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Things to do before taking up your first Technical Writing job

This is the award-winning entry of the MITWA Competition that was held in Feb-Mar 2009.

Someone asked me these questions which I feel are the most frequently asked questions.

“Hi, nowadays I see more than one company/school are offering certification courses on Technical Writing.

Would it be wise to advocate any of these courses to a fresher?

Are there any tips, opinions, thoughts, on which courses might be better or those that can be best avoided?

Are there any other suggestions I can give an interested fresher?

Are there any relevant experiences to share?”

I don't think any of these courses are necessary to be a technical writer. I feel these are “good –to-have” courses but not really essential. An employer often hires a candidate based on a variety of criteria than just the experience and the knowledge of tools.

Fresher or otherwise, the candidate must have great written and oral skills in English (it doesn't matter which degree or certification) apart from a positive attitude and quick learn-ability. I'd rather practice writing well and learn the language.

The person quickly shot back with another tricky situation: I, for one have never taken any related course. I guess I was rather fortunate to find someone willing to hire a fresher!

I have been looking at openings posted online for the last couple of months. Although there are no dearth of openings, but there's isn't one that exactly spells 'freshers welcome'.

Everyone generally looks for 2-3 years of experience. And viewing this scenario – I wonder if having a 'certificate' truly helps?”

Fresher vs. experienced – This is the dilemma everyone faces! The best way however would be to write as much as possible (blog, myriad types of documents – as your samples are often sought during the interview process). Apply for the job even if you don't have the experience, and patiently await a call. Believe it or not there are a few employers who don't really care for the experience; that is if you prove you can write well.

So by all means, go for the certification if you can afford the money and the time. It is as people normally say; the first sample of your work is your resume!