the medium on which they are delivered.
- The platform (such as Web, Windows, or Macintosh) is not a consideration in determining the category.
- Entries that run on other platforms or require special equipment will be accepted, as long as the entrants provide such specialized hardware or software to the judging location at their own expense.
- If the entry is provided on a CD or DVD, specify the format (PC or Mac) on both the submission form and the media itself.
- If you send compressed files, they must be self-extracting.
- An entry on the Web is judged as it exists on the day of judging.
- Demonstration of the entry to the judges is forbidden.
- Entries must install correctly, be virus-free, and not take an unreasonable amount of time to install.
- If the entry uses any software other than the latest versions of Firefox, Adobe Reader, or Microsoft Internet Explorer, you must also provide four copies of the software with the entry.

Entries, **including Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) files**, are accepted in any category regardless of media.

### Informational Materials Category

Informational materials are designed to attract potential buyers while providing information about a technical or scientific subject, product, service, or organization. The materials must persuade the audience favorably toward the subject or sponsor. Visual design, including production, is very important. So, too, is editing, because errors are very obvious.

The Informational Materials category includes all entries that are intended to inform the user of information without a specific call to action. These materials might include annual reports, articles, books, error messages, magazines, newsletters, periodicals, posters, research papers, and websites.

1. **Annual Reports** are publications that summarize the activities or financial position of corporations, government agencies, or nonprofit community organizations. "Annual Reports" includes reports that comply with the regulations of government agencies, such as the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, as well as reports of unregulated, nonprofit organizations.

The design should support the focus and projected image of the entity, and present financial and technical information in a visual manner.

2. **Articles:** Includes scholarly articles, professional articles, and trade or news articles.

*Scholarly/professional articles* are single articles appearing in academic or professional journals or in a scholarly book as an original contribution of knowledge.

*Trade/news articles* are single articles appearing in trade journals or general interest periodicals and are not original contributions of knowledge.

3. **Books** include bound, printed matter usually sold to the public through a bookseller, or e-books. For this competition, a book is defined as a lengthy document covering one technical subject that is intended for sale to the public.
4. **Periodicals** include magazines, newsletters, and scholarly and professional journals that are covered and bound or published in an electronic format. Submit **three** consecutive issues as a single entry.

*Magazines* have features and regular columns in an established format that people recognize. Advertising may or may not be included. They are controlled by identifiable publishers or owners and served by editorial staff. Magazines can contain news and information about an organization, technology, industry, or scientific field. They can serve either an internal, external, special interest, or general public audience.

*Newsletters* are regularly scheduled publications with brief articles and a flexible format. They generally have lower budgets and fewer pages than magazines, and may or may not have photographs and illustrations. Newsletters are generally about a company's or organization's employees or products, and they may be intended for an internal or external audience. Their primary purpose is to deliver information that, at the same time, will interest the reader and promote the interests of the sponsor.

*Scholarly/professional journals* appear as serial publications with features and regular columns in established formats that people recognize. Advertising may or may not be included. They are controlled by identifiable publishers and served by editorial staff. Writing style may tend to be relatively formal, and design creativity may be limited, in keeping with standards defined by expectations of the profession. Journals are usually targeted for a limited and specialized audience and typically contain information about research and developments in a particular discipline or profession.

5. **Technical Reports** report on scientific or technical efforts, usually aimed at the professional community or a contracting agency.

## Instructional Materials Category

The Instructional Category includes all entries that train a user/learner on a particular set of skills and knowledge. These materials might include CBTs, facilitator guides, instructional animations or videos, student guides, tutorials, and webinars.

1. **Tutorials and Training** that have a primary purpose of teaching the techniques for using the main features and capabilities of a product, or of assisting in the process of teaching using computer-based training applications, tutorials, online lesson books, and training aids.
2. **Training materials** include student guides, tutorials, workbooks, and instructor guides, or sets of these pieces. They should also display good use of motivational techniques (cartoon characters, themes, human interest stories, color); layout or content that readily pulls readers in and keeps them interested in using the materials; student participation, such as exercises; and mechanisms for learners to check their knowledge, such as quizzes and tests.

## Promotional Materials Category

The Promotional Category includes all entries that are intended to market or promote a product, company, individual, or event. The materials must persuade the audience to some action, using integrated text and figures. Visual design, including production, is very important. So, too, is editing, because errors are very obvious.

These materials might include brochures, catalogs, fliers, posters, and websites.

1. **Brochures and Catalogs** may be used to deliver information about technical products and services. Brochures should inform people about a product or the features or benefits of products. Catalogs should present large amounts of data in a readable format and provide information on ordering the product or service while being visually pleasing.
2. **Fliers** (advertisements, product data sheets, single-unit promotional handouts, and multiple-page publications) market a technical product, service, or organization. Corporate and program identity materials (folders, stationery, logos, etc.) are acceptable if they communicate technical information or images. Do not mount entries **larger than 11 x 17**. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.
3. **Posters** support or market an employee campaign, a technical product, an organization, an event, or communicate educational information (as opposed to marketing) about a technical or scientific subject, service, or organization. The entry description should include information about the poster use. Do not mount entries **larger than 11 x 17**. Roll up the entry and send in a mailing tube. Otherwise, smaller physical entries must be mounted.
4. **Websites** include those that might include interactive (online) or static, non-interactive information (online or print) describing or defining the main features of a product or product line.

## User Support Materials Category

The User Support Category includes all entries that provide information needed to support the user in performing specific tasks for independent use by the audience. These materials might include online help, job aids, quick start or reference guides, reference documents, user guides, and websites.

1. **Job Aids or Quick Start Guides** have the primary purpose of assisting the user to complete a set of tasks or solve a set of problems. Examples might include troubleshooting tools, wizards or wizard-like task completion tools, quick start guides, and automated support tools.
2. **Help** includes online information that has a primary purpose of providing immediate assistance to individuals while they use a product. It provides information appropriate to the task on an as-needed or as-requested basis. Help might include general help, procedural help, cue cards, examples, performance support, videos, laminated quick reference cards, and integrated user assistance.
3. **Organizational manuals** include content and tone that are usually company-dictated. Entries might include employee manuals, policy and procedure manuals, and style guides.
4. **Quick References** include materials that provide concise reference to essential features of a technical product, service, or subject. The emphasis is on presenting essential information concisely and in a way that it is quick and easy to find. They often contain graphic devices and other job aids to help fulfill their purpose.
5. **Reference Documents** that have the primary purpose of defining or explaining structure, results, words, problems, or parameters. Examples might include online dictionaries, glossaries, function or object descriptions, data structure definitions, encyclopedias, directories, software documentation sets, multivolume reference materials, and videos.

**User Guides** are intended to provide informational or instructional processes on the use of a specific device or application. Examples might include computer hardware guides, documentation sets, hardware/software combination guides, non-computer equipment guides, and software guides.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why should I enter?

All entrants receive a detailed evaluation from **three** technical communication professionals. This alone is worth the entry fee. If your entry goes on to the STC Summit Awards that means you will receive **six** comprehensive sets of feedback over the course of the competitions. This is unique to the STC competitions and is in addition to any award you may win for your entry.

### For online entries, what equipment and software will the judges use?

Entries will be judged on a variety of platforms, similar to how your target audience would view your entry. Judges typically will have a PC running Windows XP or Vista or a Macintosh equivalent, and any required software supplied with the entry. All machines will have a CD-ROM drive, sound card, video card, and speakers. For Web-based entries, Firefox and Microsoft Internet Explorer are the standard judging platforms.

### On the entry form, should I list my company's name or the name of the individuals who worked on the project? If I list individuals, how many of the people who contributed to the project can I include?

The goal of STC Summit Awards is to give credit and recognition to individuals rather than departments or organizations. STC prefers that individuals be named as contributors. However, because works of technical communication are often produced by teams, it is acceptable to cite a department or organization as a contributor.

While local and regional competitions determine the number of contributors they will allow per entry, no more than three contributors can be listed for an entry that goes on to the STC Summit Awards.

### How will entries be judged?

A panel of judges selects winners in the four STC Summit Award categories. The judges have the right to reject an entry.

All entries are judged on context of the purpose, design, content, usability, type of media (print or online), and writing style.

### How will I be notified?

All entries are acknowledged. Whether or not you win an award, you will receive the local judges' evaluations of your entry.

Winners in the STC Summit Awards will be notified at the STC annual conference. At the conference, winning entries will be displayed, and the Best of Show awards will be presented.

### What happens to my entry after the competition?

Your entry will **not** be returned from the local or regional competition unless you make special arrangements with the competition manager and provide adequate and prepaid packaging. If your entry wins an award of Distinguished Technical Communication or Excellence at the local or regional level, it will be returned only if you notify the local or regional competition manager that you do not want your entry to compete in the STC Summit Awards. No entries are returned from the STC Summit Awards.