

User Documentation Checklist

One element of evaluation for software is the quality of the user documentation supplied with the software. User documentation may be provided as a user manual in electronic form, as a paper insertion in the submission, or in the form of online help. Users increasingly express desire for context-sensitive online help, which provides screen-specific and task-specific guidance when it is accessed from within the software application.

User documentation is reviewed for the following:

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| General (Organization/Appearance) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the document easy to use? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the document organized well? Are things easy to find? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document look professional? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document describe the purpose of the API? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the document consistent (check numbering, pagination systems and fonts)? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document contain decipherable lists of error codes? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document use proper terminology? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document use full names prior to first instance of abbreviations ? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is spelling and grammar correct? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the information cross-referenced well? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is technical support information included? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is the table of contents included? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does the document contains the Copyright, Ordering Information, and Disclaimer Notice for user documentation? |
| Installation Procedures |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organized well |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operates exactly as stated |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not omit any steps |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documents minimal system configuration |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documents all changes to directories and system/configuration files |

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| Operational Procedures |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized well |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates exactly as stated |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly describes all toolbars, menus, commands and options |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toolbars, menus, commands and options operate exactly as stated |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Default data identical with default data in GUI |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples documented correctly |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents differences between OS or Windows versions |
| Sample Sessions/Tutorials |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gives user better understanding of solution |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains all of the steps |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Default data and output identical with default data and output in GUI |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documents exactly as GUI behaves |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes printouts of sample output |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample printouts identical to GUI |
| Tables, Graphs and Figures |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient in type/number to guide novice user through major software options |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identical to actual GUI (check titles of dialogs, dialog fields, and default values) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with previous tables, graphs and figures |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent captioning and numbering |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referenced in text |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistent with list or table of tables, graphs and figures |