Simple English

(1)   ACTIVE VOICE

Write all procedures and instructions in the active voice. Use it as much as possible in descriptive text.

YES   AutoLedger *creates* the purchase order.
NO   The purchase order *is created* by AutoLedger.

YES   You *must create* the purchase order.   NOTE   See (5) SHOULD and (6) OUGHT TO
NO   The purchase order *must be created*.   overpage.

YES   You *can (cannot) create* the purchase order.
NO   The purchase order *can (cannot) be created*.

YES   You *may create* the purchase order.
NO   The purchase order *may be created*.

(2)   PERSON

Use the second person singular "you" to refer to the reader. Use the third person singular "it" or plural "they" to refer to hardware and software. Use the first person plural "we" to refer to your company.

YES   Parola *support* AutoLedger.
NO   Parola *supports* AutoLedger.

(3)   FORMS OF THE VERB

Use only the following forms of the verb. Do not use any compound tenses in the positive. Use only the present and past compound tense with the verb "to do" in the negative and interrogative (question form).

(a)   The infinitive.

   YES   to calculate

(b)   The imperative (command form).

   YES   calculate, do not calculate

(c)   The simple present tense, and the interrogative & negative compound present tense with "do" & "does".

   YES   you calculate, it calculates, we calculate
            do you calculate, does it calculate, do we calculate
            you do not calculate, it does not calculate, we do not calculate

   NO   you are calculating, you do calculate

(d)   The simple past tense, and the interrogative and negative compound past tense with "did".

   YES   you calculated, it calculated, we calculated
            did you calculate, did it calculate, did we calculate
            you did not calculate, it did not calculate, we did not calculate

   NO   you were calculating, you did calculate, you used to calculate
            you have/had calculated, you have/had been calculating

(e)   The future tense.

   YES   you will calculate, it will calculate, we will calculate
            will you calculate, will it calculate, will we calculate
            you will not calculate, it will not calculate, we will not calculate

   NO   you will be calculating, you are going to calculate
            you will have calculated, you will have been calculating

(4) CONTRACTIONS	**(5) SHOULD**	**(6) OUGHT TO**
YES Do not, cannot	Do not use "SHOULD".	Do not use "OUGHT TO".
NO Don't, can't	Use "MUST" or "IF" instead.	Use "MUST" instead.

(7) IMPERATIVE (COMMAND FORM)

In an instruction, write the verb in the imperative. Other, less direct forms of the verb leave confusion as to whether something: must be done; is already done; must be done in the future by someone else.

YES *Make* a backup copy of the database table.
NO You *should make* a backup copy of the database table.
Parola *recommend* that you *make* a backup copy of the database table.

(8) PRESENT PARTICIPLE and PAST PARTICIPLE

Do not use the present participle. Some words that end with "–ing" are nouns, adjectives or prepositions.
[See also (3) FORMS OF THE VERB – (c) Present Tense, (d) Past Tense, and (e) Future Tense.]

YES After you *check* that the backup is identical to the original, store the tape in a secure location.
NO After *checking* that the backup is identical to the original, store the tape in a secure location.

YES The *meeting* starts on Monday morning. Each section has a *heading*.

Only use the past participle as an adjective, either with a noun or after the verbs TO BE and TO BECOME.
[See (1) ACTIVE VOICE.] Do not use the verb "to have" to form a compound tense with the past participle.

YES Restore the *deleted* files. The files *are deleted*.
NO If you *have deleted* the files, restore them.

(9) STRONG VERBS

Use a strong verb, instead of a weak verb with a noun.

YES Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy *authorise (approve)* the purchase of all books.
NO Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy *give authorisation (approval)* for the purchase of all books.

YES Parola *support* AutoLedger.
NO Parola *provide support* for AutoLedger.

Use a strong verb, instead of a weak verb with an infinitive.

YES The worksheet *calculates* the total from these values.
NO The worksheet *uses* these values *to calculate* the total.

(10) SENTENCES

(1) The maximum length of a descriptive sentence is 25 words.
(2) The maximum length of a procedural sentence is 20 words.
(3) Write only one instruction per sentence.
(4) Write more than one instruction per sentence only when more than one action is done at the same time.

(11) Use of the conjunction THAT

In English, you can use the word THAT to introduce subordinate clauses after verbs such as "make sure", "recommend", and "show". Although English grammar allows the omission of "that", the word helps readers to locate the beginning of a subordinate clause. Inclusion of this conjunction also helps translation and Natural Language Processing (NLP), because the equivalent word cannot be omitted in many foreign languages.

YES Make sure *that* the backup copy is identical to the original database table.