



Checklist for SunCam Authors

First, a few suggestions for authoring a course for SunCam:

- Write about what you know. Prospective authors often ask what topic they should select. The simple answer is that you should write about the issues that you know best.
- ALWAYS be gender neutral and gender inclusive in your writing. Women have engaged in engineering since at least the late 19th century and now comprise 13% of our ranks. Ignore this important market, and you will hear about it in your course reviews and your sales results.
- To maximize sales of your course, start with a course that appeals to the broadest possible audience. For example, a course titled “Inspection and maintenance of freight rail ballast” will appeal to a very narrow market but one titled “What every engineer should know about railroad engineering” will find a much broader audience. The broader the market, the more your course will sell.
- Personalize your examples by giving the engineer that is solving the problem a name rather than writing an impersonal description of the engineering design. Try setting up your cases by giving names to the people and places such as, “The town council of East Haven engaged the services of Emily Hansen, P.E. to design a new water treatment plant . . .” Customers will praise the course for using “real life” examples even though the people and places are fictitious.
- Breakdown large topics into a series. A 16-hour course will be off-putting but if you break it into 4, 4-hour courses, and label them part 1, part 2, etc. they will often sell as a 4-part set. We offer set discounts to encourage set sales.
- Illustrate your course with crisp, clean, well composed original photos, charts, and graphs. Don’t ever use your scanner, instead recreate that table or chart. Think of your course document as a lengthy technical article in a professional journal. If it is not well-illustrated people just won’t read it. If the illustrations are not readable, don’t use them. If you don’t get it right you won’t get published.
- Don’t use anything to illustrate your course unless you created it or, you have written permission from its owner. Remember, the World Wide Web is free to read, but most is not free to reuse. You may not use the material harvested from the work of others in your course without written permission from the owner. SunCam will terminate any author who plagiarizes. For an extensive collection of royalty free photos that are acceptable, try <https://commons.wikimedia.org>.
- Put the important stuff in the captions. Publishers know that the caption space under an eye-catching illustration is solid gold because people are more likely to read and remember it.



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Now we turn to the perfunctory stuff. Before we can take your course live on our web site, we will need all of the following:

- ❑ OPTIONAL! Before you begin work on your course, you may benefit from asking us to review a sample of your writing to make sure that your writing style is suitable for our audience. An article or report that you authored would work well. Please don't send us coauthored work unless the same person is a coauthor of your course.
- ❑ Course document formatted, proofed and ready for publication (Microsoft Word). Note that we do not proofread or edit your work but customers do and they will give you poor ratings for a course document with spelling, grammar or punctuation errors. Termination of courses is almost always due to poor reviews, and poor reviews are almost always related to poor writing. We strongly recommend that you find someone skilled in English composition to do the final reading and proofing of your course document and test.
 - Use one of our course templates for writing your course document. You may download the "Course Template" at: <http://www.suncam.com/CourseTemplate.dotx> for Word 2007 users or <http://www.suncam.com/CourseTemplate.dot> for Word 97-2003 users.
 - Use 1" margins all around, a 12 point font (Times Roman or Arial) and 1.15 line spacing for readability [right click/Paragraph/Line Spacing/Multiple/ then delete 3 and type in 1.15]. The templates linked above already have this formatting set.
 - Don't use [embedded links like this](#) instead, use an inline link like this <http://www.suncam.com>. Embedded links don't survive when creating .pdf documents.
- ❑ Test and answer key (in plain .txt format or Word if you have pictures, math formulas, or special symbols in the questions or answers)
 - The questions must be coded to work with our testing software as follows: (Don't worry too much about this. We can fix any mistake)
 - Each test question must begin with the code: Qn: or Qn. (where n is the question number). Don't forget the colon or period. Use a carriage return at the end of each question, answer, and explanation but don't use any tab or carriage return within any question, answer, or explanation. Don't add tabs or spaces before the questions or the +/- signs (further explained below) and don't use the "Number or Bullet List" functions to format the test. Inserting one or more extra lines after each question or explanation is OK.
 - Use only multiple choice questions. (True/False questions are okay but please use them sparingly.) The correct answers must begin with a plus sign (+) begin all other answers with a minus sign (-). There has to be one and only one correct answer. The software assigns a,b,c... to the answers so don't number or letter the answers and please remember not to insert any space or tab before the + or -.

Sample question format:
Q5: What is the area of a 3-4-5 triangle?
-3
+6
-15
Explanation: A 3-4-5 triangle is a right triangle with base and height of 3 and 4. The area of a triangle is $(b \times h)/2 = (3 \times 4)/2 = 6$



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- You must write an explanation for each test question. A “Results Email” with test results and explanations will be automatically sent to the customer, the author, and SunCam when a customer passes a test. The “Explanation:” for each question may be in the form of a statement, a quote from your course document, a math formula or anything that will aid in the customer’s understanding of why they missed a question. Be smart! Answering phone calls or emails from customers can be time-consuming, so you will want to write explanations that do a good job of anticipating their questions and satisfying them without the need to contact you.
- IMPORTANT:** Test questions should be in the same order as the answers appear in the course document. This is a convenience to customers that they often praise in their reviews. Test questions should be meaningful but not complex. Do not use trick questions or double negatives and use true/false questions sparingly.
- Course description (1-3 paragraphs). The description should include learning objectives. Think of the course description as your “sales pitch” for taking the course. Tell the customer how they will benefit from taking your course and tell them about any prerequisite knowledge that they should have.
- In addition to the course description, you may include a list of keywords that will help customers search to find your course. These keywords will not be visible except to search engines. There is no need to repeat any keywords that you have included in your course description.
- Photo of the author(s) for the web page. A head and shoulders (mug shot) works best but try not to make it look like an actual mug shot or passport photo. Smiles sell!
- A short biography of the author(s) (1-3 paragraphs). Only include education, experience, and publications that qualify you to author your course(s). Status as a disadvantaged, women-owned, or minority business enterprise will not be useful here.
- Author agreement (SunCam will prepare the agreement, sign it and send it to you for your signature when the course is in final form.) You must provide us with the following:
 - Name(s), address(es), phone number(s) and email address(es) to be in the agreement
 - Are you an individual, corporation (what state), partnership, trust, etc.
 - Your Social Security number for individuals or FEI number for your business. NOTE: It is best NOT to email your Social Security Number, call it in or send it via fax. We’ll tell you where to send it when we send you the agreement.)
- A list of future courses (the list is suggested but not required, and the list may change or be deleted completely in the future)
- Graphic logo(s) of any organization (such as a university or your company) that you wish to associate with on the web page. It is not necessary that the organization be a party to the agreement.



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- If you have authored any books on the subject covered by the course, you may wish to put a thumbnail photo and description on the website. We can also link the thumbnail to Amazon or any other site where a customer may purchase the book.
- Any other photographs or illustrations that will help tell the story about you or your course(s).

Please feel free to contact me at any time.

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