

User-Centered Documentation

Users read non-sequentially

- Create self-contained topics
- Provide necessary context
- Treat every page as page one

Users are frustrated, impatient

- Use article summaries
- Use lots of subheadings
- Structure information in lists
- Make sentences short and easy

Users want to begin right away

- Focus on real-world tasks
- Provide hello-world tutorials
- Keep the focus in the task domain

Users desire simple instructions

- Provide filtering mechanisms
- Apply progressive information disclosure
- Create different sidebars for different sections

Users may not speak your "language"

- Define unfamiliar terms in a glossary
- Put keywords + synonyms in page metadata
- Write for people who *really* don't speak your language

Users organize the same items differently

- Leverage facets if they make sense
- Use tags to provide other groupings
- Provide bottom-up navigation

Some users are beginners

- Create "getting started" guides
- Provide sequential tutorials
- Give the big picture

Some users are advanced

- Create "quick reference" guides
- Emphasize troubleshooting info
- Use homepage as routing page

Users resist going into help

- Bring help into the UI
- Make the UI more helpful
- Show tasks in the UI

Users gravitate toward visuals

- Use visuals to reduce cognitive load
- Reduce distraction, focus on the point
- Worry about ideas, not high art

