



Preparing a Proposal

We are pleased that you are interested in publishing your work. At American Tech, our Editorial Department staff routinely works with new and experienced authors to develop high-quality instructional material. For a prospective author, the publishing process can be approached as a series of steps: identifying the product, preparing the proposal, and authoring the manuscript. Each step requires close collaboration with our staff to expedite the process. This publication is designed to help guide you through the process of preparing a proposal for consideration by American Tech. Examples of proposal elements are provided at the end of this document.

We wish you success in your writing efforts. Please contact us if we can be of any assistance.

Jonathan F. Gosse, Ed.D.
Editor in Chief

THE PROPOSAL

A proposal is information prepared by the author that allows the publisher to make an informed decision regarding the feasibility of publishing the work. American Tech develops many types of products such as textbooks, workbooks, CD-ROMs, videotapes, and resource guides. However, the proposal process focuses on our core product—the book.

The proposal includes information about the author and a representative sample of a complete manuscript. The term manuscript is used to describe the collection of all of the elements in a book. Submission of a complete manuscript is not required with the proposal. At American Tech, close collaboration occurs between the author and editorial staff throughout the proposal preparation and subsequent manuscript development process. This collaborative approach expedites the production process by establishing submission procedures early to minimize time spent on revisions to the manuscript. The following elements should be included in your proposal:

- Cover letter
- Resumé
- Market survey
- Book outline
- Chapter outline
- Chapter text
- Chapter illustrations
- Chapter captions
- Chapter review material
- Chapter introduction
- Electronic enhancements
- Electronic proposal files

Although a proposal provides a preliminary overview of a proposed publication, it should demonstrate the quality of work that can be expected from your best efforts. The proposal contains a cover letter that introduces the author, and describes the proposal material submitted. Information about the author(s) is detailed in the resumé.

RESUMÉ

A current resumé documents the experiences related to the topics covered in the proposed book. All authors have particular strengths and expertise to be used in the development of a book. Hands-on experience in the field, educational background, instructional experience, professional activities, and related writing experience should all be detailed. Each of these is considered important, with significant hands-on experience mandatory for credibility. College degrees and teaching experience, while not absolute requirements, are definite assets when developing instructional material.

MARKET SURVEY

A review of products available in the market should be conducted before a proposal is developed. A market survey can serve as a guide for compiling information about competing products in a particular market. A market survey also helps to refine content and approach early in the proposal process. How a new proposed publication is different than products currently available is a major consideration in the acceptance or rejection of a proposal.

Most publishers target a specific market. American Tech develops and promotes products for secondary and postsecondary training programs in public and private schools, apprenticeship training programs, industrial training programs, and for individual training in the United States, Canada, and other countries throughout the world. Products developed for this market address specific needs, and the market survey should assist the author in developing a proposal for a particular book. All established publishers have a web site that features company information and products. A publisher's catalog can also be used to assess the target market and products of a particular publisher.

Basic information on the market survey will help identify competing products and information that can be used for comparison. Your description of competing products will also demonstrate your understanding of the market by identifying strengths and weaknesses of competing books. Most important is the information that details how the proposed product is better than the products of potential competitors.

BOOK OUTLINE

The writing process can be compared with composition of a human body. The book outline provides the major supporting structure and function as the “backbone” of the entire book. The chapter outlines are the supporting structures of the book chapters and function as the skeletal support. The chapter text, chapter illustrations, and chapter captions build on the chapter outline

content and function as the organs and flesh of the body. A well-organized book starts with a strong “backbone” or book outline.

The book outline is the list of chapters to be included in the proposed book. The final version of the book outline is used to create the contents for the book. The chapters should be numbered sequentially and follow a logical order for maximum benefit to the intended audience. The content in the book, organized by chapters, should progress from simple to complex. Fundamental principles covered at the beginning of the book should provide the basis for subsequent applications. To allow consideration of all elements in a book, the chapter selected for the proposal should be a chapter from the middle of the book.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

A chapter outline is a listing of topics covered in a chapter. The chapter outline determines the content topics and organizes the sequence of information presented. A chapter outline is similar to a road map; it shows you how to proceed to reach your destination. The chapter outline will also serve as your guide when writing the chapter.

A detailed, well-organized chapter outline is a challenge to create. It provides the foundation for all content covered, and is one of the most important parts of the proposal. As you develop the chapter outline, think about how a person reading the material can best comprehend the content.

Care taken in developing a comprehensive chapter outline will save time when writing the chapter text. Some key suggestions when developing your outline include the following:

- Organize chapter content from most common to least common, and from simple to complex.
- Introduce content to allow readers to compare and contrast with previous content.
- Use parallel treatment when covering content in a topic/category. For example, when covering cars, cover the brand, model, and price range for each car manufacturer.

Book organization varies in the publishing industry. At American Tech, A, B, and C level heads are used to organize topics in the chapter outline. The heads are also used in the text to establish a hierarchy of content presented. The A heads are the major content areas of the chapter. The B heads are subdivisions of the A heads, and C heads are subdivisions of the B heads. On the chapter outline the chapter heads are indented for quick identification.

For example, in the book *Electrical Motor Controls*, Chapter 2—Electrical Tools and Test Instruments starts with the Introduction. The first head “Tools” is an A head that serves as the title for the general category of tools used by electricians. The next head “Hand-Operated Tools” is a B head that is a subcategory of the A head “Tools.” The next head is a C head that is a subcategory of the B head “Hand-Operated Tools.” This organization extends through the chapter.

By design, the heads in a chapter may also be used to compare and contrast topics such as “Reading Analog Displays” and “Reading Digital Displays” covered later in the chapter. In addition to the heads listed, the chapter outline should also include the introduction and the review material at the end of the chapter such as questions or problems.

The chapter outline is revised as required if the content and organization of the chapter changes. When completed, the final version of the chapter outline can be referenced when developing other chapters in the book. This prevents the duplication of content already covered in another chapter. The chapter outline also can be used to verify if a topic has been covered.

CHAPTER TEXT

The chapter text is the content that addresses topics listed in the chapter outline. This structure ensures the proper sequence and development of content covered. Some fundamental guidelines to follow when developing the chapter text include the following:

- Assume no prior knowledge when presenting new content.
- Define new terms, abbreviations, and acronyms immediately when introduced.
- Provide transition from previous information covered and new information presented.
- Reinforce each theoretical concept with a practical example.
- Include enough information to allow the reader to master a specific concept.
- Sentences with fewer words are better.
- Use an engineering style—avoid pronouns: you, his, her, they (use correct title/term).
- Present content using consistent (industry standard) nomenclature.

When developing the chapter text, several approaches may be taken. One approach is to present material in a sequence and scope that mimics a classroom presentation. In this scenario, specific concepts are presented followed by concrete examples. When required, the instructor will pause and hold up an example, show a PowerPoint® slide, sketch a drawing on a whiteboard, or show a video clip. Likewise, as an author, your illustrations reinforce the text content. This is an opportunity to provide an application of the material presented.

Another concern commonly raised by a new author is how much content should be covered, or “how deep should I go?” The primary task of the author is to address the specific needs of the target audience. In general, a rule of thumb is to develop the content expected to be covered in a typical course or setting where the book will be used. Your outline will determine the breadth of coverage, and will, at times, need to be revised to match the coverage required. In all cases, an easy way to see examples of how content should be treated is to reference other American Tech books.

Writing styles vary greatly in books. At American Tech, our content is focused on technical training, and writing tends to have an engineering style and be functional in approach. Short, concise sentences are preferred over long, complex sentences. American Tech is known for efficient, functional products. We believe that this approach offers the most efficient transfer of information.

Conversational and transitional phrases such as “it is important to know ...” may be appropriate for some publications. However, at American Tech, we view content that merits inclusion in the book as inherently important. Emphasis is given by the amount of coverage using text and illustrations.

Writing the Chapter Text

The chapter text is written after the book outline and chapter outline have been developed. The chapter heads will serve as the basis for developing the chapter content. Many authors choose to use the outline file as a beginning point, develop content under each head, and save the chapter text electronic file with a new name. Even with a good chapter outline, a common problem for new authors is facing the daunting question, “Where do I begin?” One common strategy used by new and seasoned authors when developing text is to address a series of questions to be answered under each head. For example, in Chapter 6—Refrigeration Systems of the *Industrial Maintenance* book, the beginning portion of the chapter outline includes the following heads:

MECHANICAL COMPRESSION REFRIGERATION

- Mechanical Compression System Operation

 - High- and Low-Pressure Sides

 - Refrigerants

 - Compressors

 - Reciprocating Compressors

 - Vane Compressors

 - Screw Compressors

 - Centrifugal Compressors

When beginning to write the text for the A head “Mechanical Compression Refrigeration,” the first task is to answer the question, “What is it?” by defining refrigeration as it is presented in the context of the chapter. A term that is defined for the first time in the book is italicized. The same definition is used again later in the glossary. Other information is addressed by answering the question, “How does it work?” After defining/covering the terms associated with the general topic of refrigeration, the last sentence in this head prepares the reader for the next section with the statement “The most common refrigeration process in industry is mechanical compression refrigeration.”

The process continues with the outline topics serving as a guide for the sequence and content covered. In a category of topics, parallel treatment of the content can be ensured with a series of questions.

For example, under the B head “Compressors,” several compressor types are listed. Each of these devices can be covered in a parallel manner by answering the following questions:

- What is it?
- How does it function?
- What are the main elements/components?
- What are the common applications of the device?
- How does it compare with other similar devices?

By following the chapter outline and answering basic questions, the writing process is more procedural and less challenging. If it becomes awkward trying to write according to the chapter outline, the chapter outline may have to be revised. If necessary, heads may be combined if the content is not appropriate or appears redundant.

Figure References. A figure reference is a short text statement that directs the reader to an illustration. A *figure* is an illustration consisting of line art, photograph, tables, or a combination of these elements that directly relates to the text content. The location of figure references in the text should be chosen for maximum benefit of the information depicted for the reader. The figure is located after the figure reference in the text. Figure references are a part of the text and use the standard treatment, “**See Figure 4-16.**” In this example, the figure referenced is the sixteenth figure in chapter 4. Figure references are boldfaced in the text to help the reader navigate to the appropriate text and illustration.

The number of figure references should be limited to illustrations required to facilitate maximum comprehension by the reader. If too many figures are used, the book may have a disjointed approach and the book layout may be compromised. If too few figures are used, the opportunity to enhance comprehension with an illustration may be missed. American Tech has a reputation for having succinct text complemented by outstanding illustrations. Achieving this balance becomes easy with authorship experience and guidance from the Editorial staff.

Supplementary Text. Supplementary text such as factoids, case studies, sidebars, vignettes, or other supporting text elements provide an enhancement to information presented. Supplementary text can be used to address such areas as historical facts, safety issues, time-saving techniques, or other interesting and valuable information. Supplementary text should provide the reader with related information that stimulates interest and complements other content provided. Supplementary text may also be in the form of key points, or a chapter summary for reinforcing content covered within the chapter.

CHAPTER ILLUSTRATIONS

American Tech is known throughout the industry for the quality of illustrations in its products. Most readers use illustrations as the main source of comprehending key concepts. Consistency in the quality of illustrations throughout an American Tech book is expected and required. Illustrations in a proposal are just that—proposed illustrations with clear reference material provided by the author. Illustrators at American Tech transform this information into the high-quality, consistent illustrations found in our products.

Illustrations in the proposal are referred to as “rough art.” Rough art contains all elements required to draw the illustration. In some cases, the rough art is a combination of sketches, manufacturer photos, and other reference material. Whatever the source, the intent of any illustration is to efficiently convey information with clarity. Illustrations can be categorized as line art, photos, or tables. Each illustration is referenced in the chapter text by number using the phrase “**See Figure X-XX.**” When developing the illustrations for the proposal, the rough art for each illustration is developed on a single 8½ x 11 sheet of paper. The figure number and other reference information is provided at the bottom of the sheet.

An illustration contains information related to the text content, and callouts direct the reader to certain parts within the illustration. Callouts are short, descriptive text phrases used to identify particular parts of an illustration such as a section, operation, tool, sequenced step, or safety device. An arrowhead with leader line points to the part of the illustration to be emphasized.

In all cases, an illustration in an ATP book must be simple, free of excess clutter, and offer an efficient conduit for comprehension of key concepts. Certain types of illustrations can be more effective by using the following guidelines:

- *photographs* provide an authentic visual reference with devices/procedures in context
- *line art* simplifies complex features and allows emphasis on specific details
- *tables* provide a great amount of information organized in a succinct format

The reader can best comprehend concepts through comparison and contrast. An illustration that highlights similarities and differences promotes learning. In some cases, an enlarged section is required to provide details within the object illustrated. Sometimes a line drawing is used with a photograph. Photographs used in the publication are generally provided by ATP or acquired from a manufacturer. In some cases, the author will provide the photographs. For the proposal, a simple sketch or photocopy of a similar photo will serve to convey what the published photo should look like. American Tech will work closely with you to obtain the appropriate photos after the proposal has been accepted. Additional information about the illustration is provided to the reader in the caption.

CHAPTER CAPTIONS

A caption is a complete, brief, descriptive sentence or two that provides information related to the illustration. The caption content should reinforce key concepts presented in the text and depicted in the illustration. The caption, along with the text and illustration, collectively form the triad of content required for maximum comprehension. Consistency in terminology and treatment in all of these three elements is necessary to prevent any confusion. Captions are best written after the rough art and text are completed.

A separate caption is written for each illustration. Each caption should be able to stand on its own for content. The caption should complement the text and illustration and briefly describe

important feature(s) or key concepts related to the content. Statements such as “This figure shows...” are unnecessary. Likewise, a caption such as “A Claw Hammer.” provides little information to the reader. The captions developed for the chapter should be listed in numerical sequence on a single page in a separate file. Reading the captions in comparison to one another allows a check for consistency in approach and content between illustrations and with other elements in the chapter.

CHAPTER REVIEW MATERIAL

Review material consists of questions, activities, or projects that follow the chapter. Review material varies with the content and format of the book. For example, in a textbook, subjective questions follow the chapter in the form of essay questions. Answers are written on a separate sheet. These questions offer an opportunity to synthesize major concepts and practice critical-thinking skills. These questions can also serve as a catalyst for discussion in a classroom setting.

In a text/workbook, answers to objective questions, essay questions, and activities are written in the book on removable pages. If warranted, a separate student workbook may be developed to reinforce content covered in the textbook. Examples of different formats and complete instructional packages are described in the American Tech Catalog.

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Because the Introduction is a brief overview that summarizes the chapter content, it is best written after the chapter text is completed. The Introduction provides a rationale for the material presented and explains the context of the chapter by relating previous information covered in the book to new material to be introduced. Information in the chapter introduction should supplement chapter content, not repeat it. Other information consistently presented throughout the book such as competencies, objectives, or other information should also be included in the introduction.

ELECTRONIC ENHANCEMENTS

Electronic enhancements such as interactive tests, reference material, presentation slides, video clips, Internet links, test development software, and instructional material on CD-ROM or via the Internet provide additional instructional tools for the learner and/or the instructor. If appropriate, specific examples of how electronic enhancements could be used to supplement the proposed book should be included. Although these enhancements may not be an integral part of the book, it is helpful for us to understand how these enhancements create a comprehensive instructional package.

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

As a publisher, American Tech is responsible for the packaging of the manuscript material. If the proposal is accepted, a book design will be created at the appropriate time. For the proposal, the manuscript format should be simple and not contain embedded illustrations, tables, photographs,

or other elements. Special fonts, tabbing, or elaborate page formatting should be avoided. The text should be double-spaced with 1" margins.

The electronic files for the proposal manuscript are named for quick identification and access. An abbreviation for the book title is used with a three-letter abbreviation for the specific part of the book. For example, if the book title is *Technical Math for the Trades*, the abbreviation would be "TMT." Abbreviations for parts of the manuscript include the following:

- BKOUT—use for book outline
- OUT—use for chapter outline
- TXT—text
- CAP—captions
- RVW—review material following chapter text
- TST—test
- ACT—activities
- REF—references
- APD—appendix
- AK—answer key
- GLO—glossary

The chapter number is added to identify the specific chapter. For example, the file name TMTCAP04 refers to captions for chapter 4 of *Technical Math for the Trades*.

Copyright Notice

As a protection for your work when submitted to another organization, it is recommended that you include the following copyright notice information at the bottom of all pages of the proposal manuscript:

© Author Name 20XX

The three elements required to serve copyright notice are the word "copyright" (or © symbol), the holder of the copyright, and the date. Although American Tech adheres to the highest standards of publishing integrity, these standards may not be applied at other organizations in the industry, and the copyright notice will serve to inform the reader about your ownership.

Submission to American Tech

Your completed proposal required a great amount of work, and now you should rest. Do not submit the proposal yet. Give a copy of the proposal to a colleague who can provide an unbiased critique of the work. Additionally, read the proposal again after a few days. This will offer a fresh perspective. This process will often produce the best refinements, and your final version will be much better for this process.

In the proposal, include a cover letter that documents your interest in writing for American Tech. Make a copy of all proposal elements and send a copy (electronic and hard copy) to American Tech. Your submitted package should contain the following:

- Cover letter
- Resumé
- Market survey
- Book outline
- Chapter outline
- Chapter text
- Chapter illustrations
- Chapter captions
- Chapter review material
- Chapter introduction
- Electronic enhancements
- Electronic proposal files

Keep a copy of the complete proposal package in a safe place and send the original copy to:

American Technical Publishers, Inc.
Editor in Chief
1155 West 175th Street
Homewood, Illinois 60430-4600

Send the proposal package via United Parcel Service with an “acknowledgment of delivery” (AOD) card or by United States Postal System, Certified—First Class Mail.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

After we have received your proposal, American Tech will call or send an e-mail message to confirm its receipt. The evaluation schedule will be addressed at that time. The proposal evaluation process typically requires a few weeks depending upon our staff schedule and independent reviewers. After the evaluation process is complete, we will call or write to notify you about the status of your proposal.

The evaluation process is designed to help determine what is best for the author and the publisher. The writing and publishing of a book is a large project and requires a great amount of time and resources. The projected sales generated by the book must be enough to recover the investment of time and resources expended. Key factors determining the acceptance of a proposal include market potential, product compatibility, existing competing products, author credentials, and unique content characteristics. Rejection of a proposal is not always an indication of poor quality, but usually a mismatch of publisher needs and manuscript content.

If your proposal is not accepted, we will cite the reasons why and suggest possible actions to take. It may need to be resubmitted with specific content added. It may be targeted to a narrow market that has limited potential sales. Regardless of the reasons for the proposal not being

accepted, your experience in developing the proposal will be useful writing other pieces such as magazine articles or another book proposal.

If your proposal is accepted, we will call to discuss the proposal, develop a schedule for completion, and arrange a meeting. An agreement for the book will be issued. Several Editorial Department staff members will ultimately be involved on the project. Initially, a technical editor and/or production editor will work with you in the development of the completed manuscript.

Once again, we wish you success in your writing efforts. When you work with American Tech, you are part of a large team of professionals. These professionals are also employee-owners with a vested interest in making sure your work is the best it can be. As questions arise, do not hesitate to call. It is our pleasure to have the opportunity of working with you and we look forward to receiving your proposal.