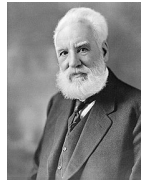


# WriteIT

## Writing it.amazon.com articles

For fun (and maybe profit)

## Innovation begins at home



- Dolly the Sheep
- Alexander Graham Bell
- John Logie Baird
- Heather Nelson
- Ewan McGregor

9/30/25

Amazon Confidential

Welcome to the writing for it.amazon.com training. You may be wondering what this list of names has to do with anything. These people, and you probably recognize one or two of them, are your fellow countrymen, and they changed the world for the better.

It is in this spirit. The spirit of making things better. That we offer this training. We want you to improve the it.amazon.com experience for your fellow Amazonians by writing about what you know, and providing high-quality step-by-step instructions to help them solve the technology issues that get in their way. Over the next few hours we will show you how to do exactly that.

First on this unordered list is:

Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal was born 5 July 1996 in Midlothian. Without her, and the team that created her, we do not have stem cell research.

Of course, when they invented Dolly, the team called their family and colleagues. That would have been impossible without the innovations of Alexander Graham Bell, born here in Edinburgh on 3 March 1847. He invented the telephone in 1885.

And without John Logie Baird, Born 13 August 1888 in Helensburgh, the world could never see Dolly the Sheep walk and bleat. For he created the first television in 1926.

Had Dolly been created last year, perhaps people would have raised a glass of Heather Nelson's whisky. Born late last century in the highlands of Ross-shire, Nelson is the first woman to be the solo head of a whisky distillery.

And, uh, Ewan MacGregor....This is what happens when your wife helps you with your power point transitions. She thinks he's hot.

## Today's agenda

- Introduction (20 minutes)
- it.amazon.com overview (5 minutes)
- Writing for it.amazon.com (60 minutes)
- Time tracking (5 minutes)
- Assigning articles (10 minutes)
- Writing (Remainder of time available)

9/29/25

Thanks so much for participating. I am Jay Hauser, I've been with Amazon almost three years. I've been a technical writer/editor/PM for about 20. This is <REDACTED>...<she introduces herself>.

We both want to thank you for coming to Munich, and for participating via Chime.

You are helping your fellow Amazonians solve their IT issues themselves. The articles we create today will be the proof your peers around the world need to engage and begin to create content as well. More importantly, it will signal the start of a time when Amazonians have a single place where they can find the answers to all their questions. Whether they are in the payroll department or are IT support experts like yourselves, who need to help people solve highly technical issues.

Eventually we will develop a content management system where IT support staff content is walled off from payroll department content is walled off from customer service IT support content. However, that bit of innovation is in the future. So today, let's focus on external content. What do I mean by external content? Content for non-technical Amazonians. Not articles from the IT support knowledge base or IT support wikis that you use internally. Let's create content that a non-technical Amazonian can

use to solve a problem with their computer or better understand an issue they are having, so they can get back to innovating.

By enabling people to solve their own issues, you both save them time, and, more importantly, minimize the amount of context switching they have to do. Does everyone know what context-switching means?

(optional) Context switching when you switch from working on one task to working on another before you complete the former task. It causes you to whipsaw between tasks and can be very disruptive. By enabling Amazonians to self-serve and self-solve, your articles are enabling the company to grow and innovate. Pretty exciting. Which is good, because I must be honest with you, some of the English rules we will discuss are a little boring. We think it all evens out in the end.

Here is what we will be talking about today. You just heard the introduction. Next, we will talk about [it.amazon.com](http://it.amazon.com), then we will talk about writing for [it.amazon.com](http://it.amazon.com), in other words how to write easy to digest information, how to write crisply, how to use the template, how to submit content with SIM, and our editing process. Then we will talk about tracking your time, finally, we will assign articles and start writing.

## It.amazon.com

- Part of the OneIT program
- Should take no more than a few hours per week
- Will reduce walk-up traffic
- Will reduce chat/phone traffic

9/29/25

It.amazon.com is part of the One IT program. The vision for the IT support model within One IT is **To enable anytime, anywhere, IT support that is one click away.** it.amazon.com is starting to fulfill that goal. Eventually, we will have a system that intelligently routes people to the best support, whether that be an article, a chat channel, or phone support.

The Amazon Global IT (GIT) team provides IT support for Amazon employees across <REDACTED> products and services, and <REDACTED> resolution root causes. Information related to these services, troubleshooting documents and processes are available across multiple locations like [Sharepoint](#) (~<REDACTED> **Knowledge Base articles**), [Wiki](#) (~<REDACTED> **articles**), internal sites (~<REDACTED> **including content on Inside, Policy, Broadcast, etc.**) Which adds up to over <REDACTED> **pieces of IT-related help and support content across multiple channels.** This makes It very hard for technicians to know where they need to search for IT support content when trying to solve a support ticket. Hence, there is a need to build a centralized KMS aligned with the IT Portal.

That centralized KMS is in the future, however. For now, people have to self-select. And, when they want, to self-serve. To make that easier, we want to create high

quality content that people can use to solve their own problems.

Writing content should only take a few hours per week or month, depending on how many articles you want to write. After creating 90+ articles, some from your peers, we have data that says creating content generally takes two hours or less, the editing and revision process takes about the same amount of time. This is spread out over a few days. So, you send an article to us, we edit it within 24 hours, generally, we send it back to you for confirmation that we didn't change anything material, you send it back and we publish.

The benefit, for your peers who provide walk-up support, will be that they can spend their time solving difficult problems instead of helping people unlock their accounts, update passwords, etc. The benefit for the people in this room is that you will also start seeing problems that you have to really think about to solve. Humans love a challenge. We hope that by creating content that enables people to solve basic problems that your days will be filled with more interesting calls and chats.

Speaking of calls and chats, by show of hands (or comments in Chime), how many people solved an interesting problem last week.

<pick someone>

What was it and why was it interesting?

Is that something that you could write an article about?

## Existing topics

- 28 topic areas
- Several areas are lacking depth and breadth
- Need experts to fill in those gaps
- Need people to also review existing content
  - Is it technically correct?
  - Do all the links work
  - Is it easy to understand?
- List of available topics: <https://quip-amazon.com/<REDACTED>>

9/30/25

Right now, there are 28 topics in the it.amazon.com taxonomy from AWS to Wi-fi. Several of these topics are lacking depth and breadth. For example, The onCall tropic area only has three or four articles.

We need experts like you to fill in these gaps. Think about the topics you really know and write about them.

But Max, you might say to yourself, I hate to write, but I want to help. What can I do? We also need people to review existing content and file bugs against articles that are incorrect, have broken links, are not helpful. Who would be interested in doing that today, please raise your hands of comment in the Chime room..



## Phone tool icons

- Inaugural participant
- Rookie
- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold

9/30/25

For your efforts today we have two phone tool icons. Everyone who participates can request a Initial content blitz icon. When we publish your first article, you can apply for a Rookie icon.

Once you have written 10 articles, you can request a bronze phone tool icon. Write 25 and get a silver icon. 25 more (or 50) and you can request a gold phone tool icon.

## Career opportunities

- Work on multiple, different types of projects, together with Amazonians and teams from all kinds of departments
- Create or prompt the creation of new policies, methods, tools and/or systems
- Improve your and your fellow Amazonians' daily work life

9/30/25

If you can write well at Amazon, you can do anything here because it is such a writing culture.

Read the slide.

## Writing for it.amazon.com - How

- Go to <https://it.amazon.com/<REDACTED>>.
- Click the Create button.
  - Template appears
- Save the template.
  - Document > Copy document > New title > Copy to folder

9/29/25

We just talked about Innovators from your country, ourselves, and how it.amazon.com will help your fellow Amazonians innovate. Now, let's talk about writing for it.amazon.com. The process to create an article starts, conveniently, with the website itself

Go to the submit content article and click the big submit button. That will take you to the Quip template that you will use to create your article. Because this is the template for any person creating it.amazon.com content, we have it locked down. This move ensures that someone does not accidentally change the template. Because it's locked down, you must perform a few steps to save it as a new document.

Here's what you have to do....and to make it less than theoretical, I'm going to end the presentation and show you how to do it on screen.

That made sense, right?

## Writing for it.amazon.com - Template

- Title
- Introduction
- Instructions
- Related articles (optional)

9/29/25

Now let's talk about the template itself.

- Here's an example

### Related articles section

Use the optional related articles section to include it.amazon.com articles that are relevant or KBs and wikis that people from the content team can use to educate themselves about the topic you are discussing.

All of this is in a training video on Broadcast.amazon.com. Will send that out to you in an email.

Now let's move on to some best practices for writing.

## Template - Title

### **Bad title:**

- Keyboard and mouse requests

### **Good title:**

- Get a new keyboard or mouse

The title should describe the purpose of the article

- It should be 25 characters or less
- Don't start with How to. Instead of a title like How to update your Amazon password, you would write Update your Amazon password
- Write it in sentence case. In other words, just capitalize the first word of the title, not all of them.

The bad example is ambiguous. The good example is direct.

## Template – Introduction (bad)

### Bad introduction:

- To be able to make any system level changes on your computer, such as installing software, or updating other items, you need local administrator rights. If you don't have them read on.
- **Am I eligible?**
- Not everyone at Amazon is eligible to have the rights that allow them to make changes on their computer. If you are a **level 4 blue-badge employee** or higher, except for specific job roles, and are set as the owner of your computer, you are eligible for local administrator rights.
- If you are a **level 3 yellow-badge or green-badge employee**, your blue-badge manager must [apply you for Local Admin Rights on HallPass](#). Once approved, follow the steps below this sentence to enable it on your computer.

Now we will move to the Introduction section.

In one or two paragraphs tell the customer what the process is and why they would use it.

- Summarize the feature in the first two sentences.
  - Cover one topic per paragraph.
  - Keep your sentences short. Studies show that people don't retain or understand long sentences. We consider more than 25 words too long.
- Here's an example of a bad introduction.

## Template – Introduction (good)

### Good introduction:

- To be able to install software or make any system-level changes on your computer, you need local administrator rights.
- **Am I eligible?**
  - Blue badge: Yes. There are some [exceptions](#) based on job role, but this does not affect most blue-badge employees.
  - Yellow badge: No. But your blue-badged manager can request access for you via [HallPass](#). Once you are approved, follow the steps below.

Here is an example of a good introduction. You can see how we cut to the chase. If you're a blue badge, in most cases, you're approved.  
If you're a yellow badge, you need to get permission from your blue badge manager.

## Template – Instructions (bad)

### Bad instructions:

1. Connect to the Amazon network via corporate Ethernet, Wi-Fi, or via VPN (you will need your <REDACTED> token).
2. Go to > **System Preferences** > **ACME** > **Settings**.
3. In the **Owner & Admin** section, look in the **Local Admin Rights** section.
4. If your account is eligible, you will see **Request Admin Rights**. Click that button.
5. The **Admin Rights Assistant** should open.
6. Follow the **steps** to complete the assistant. You'll have to **log out and back in** for changes to fully take effect.

Now let's discuss the Instructions section.

Generally, begin with a one or two sentence introduction followed by the instructions. This example does not follow that advice, but most articles do.

- Use a numbered list.
- Only describe one or two actions per step. For example, Click the Open button, then click the Ok button. Anything more complicated than that should be two or more steps. Again, because it bears repeating: If an action is complicated, break it into separate steps.
- Only bold words that are clicked or tapped. Which brings up a point, we have a style guide to help you create content that looks the same no matter who writes it. We'll discuss that later.

Step 1 is wordy.

We can combine steps 2&3.

Step 4 is wordy. It's also missing a period.

Step 5 sows discontent. Should open?? You mean it might not??

Step 6 bolds incorrect words. Also, assistants are commonly known as Wizards.



## Template – Instructions (good)

### Good instructions:

1. Connect your Macbook to the Amazon network.
2. Go to > **System Preferences** > **ACME** > **Settings** > **Owner & Admin**> **Local Admin Rights**.
3. If your account is eligible, you will see a **Request Admin Rights** button. Click it.
4. The **Admin Rights Assistant** wizard will open.
5. Follow the steps in the Wizard until it closes.
6. Log out of your computer and then back in to complete the admin rights process.

## What makes a good article

- Only describes a single task/topic/idea
  - Uses a tone that is conversational, friendly, direct, and respectful
  - Uses words that your customers use every day
  - Uses bulleted lists or smaller paragraphs to make it easier to scan
  - KISS: The more you write, the less customers read
- 
- <https://it.amazon.com/en/help/articles/it-portal-style-guide>

9/29/25

Now that we have talked about how to access the template, let's discuss what makes a good article.

Knowing this will set a framework for what is to come. Writing best practices, in other words, grammar and style. Both are important. You can ruin an article that follows these rules by using poor grammar. Conversely, you can write an article that is grammatically correct, but poor because it talks about multiple tasks at once, or it is hard to understand because it does not use the correct terminology, etc.

Go through the list.



## Correct English

### Example:

Its important to used Apostrophe's correct and pay attention to spelling errs, capitolization, and typos

How many mistakes do you see?

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The lowest bar we have for writing articles for it.amazon.com is using correct English.

How many things are wrong with this sentence?

Eight mistakes:

- Incorrect use of its vs. it's (1)
- Wrongly capitalized word (2)
- Unnecessary apostrophe and missing period (3 and 4)
- Correct grammar would be "use" and "correctly" (5 and 6)
- Typos/spelling errors in "errs" and "capitolization" (7 and 8)



## Correct English

Incorrect example:

Its important to used Apostrophe's correct and pay attention to spelling  
errs, capitolization, and typos

Corrected example:

It's important to use apostrophes correctly and pay attention to spelling  
errors, capitalization, and typos.

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There's often a debate on whether there are eight or nine depending on your feeling about the last comma. For any site merchandisers or editors, Amazon's style guide says for the website and customer facing emails that the Oxford comma should be included.

## Writing for it.amazon.com – Best practices

- Clarity of thought      }
  - Document structure    }
  - Sentence mechanics    }
- What
- How

9/29/25

Broadly, business writing best practices can be divided into three categories. Clarity of thought, Document structure, and sentence mechanics.

Clarity of thought has further divisions, which we will discuss in a moment. Document structure covers how you organize the information you are conveying so that it has the most impact. This is why we designed a template for you. As you have seen it is bare bones, which enables its flexibility. Sentence mechanics covers style, grammar, and punctuation, another topic we will cover in a bit.

## Writing for it.amazon.com – Clarity of thought

- Purpose
- Answers
- Background
- Voice

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What defines clarity of thought? These four principles do. Think about them when you write. First, let's talk about Purpose: Not your life's purpose, but what is the point of your article. We recommend writing articles that only have a single point or address a single issue.

Answers: Is the answer to the problem you are describing clear and well explained? If not, then keep working at it.

Background has two meanings

It refers to the background of the people who may read the article. This, is critical. Honestly, we have no idea who will read the content. It could be a fresh new Amazonian, it could be Jeff Bezos. So, with that in mind, we must write instructions that everyone can understand and follow. It is one of the reasons you should try to write as simply as you can. Say use instead of utilize, for example. Include every step in a procedure, no matter how small or obvious. Make it easy for your reader to self serve.

It also asks you to provide enough background information so that anyone can understand what you're talking about. The next slide will discuss some examples:

Finally, voice.

## Provide background

Example:

"After the NDA phase, we will share the FCF and ASP with our indirect retailers to get initial forecasts. Once the Mandy system is updated, we should have the YoY estimates ready before Jason gets back."

Who can spot at least six areas lacking background?

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Question: What does NDA mean? FCF, ASP, Mandy, Jason, when does he get back?



## Provide background

Example:

"After the NDA phase, we will share the FCF and ASP with our indirect retailers to get initial forecasts. Once the <REDACTED> system is updated, we should have the YoY estimates ready before Jason gets back."

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Question: What does NDA mean? FCF, ASP, Mandy, Jason, when does he get back?



## Provide background

### Revised Example:

After we sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), we will share the Free Cash Flow (FCF) estimates and Average Selling Price (ASP) with the offline retailers who purchase our devices from our distributors to get initial sales forecasts. Once our demand planning system (<REDACTED>) is updated, we can have Year-over-Year (YoY) estimates ready by 12-Oct-2014.

*\* Subsequent references to NDA, FCF, ASP, <REDACTED>, and YoY are acceptable after they have been spelled out in the document the first time.*

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## Writing for it.amazon.com – Voice

### Clarity of Thought:

- Purpose
- Answers
- Background
- Voice

- The voice is consistent throughout the document.
- **Guidance:**
  - Use active voice (subject-verb-object).
- **Red Flag:**
  - Excessively using passive voice (object-verb).
  - Switching tones (formal vs. casual).
  - Switching narrative modes (1<sup>st</sup> person vs. 3<sup>rd</sup>).
  - Excessive buzzwords.

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Now that we have talked about clarity of thought (Purpose, Answers, Background), let's talk about Voice.

What do we mean by voice? Voice is what makes you, you. However, as much as we like you, we want you to write your content in such a way that every article seems like it might have been written by the same person. Ultimately it is up to the Global IT Content team to shape your words to achieve that result. But you can help by following these simple rules and guidance.

The first step on that journey starts now.

### Guidance:

Be simple and clear in your writing. The easiest way to do this is to write in the active voice.

Active voice sentences follow this pattern: subject - verb – object.

### Red Flag:

Excessively using a passive voice construction: verb-object (in other words, the object receives the action rather than performs the action).

Jumping between first person and third person or jumping between a casual tone and a formal tone.

Sounding coached or overusing buzzwords.

## Use the active voice

Example:

### PASSIVE VOICE

Blocking online sales from other retailers is likely to become an issue.

↑  
action

↑  
receiver of action

What makes this a passive voice, and how can you make it active?

### ACTIVE VOICE

Doer of action

action

receiver of action

↓ ↓ ↓  
If Amazon allows retailers to sell through their online channel, then Kindle adoption will accelerate.

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I struggled when people told me to write in the active voice for a long time – I somewhat knew what they meant but couldn't consistently implement it and then about 20 years ago somebody walked me through line by line and corrected all the instances, and it suddenly clicked. If somebody says you're not using active voice and you don't understand, ask them to show you the specific examples.

**One important note on active voice, "allows" is active voice, "were to allow" is passive.**

## Use the active voice

Example:



The matter will <u>be</u> given consideration.	We will consider...
... <u>is</u> operated <u>by</u> Amazon.	Amazon operated...
We would <u>like</u> ...	We want...
If we were <u>to</u> allow...	If we allow...

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Also, be on the lookout for “be’s,” “by’s,” “to’s,” and “like’s” – they may foretell a passive voice construction. Even “is” may be headed for trouble.

This slides typically gets called out in the class feedback as one of the most helpful.

## Concise sentences

Example:

Our services enabled healthcare practices to transmit electronic claims to insurance carriers, and additionally provide a Biller or an Office Manager with a single Internet address to manage all their claims from one central control panel, similar to online checking, and at that time, the venture received funding from major private equity firms such as Softbank, Chase Partners and Warburg Pincus.

*61 words in one sentence*

Who wants to try saying this in one breath?

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The last one came from a candidate last week. It's one sentence, 61 words long.



## Concise sentences

Revised Example:

Our services enabled healthcare practices to transmit electronic claims to insurance carriers. We provided billers and office managers with a single Internet address to manage all their claims from one central control panel, similar to online checking. The venture received funding from major private equity firms such as Softbank, Chase Partners, and Warburg Pincus.

*54 words broken into three sentences*

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We easily trimmed more than 10% of the words and split this into three sentences, which made it clearer.



## Readability

- How difficult is it to understand a passage in English?
- Two core metrics:
  - Word length
  - Sentence length

9/29/25

Now that we've discussed concision, what is readability?

Essentially, it answers the question how difficult is it to understand a passage.

We use two core metrics.

Word length: The more syllables in a word, the harder it is to understand. One or two syllables per word is ideal.

Sentence length. The more words in a sentence, the harder it is to understand. When you re-read your work, chop sentences of 25 words or more into separate sentences. We covered this point during our discussion of being concise.

## Writing for it.amazon.com – Style

<https://it.amazon.com/en/help/articles/it-portal-style-guide>

- Use numerals (ex: “9,” not “nine”), even at the beginning of sentences.
- Avoid exclamation points.
- Use sentence case. Capitalize the first letter of the first word.
- Insert only one space after a period.
- Keep sentence length to ~20 words.
- Use a tone that is conversational, friendly, direct, and respectful.
- Avoid first person (I). Instead use second or third person (“you” or “we”).
- Use contractions to make the tone informal (there’s, you’ll, isn’t).
- Refer to readers as “you” and “your”.
- The more you write, the less customers read. How much can you cut?
- Use words that your customers use every day.
- Write your text in bullets or smaller paragraphs to make it easier to scan.
- Test instructions to make sure they work.

9/29/25

### What do we mean by Style?

Style is the choice of words, sentence structure, and mechanics that makes writing, writing.

Style is important. It provides consistency. Because you’re all different people, hewing to the standard in the style guide will mean that the content in it.amazon.com will be consistent. For example, no matter the topic, all items that a person can click or tap will appear in bold.

Go through the items.

## Submitting articles for review

- The content doesn't exist on it.amazon.com
- Your article is technically and factually accurate
- Access the SIM quicklink in the template
- Review the submission instructions
- Follow them

9/29/25

In this instance we have curated the articles we would like you to write about. So today, we don't have to ensure that the content we are writing does not already appear on it.amazon.com

Next, make sure that your content is technically accurate. This should be fairly easy for you folks, but we thought we would include it for consistency's sake. We hope that one day, any Amazonian will feel comfortable enough to create content.

Once you've ensured that the content is correct, you will submit it. Let's walk through that now <end presentation>

## Tracking your time

- Very important
- Used to determine performance metrics
- Every minute counts (thinking, writing, editing)
- <https://tt.amazon.com/<REDACTED>>
  - Assigned group
  - Assigned individual
  - Building ID lookup
  - Problem location
  - Requester login
  - Short description/Details/CC list

9/29/25

Tracking your time is very, very important.

It's important because it's one of the factors used when determining your performance metrics.

But what to track? just the writing, the pecking of the keyboard until your article is done? No. 75% of writing, at least it feels this way, is thinking 15% is actually writing, and 10% is editing, so make sure you capture all that...we'll get to the data entry in a bit.

It's easy to forget to track your time, so use whatever method works for you to remember.

The first step to getting credit for the content you have created, is tracking your time. Doing that is pretty straightforward. You're all familiar with TT, correct? Show of hands. Good, good.

Ok, so you will use the quicklink that is here (I've sent it out to you in email as well). You'll fill in the following fields, assign it to yourself.

Once you have worked with the content team and we publish your work on [it.amazon.com](https://it.amazon.com), you can close the TT. This is where you will track your time. First, click the Edit link. Then set the status of the ticket to Resolved. In the Add time spent field, write the number of hours and minutes you spent. Then click the Save button.

We are developing a report to track these tickets and the time you spent.

## We need your expertise

- Operating Systems
  - AV
  - Microsoft Office
  - Databases
  - Telephony
  - Etc.
- 
- Also need SME reviewers (Level II or III)

9/29/25

Think about the types of calls/chats/walk up questions you love. This is fertile ground for you to write about. The best writing advice for fiction authors is write what you know.

The same advice applies here. We don't want you to have to learn something new. We want you to share your hard-earned experience.

As of the end of May, [it.amazon.com](https://it.amazon.com) had x articles covering about x topics.

There is a broad base of great content, but some areas are lacking. For example, X, Y, and Z.

So if you know something about any of the topics listed here that have not been covered, write about it.

We also need a group of Level II and Level III SMEs who can act as a review panel.

## SME roles and responsibilities

- Review content
- Teach others
- Assign topics to your peers/direct reports

9/29/25

Ultimately, the Content team wants to empower the SMEs here today to know how to write well, so they can check the articles of others for technical accuracy and style before sending them to us for a final polish and publication.

We also want people who are interested in teaching others how to use the [it.amazon.com](https://it.amazon.com) template to write new articles that solve the problems of your fellow Amazonians. We've made it through the training, so you can see that it is fairly straightforward.

By teaching others, you enable them to write well. The more people we have writing content, the better [it.amazon.com](https://it.amazon.com) will be. Also, by identifying strong IT support specialists and teaching them how to write, you will be able to improve the content in the knowledge base, when that project begins (though I have no dates to share).

This program is in its infancy, so if you are Tier II or Tier III, you can wield great influence on its final form. Please see me or <REDACTED> during the writing portion of the class to talk more about it.

Thanks so much for your time. Now let's talk about assigning articles.

END

9/29/25