CAPACITARTE

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Troubleshooting

Help desk technicians work at **help desk**, a computer centre where people phone for help with their computer problems. Help desk technicians talk to the computer user to find the source of the problem and try to fix it on the phone.

Help desk technicians offer computer assistance for all types of problems. Some people prefer to use the word **debugging** when technicians solve programming errors and use **troubleshooting** when we solve problems encountered while using information technology. Sometimes there are no problems with either of them and it is a **PEBCAK**, the problem exists between the chair and keyboard, i.e. it's a user problem.

Describing Problems

People ask help desk technicians for help with problems like the ones given below. Look at the words in bold which refer to the problems users usually have.

1. 'My printer is producing **fuzzy**, not clear, printouts.'
2. 'I get a lot of error messages. Some of my files won't open. They're **corrupted**, damaged.'
3. 'The monitor **flickers**, the image is unsteady.'
4. 'My optical drive **fails**: it won't read or write discs.'
5. 'My machine is running very slowly and it shows **low memory** error messages.'
6. 'My computer is behaving strangely. I think it's got a **virus**.'
7. 'I get a 401 message: I'm **unauthorized**, not allowed to enter that website.'
8. 'I've tried to access a website but I get a **404 Not Found** message, as if it didn't exist.'
9. 'I try to connect but I get this message: **Network connection refused by server**.'

Suggesting Solutions

Help desk technicians have to sort out the different reasons for the problem and suggest ways to fix it. Look at some of the expressions that can be used given below (vocabulary is in bold). Check the use of **advice expressions** such "You should", "Why don't you", "If i were you, I would" (`d refers to would).

- *Turn* the computer **off** and **on** again. It often works.

- You *should* check that dust is not affecting the computer **cooling fan**, the device that prevents the parts inside the computer from overheating.

- *Why don't* you **reboot**, restart, the system again?

- *If* this doesn't work, use a **recovery tool**, a software application to restore your deleted data.

- You *should* **back up** your files (make copies) in the future.

- *If I were you*, I'd get a **UPS**, **an uninterruptible power supply**, a device to mantain continuous supply of electric power.

Describing processes

When help desk technicians try to fix computer problems, sometimes they need to explain to users technical processes so that they can understand how hardware or software components work and in that way they can find a solution to the problem.

When describing technical processes, they often use the **present simple passive** to explain how something is made or used. The agent is not as important as the process.

For example,

- *The image is digitized* – passive voice. (We digitize the image – active voice)
- *The files are converted* – passive voice. (The software converts the files – active voice)
- *The software is set up* – passive voice. (The analysts set up the software – active voice)

Experts also use the passive voice to describe different are of computing, for example:

- *The data in the hard disk* **should be defragmented, rearranged,** *so it* **can be accessed** *more quickly.*
- *Your computer system may* **need to be upgraded, improved,** *by adding devices or updating software.*

When describing a process, it is important to use **time and sequence connectors** to show the different stages of a process. There follows a list of example sentences using the most common time and sequence connectors.

First… Then//Next… Finally…	As…	After/Once	Before
First the computer is switched on. *Then* the OS is booted. *Finally*, the application is run.	*As* the laser printer drum rolls, the toner gets stuck to it and reproduces the original image	*After* you've had a program for a while, it may have to be updated. *Once* a CD-R has been written to, you can't alter the date	*Before* you can recover the files that have been deleted, you must unformat the hard disk.