

IT Applications: VCE Information Technology

Units 3 & 4

Chapter 6: 'Supporting information products and reviewing decisions'

Test your knowledge answers

Content and types of on-screen user documentation

- 1 List three types of situations where a computer user would refer to on-screen documentation.**
- 2 What is the purpose of user guides and instruction manuals for hardware and software?**
- 3 List three common topics that would be covered in an on-screen user guide for a software application.**
- 4 List two common read-only formats or file types that are used for text- and graphics-based user documentation.**
- 5 Why do many organisations produce their own in-house documentation for their information system?**
- 6 Why is it important that on-screen user documentation provided in-house for the employees of an organisation should be in a read-only format?**
- 7 List four things that you would normally find in a Read Me file.**
- 8 When would a computer user usually access a Read Me file?**
- 9 What is an on-screen tutorial?**
- 10 List three different sources of on-screen tutorials.**
- 11 Why should you be cautious about downloading tutorials from the Internet?**
- 12 What are help files?**
- 13 Why is detailed technical information about a product not normally found in the help files?**
- 14 What is content-sensitive help? Provide an example.**
- 15 How can you find a manufacturer's website for supporting a software product?**
- 16 List three topics that would typically be found on a software manufacturer's support website.**
- 17 Why do users sometimes refer to blogs and community-based web support for software products in preference to the manufacturer's web support site?**

- 1 Any three of the following: when seeking instructions for new software or hardware; when seeking instructions on features of software or hardware that the user is unfamiliar with; in a workplace to find information on policies and procedures for the company information system; to find a solution to a software or hardware problem that has occurred.
- 2 To inform and instruct users about characteristics, capabilities and functions of the software or hardware.
- 3 Any three of the following: how to start using the application; how to perform typical actions with the product such as create a new file, save, use toolbars, use specific tools, turn hints on or off, print, exit the application.
- 4 Portable document format or PDF, and hypertext or HTML (browser-based).
- 5 To inform their employees of procedures and policies that are specific to that organisation's in-house information system.
- 6 To avoid the problem of employees changing the documentation files, either accidentally or deliberately.
- 7 Any four of the following: system requirements for the product (for example, which operating systems it is compatible with); configuration settings for the product; troubleshooting strategies; web support addresses or hyperlinks; information on how to access product updates; 'late-breaking news' about the product.
- 8 One or both of the following: when installing a software or hardware product; when reinstalling or reconfiguring a software or hardware product.
- 9 On-screen step-by-step instructions for using the features and functions of a software program or hardware device.
- 10 Any three of the following: accessed via a menu choice or icon within a software product; provided on CD or DVD with a product; downloadable from the product manufacturer's website; within help files of a product; purchased from a third party on CD, DVD or downloaded from the third party website; free third party tutorials downloaded from the Internet; third party tutorials on a CD or DVD that come free with a magazine purchase.
- 11 One of the following: harmful computer viruses can be downloaded accidentally from the Internet; the tutorial may contain incorrect information or it may be of generally poor quality if the credentials of the tutorial creator are not checked before downloading.
- 12 Help files provide searchable information about using the features and functions of a software or hardware product. They may also contain definitions of product-related terms, and tutorials for using features and functions of the product.

- 13 Help files are created for typical product users who do not usually require and may not understand detailed technical information about a product. The emphasis of help files is helping users use the product, not how to install or set up the product.
- 14 Content sensitive help responds to the current content a software user is accessing and offers hints or assistance. Examples (provide one of the following): starting to type a letter in a word processor triggers a dialogue box offering help in setting out the letter; clicking on a tool icon opens a related hint box; keying in the beginning of common number or word lists in Microsoft Excel triggers a fill handle to complete the list; common words may be autocorrected if keyed wrongly in a word processor; autocomplete macros will complete common words when the first few letters have been keyed in; lower case letters for the beginning of proper nouns are capitalised automatically (e.g. november becomes November).
- 15 One of the following: click on the hyperlink from the on-screen user documentation provided with a software or hardware product; click on the hyperlink from the icon found on-screen with some software product interfaces; use an Internet search engine.
- 16 Any three of the following: FAQs (frequently asked questions); knowledgebase or database of general information topics about the product; troubleshooting; updating the product; bugs and patches; technical information.
- 17 One of the following: when a user believes that the product support from the manufacturer is inadequate; when a user wishes to share knowledge and ideas with other users of the product.

Design elements that influence the appearance of information presented on-screen

- 1 **List six key elements of visual design that affect the appearance of on-screen output. Write a dot point for each, briefly explaining what it means.**
- 2 **List three common hardware elements for user interfaces.**
- 3 **Why do interface designers use layout diagrams when planning an on-screen product?**

- 1 Proportion – prominence of various elements on the screen; Orientation – direction and aspect of elements on a screen; Clarity – how clearly all screen elements can be viewed; Consistency – elements such as heading styles, colour schemes and navigation links should be consistent on each page or screen of an on-screen product or website for ease of use; Colours – should make the on-screen product readable and attractive; Contrast – there should be sufficient contrast or difference between background and text or other screen elements to make the information plainly readable.

- 2 Any three of the following: screen or monitor, keyboard, mouse, graphics tablet, stylus, touch screen.
- 3 To show the proposed layout of each screen, ensuring an appropriate and effective product with all required screen elements.

Characteristics of high-quality user interfaces and effective information architecture of on-screen information products

- 1 **Why is it important that on-screen information products are designed with well thought-out, logical information architecture?**
- 2 **In your own words, explain what is meant by a ‘transparent’ user interface.**
- 3 **In what way is the usability of an on-screen information product affected by a long or wide screen of information that makes users scroll to view it fully? Explain.**
- 4 **Why is it important that interface designers use common words and icons for navigation of a product rather than new and unusual navigation icons?**
- 5 **Why should ALT TEXT tags be included in the HTML code for all graphics on a website?**
- 6 **Why should highly technical language usually be avoided in user manuals for standard (or ‘shrink-wrapped’) software products?**
- 7 **Why don’t users want elaborate graphics and lots of visual distractions in on-screen documentation such as help files or Read Me files?**

- 1 So that users can access all required aspects of the on-screen product easily and with minimum fuss.
- 2 The user is able to use an on-screen product to access the information they are looking for so easily that they don’t really notice the interface itself.
- 3 Usability is reduced, as it is more difficult for a user to access the information they require. They may not be able to view an entire graphic image all at once, for example.
- 4 So that users feel comfortable with an on-screen product immediately and can access the required information via a minimum number of steps.
- 5 For maximum accessibility - to provide alternative text information about a graphic on a website for users who are vision-impaired.
- 6 Many users of these products may not understand highly technical language about software. They may then have difficulty accessing the information they require and may become dissatisfied with a product.

- 7 When accessing help files or Read Me files, users wish to find an answer to their query with minimum delay or distraction. Whilst screen shots may be helpful for the user, other graphics and fancy add-ons can simply be annoying.

Techniques for visually representing the decisions made and actions taken when problem-solving

- 1 **Why is it important to organisations to be able to backtrack and re-examine decisions that were made and actions that were taken during the solving of an information problem in their organisation? Explain.**
- 2 **What types of software can be used to make a visual representation of the decisions made and actions taken when problem-solving? Provide an example.**

- 1 Decision-making is important in solving problems and achieving organisational goals. Retracing and analysis of decisions and actions will mean that difficulties or errors that have occurred during the problem-solving process can be identified and addressed. The problem-solving process can be improved for future occasions.
- 2 Concept-mapping software, flow-charting software. Any one of the following: Inspiration; Microsoft Visio; Microsoft Word (flow chart autosshapes).

Criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the decisions made and actions taken when problem-solving

- 1 **List one criterion that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions made and actions taken during each of the following stages of the problem-solving process: analysis, design, development, testing, documentation. Briefly explain the criteria you choose, giving examples if necessary.**
- 2 **Explain why timeliness is a key criterion for evaluating decisions made and actions taken during the problem-solving process.**

- 1 One of the following for **Analysis**: problem identification was correct; all aspects of the problem were considered; problem statement was clear and concise; data selected was complete and from a reliable source; appropriate output was identified.
One of the following for **Design**: chosen software was appropriate to produce the output; appropriate functions of the software were used; designs met the needs of the solution and client; all designs were complete.
One of the following for **Development**: designs were followed accurately; data entry was accurate and data was validated; legal obligations in regards to ownership and privacy were met; solution was developed in a timely manner according to the project plan; regular backups were made.

One of the following for **Testing**: Choice of test data allowed data validation techniques to be tested thoroughly; choice of test data allowed all functions of the solution and output to be thoroughly tested; test results were compared with expected results in a test plan, and errors rectified.

Documentation: an appropriate on-screen user document was completed to support users of the solution.

- 2 A project may have problems if things run late. One late decision or action can have a domino effect, making subsequent actions run late. This can impact on specialist workers or resources that were to be supplied at a certain time or date. If a project is completed late overall, organisations can be financially impacted as well as inconvenienced. Clients may also be dissatisfied if service is affected.