

"How-To" Tech Guide

Can you find an effective way to teach people you know how to use a tech device or application that would improve their everyday lives?

You've Heard it All Before

Times are tough. You and your friends—and perhaps even members of your family—haven't been able to hang out for a while.

Still, you've probably found ways to stay connected. You may be posting and sharing and chatting online. You may even be staying up far, far too late with friends playing any one of a thousand multi-player video games.

And . . . you may have been hearing some of your less tech-savvy friends, family members, and teachers complaining, "I can't figure out how to—." They need a How-to Tech Guide.

Your Job, if You Choose to Accept it

Provide a How-to Tech Guide for someone who needs it. You'll follow a few simple steps to write instructions for a device or application that's baffling someone. You'll—

- identify your purpose, topic, and audience;
- outline steps and equipment;
- write your guide and save the day.

Identify Your Purpose

You can identify the purpose of your guide without much effort. Common how-to purposes include—

- teaching someone how to do or to make something;
- providing directions in how to use something; and
- sharing your own knowledge and expertise about something.

Think about the possible purposes for your guide, and select one.

Identify Your Topic

There are plenty of topic possibilities out there. We're surrounded by thousands of tech devices and applications, and any one of them can confuse a user.

To narrow down to a single topic for your guide—

- Remember times that technology has confused someone you know. You may have heard them ask things like, "How do I take a screenshot with this phone?"
- Consider complaints you've heard. Someone may have said something like, "It's too difficult to equip this character with an inventory item!"
- Think about what you know. What devices or applications do you know best? Which ones are you best able to explain?

After you've considered possible topics, pick one for your guide.

Identify Your Audience

Your how-to guide is designed to solve a problem for your readers—your audience—so you should pick that audience carefully. Pick a specific person or group that most needs your help. Then, in your guide, use language and levels of detail your audience is sure to understand.

A few audiences you might consider include—

- teachers
- classmates
- people younger than you
- people older than you

After thinking about the purpose, topic, and audience for your How-to Tech Guide, add your choices to the chart below. Describe your purpose, topic, and audience in detail, and then keep all three elements in mind as you write.

My Purpose:	
My Topic:	
My Audience:	

Outline Steps and Equipment

Before you begin writing, take some time to outline exactly what you need to include in your guide.

First, use the How-to Essay Graphic Organizer to list each activity your audience should learn to do. Remember that an audience that knows very little may need to learn the most basic ideas first—even something as simple as how to turn a device on. In contrast, an audience that already knows a lot about a device can skip directly to more complicated instructions.

Once you've identified the activities you'll teach, identify the steps to complete each one. For example, if you're teaching someone how to turn a device on, your steps might include how to plug it in, how to charge it, how to find the "on" button, or even what to expect after turning it on.

After you've listed activities and steps, note any equipment your audience will need at a given step. To video chat, for example, your audience will need a digital camera and microphone—or a device that already has a camera and microphone—along with an appropriate software application.

List activities, steps, and equipment, including exactly what your audience needs to know. Use the Graphic Organizer at the end of this lesson to help organize your ideas.

Write Your Guide—and Save the Day!

Now that you know your purpose, audience, topic, and the details you'll include, you're ready to write your guide. Create your guide's—

- **introduction** by explaining why someone should know what you're about to teach and briefly summarizing the steps you'll discuss;
- **body** by describing one activity or step per paragraph, in the correct order; keep your steps clear by using simple transitions, like *first*, *second*, *next*, and *finally*;
- **conclusion** by summarizing the steps you've described, reminding your audience of how helpful your guide will be.

If you'd like, add photos, drawings, or sketches to help clarify any of the details you've included. Remember that a picture truly can be worth a thousand words.

When you've finished, add a catchy title, polish up your work, and hand your How-to Tech Guide to someone who *really* needs it!

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER
HOW-TO ESSAY

Activity	Steps	Equipment
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

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