
Creating a glossary

- Create a list of **commonly used terms, abbreviations and acronyms** which are specific to your company/industry or that have an unusual meaning in-house.
 - **Develop the glossary over a few months**, so that a number of employees can add terms and definitions whilst at work.
 - **List terms alphabetically** and include a brief description in the column alongside. The description might include a product's use, size, construction, etc., but the writer should keep this short. Avoid writing 'a [term] is a word that is used to describe...'.
• Beware of cutting and pasting standard definitions from online dictionaries, as these are often long and are rarely as good as an employee's own definition.
 - **Photographs and diagrams** can be particularly helpful. Include web links in the glossary.
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Multilingual glossaries

Multilingual glossaries have descriptions of the terms in foreign languages alongside the English descriptions. A new column is used for each new language or region (see below).

- Consider whether it will be useful to have the descriptions translated as well as the terms, or just the terms. It might be useful to have translated descriptions for activities such as sales training. Other companies may not need this and will be happy with only having the terms translated.
 - Include terms which are likely to be unfamiliar to someone who has studied English for a couple of years (eg that are unlikely to be present in a small dictionary).
 - Glossaries can be **region- or country-specific**, to take account of different vocabulary used in countries which share a language, eg some car parts in the UK and US or the word for computer in Spain (el ordenador) and South America (la computadora). This can be handled by producing separate columns for each region/country or by listing both translations in the same column for that language, eg with (US) and (UK) afterwards.
 - As your company expands into new export markets, new columns can be added for the different regions or countries.
 - **Competitor websites** are often a good source of foreign vocabulary, especially in bilingual countries such as Canada, and multinational companies often have several languages on the same website.
 - **Distributors and agents** are a useful and often free resource for glossary translations, as they usually have good industry/technical knowledge. However, these people are rarely qualified linguists and so their suggestions should be checked.
 - Avoid using **online translations** without having the glossary checked by a native speaker before publication.
 - Translations can be provided by individual translators or agencies. They will probably need to have access to a member of staff to clarify the meaning of some technical terms. You may be able to agree a discount with agencies for regular updates of new glossary terms.
 - Glossaries should be **added to and updated regularly**, by employees and distributors/agents. Your translation provider may help you to use specialist glossary software, or alternatively you could use a table in Microsoft Word or a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel.
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Summary

Glossaries can be particularly helpful for companies that have products or processes which are technical or difficult to explain. Add an international dimension to this and a multilingual glossary can be a useful tool for improving communications with distributors or agents, new employees and potential clients worldwide.