

Evaluation Criteria for Judging STC Competitions

Organizational Design Criteria

Table 1: Organizational Design Criteria

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
General	Exceptional work in most areas	Some parts very good; other parts excellent	Very good with no major flaws and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws
Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Highly appropriate for its intended users.Has consistent focus.Section subtopics support section topics.Information layering is appropriate.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Usually appropriate.Focus is usually evident.Section subtopics usually support section topics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Often appropriate or not appropriate.Focus is not evident.Section subtopics frequently do not support section topics.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization logical and consistent, as shown in use of headings and development of various sections. • Topic length is appropriate for intended users. • Overviews and summaries are used where appropriate. • Table of contents is useful and complete. • Index is comprehensive, cross-referenced, and useful. • Information is easy to find. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With one or two exceptions, logical and consistent. • Well-balanced, except a few sections that are needlessly long or could be combined with other sections. • Many good overviews; some incomplete. • Index could be more thorough, have more task-oriented entries, or reference more layman's terms if necessary for the audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is confusing; too many or too few headings. • Insufficient or missing index. • Information is hard to find.
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is ordered and presented information in order of importance. • Information is given appropriate emphasis: for example, reference material is de-emphasized in user procedural help. • Information is easy to find. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obvious questions are occasionally neglected; sometimes less important information is given prominence. • Most information is easy to find. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less useful information is given priority in TOC and in topics. • Important topics are hard to find.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit
Scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount and type of information is appropriate for intended users. • Key content elements are included where appropriate (index, TOC, glossary). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally appropriate for intended users. • Index could be more thorough, have more task-oriented entries, or reference more layman's terms if necessary for the audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too detailed or general for intended users. • Index, TOC, and/or glossary are not present, even though needed.
Use of design elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text, graphic elements, and layout used creatively and effectively throughout to enhance comprehension for intended users. • Charts, diagrams, and illustrations support the information appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text, graphic elements, and layout generally used effectively. • Graphics are generally clear and appropriate; some are distracting or not useful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Text, graphic elements, and layout are uninformative, inappropriate, or distracting. • Graphics are unclear, distracting, or confusing. Space is taken up by graphics that serve no purpose.

Writing Criteria

Table 2: Writing Criteria

Summary Rating and Award Level				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
General	Exceptional work in most areas.	Some parts very good; other parts excellent.	Very good with no major flaws , and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws .
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences always have a clear structure. • Technical content is consistently clear, direct, and concise. • Headers clearly describe or indicate section contents. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences usually have a clear structure, with few exceptions. • Technical content generally clear, direct, and concise. • Headers usually describe or indicate section contents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentences vary between being clear and confusing. • Technical content frequently unclear. • Headers frequently inaccurate or misleading.
Important terms and acronyms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important terms are always or almost always defined at first use. • Acronyms are always or almost always explained and expanded at first use. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms are usually defined at first use. • Acronyms are usually explained and expanded at first use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terms are rarely defined at first use. • Acronyms are rarely explained and expanded.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence length is very appropriate and readable, both for the content level and the target audience. • Content is very easy to read. • Only necessary jargon (technical terms known by a limited audience) is used and is always defined. No unnecessary jargon is used. • Wording is always or almost always clear and concise. • Long units of text are consistently broken up by headings/subheadings. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence length is usually appropriate and readable, with only a few overly long sentences. • Content is generally easy to read. • Necessary jargon is used and but not always defined. Occasional use of unnecessary jargon. • Wording is mostly clear and concise, with the exception of some sections. • Most long units of text are broken up by headings and subheadings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence length often inappropriate and unreadable. • Content is hard to read. • Necessary jargon is used but rarely defined. Frequent use of unnecessary jargon. • Wording is frequently unclear with a number of wordy sections. • Contains many long units of text that are not broken up by headings and subheadings.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
Grammar, syntax, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are always or almost always used correctly and consistently. • Spelling is always or almost always correct. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are usually correct with a few errors. • Spelling is usually correct with just a few errors that have minimum impact on understanding the technical content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grammar, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization are frequently incorrect. • Spelling is frequently incorrect. Spelling errors in technical terms make comprehension difficult
Parallel structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupings of series or pairs are always or almost always logical and grammatically similar. • Comparable sentence components are always or almost always in the same form. • Headers are always or almost always in parallel form. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupings of series or pairs are usually logical and grammatically similar, with few exceptions. • Comparable sentence components are usually in the same form. • Headers are usually in parallel form. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupings of series or pairs are frequently not logical and/or grammatically similar. • Comparable sentence components are frequently not in the same form. • Headers are frequently not in parallel form.

User Interface Design Criteria

Table 3: User Interface Design Criteria

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
General	Exceptional work in most areas	Some parts very good; other parts excellent	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws
Conforms to platform standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conforms very well.		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mainly conforms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Frequently does not conform; operates in an unusual manner.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
Overall screen appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media, graphics, color contribute to topic comprehension. • Text size is consistent and easy to read; layout greatly enhances comprehension. • Consistent use and placement of design elements. • Interface is consistently neat and inviting, supporting display of different information types. • Users with different sizes of monitors can consistently use the information effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media, graphics, color generally contribute to topic comprehension. • Text is generally easy to read; layout enhances comprehension. • Consistent use of design elements aids navigation and/or understanding. • Interface is generally neat and inviting and supports display of different information types. • Users with different sizes of monitors can mostly use the information effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media, graphics, color are over- or under-used; their purpose is frequently not clear. • Text is hard to read; layout of text is hard to comprehend. • Frequent, inexplicable changes in interface design. • Interface is generally disorganized, overcrowded, uninviting. • Users with different sizes of monitors will have problems using the information effectively. 	

Web User Interface Design Criteria

Table 4: Web User Interface Design Criteria

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
General	Exceptional work in most areas	Some parts very good; other parts excellent	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws
HTML extensions (tables, forms, frames, scripts)	Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) consistently add to usability and comprehension; do not detract from compatibility.		Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) mostly add to usability and comprehension; do not detract from compatibility.	Extensions to HTML (such as frames, tables, forms, scripts, etc.) repeatedly detract from usability, comprehension, and compatibility.
Address information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently complete address information provided with easy links to more details. Every page shows where to find the address (home page or origination point) and whom to contact with feedback or questions. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly complete address information with easy links to more details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repeatedly incomplete or incorrect address information.
Resources required to view	Always makes it possible for intended users to use any add-on programs or tools.		Occasionally requires add-on programs or tools; usually provides them or explains how to get them.	Often requires add-on programs or tools that users are unlikely to have and does not provide them or explain how to get them.

Summary Rating and Award Level				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
Design elements (sound or video files)	Very appropriate for the resources of intended audience.		Usually appropriate for the resources of intended audience.	Rarely appropriate for the resources of intended audience.
Alternate interfaces	Automatically changes to an excellent alternative interface for text-only and graphics-off browsing.		Appropriate alternative interfaces provided for text-only and graphics-off browsing.	Poor alternative interfaces provided for text-only and graphics-off browsing.

Navigation Aids Criteria

Table 5: Navigation Aids Criteria

Summary Ratings and Award Levels				
Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
General	Exceptional work in most areas	Some parts very good; other parts excellent	Very good with no major flaws, and at least one exceptional feature.	Average work with minor flaws and no exceptional features, or has major flaws
Basic navigation elements (index, site map, search, as appropriate for the entry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table of Contents, Index, and Search, and Favorites features exist and are complete and correct. Index provides functional as well as syntactical entries. Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality exists and works. If needed, glossary is complete. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Table of Contents, Index, and Search, and Favorites features exist and are complete and correct, with few exceptions. Generally, users can access Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks one or more of Table of Contents, Index, and Search, or Favorites features. Or has these features but they are incomplete or wrong. Back, Forward, Home, and Browse functionality completely missing.
Finding information	Generally, information can be found in as few steps as possible		Generally, information can be found in a reasonable number of steps, but sometimes it takes more steps than necessary	Information is difficult to find. Many topics are too long that could be split up.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
User orientation	Location identifiers consistently and effectively show users where they are, using the standard colors for the medium.		Location identifiers generally show users where they are and use standard colors for the medium.	Location identifiers are absent; for example, users cannot find out where they are. Non-standard colors are used for location identifiers.
Ease of use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always intuitive (very easy to locate and understand); appropriate for user needs at particular locations. • Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them. • Background, foreground, and text colors are conducive for reading and take into consideration color blind users. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally easy to locate and understand; results of use are generally predictable. • Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them. • Background, foreground, and text colors are acceptable for reading and take into consideration color blind users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently hard to locate or understand; results of use are unpredictable. • Links appear in the standard colors for the medium, both before and after clicking on them. • Background, foreground, and text colors are hard to read. Color schemes would not be readable by color blind users.

Summary Rating and Award Level

Criteria	Distinction	Excellence	Merit	No Award
Links	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be.• All links work and go to the correct topic.• If a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, it is always linked at the first instance		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be linked.• Links work in most cases and go to the correct topic, no more than 2 broken links• If a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, it is usually linked at the first instance, with few exceptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All or almost all phrases/words/concepts are linked that should be linked.• More than 2 broken links or links that go to the wrong topic.• When a linked phrase appears several times in a topic, the link might be to any instance of the phrase, instead of the first instance.