GRAFANACONLINE 2020

Community and Documentation

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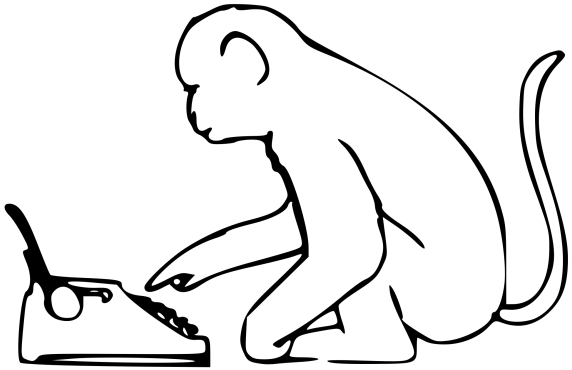
Documentarian, Technical Writer

About me



- Technical writer for over ten years
- Mainly focused on software documentation
- Joined Grafana Labs in November 2019
- Currently the lone technical writer at Grafana Labs

Today's talk

- Most content applies to general documentation, OSS
- Most examples use Grafana repo
- Why docs matter to community
- Why community matters to docs
- Slides will be available after the presentation

Why docs matter

When docs are good

Good documentation is basically invisible.

You have a question, you find an answer, and then you immediately forget the entire process.

Good docs break down barriers, empower users to help themselves.

Search...

- Getting started
- Installation
- Administration
- Manage users
- Data sources
- Panels
- Dashboards
- Explore
- Alerting
- Image rendering
- Linking
  - Overview

Dashboard links

Grafana v7.0 (latest)

Edit this page
Request doc changes
Get Support
Community

On this page:

Add links to dashboards
Add a URL link to a dashboard
Update a dashboard link
Delete a dashboard link

When you create a dashboard link, you can include the time range and current template variables to directly jump to the same context in another dashboard. This way, you don't have to worry whether the person you send the link to is looking at the right data. For more information about specifying links, refer to URL variables.

Dashboard links can also be used as shortcuts to external systems, such as submitting a GitHub issue with the current dashboard name.

To see an example of dashboard links in action, check out this demo.

Once you've added a dashboard link, it appears in the upper right corner of your dashboard.

Add links to dashboards

Add links to other dashboards at the top of your current dashboard.

1. While viewing the dashboard you want to link, click the gear at the top of the screen to open **Dashboard settings**.

Get Product Updates and News

Email*

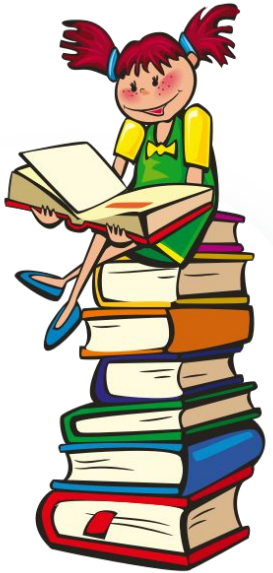
When docs are good

According to Google Open Source blog, good documentation:

- Helps to create inclusive communities
- Makes for a better software product

When docs are good

- Promotes product adoption
- Reduces the user's learning curve



When docs are good

- Improves the user interface
- Reduces cost of ownership
- Makes users happy

When docs are bad

Bad documentation is memorable.

You know what I’m talking about.

Everyone has a bad docs story.

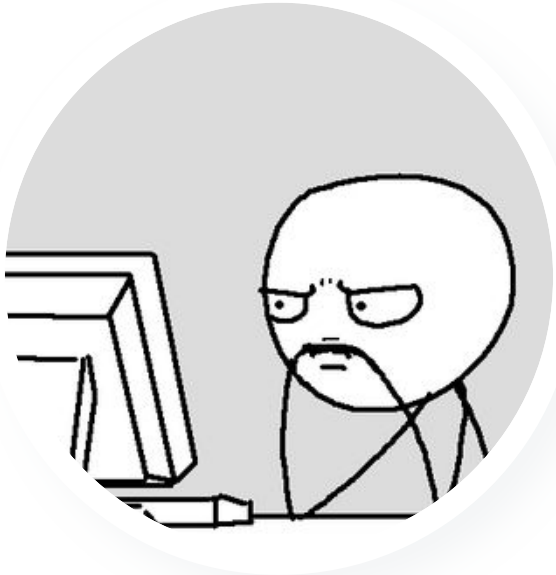
When docs are bad

According to Google Open Source blog, bad documentation can:

- Waste time
- Cause errors and destroy data

When docs are bad

- Turn away customers/users
- Increase support costs
- Shorten a product’s life span



The ideal state

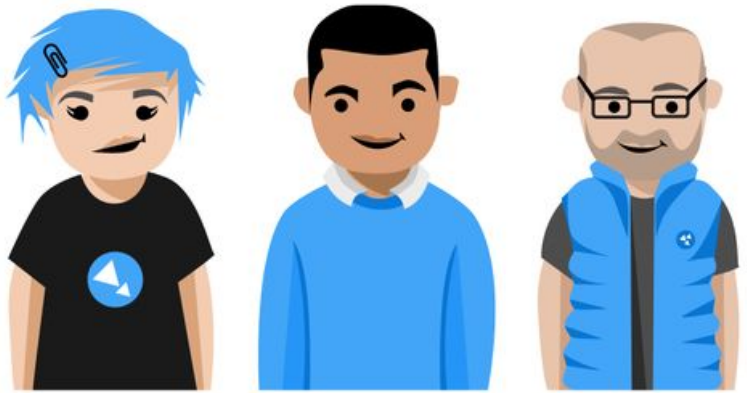
- Docs answer user questions before they are asked.
- Docs set the context and help shape how software is understood and used.
- Docs should reflect common use cases, provide examples, code snippets, and so on.

...how do we get there?

Who writes the docs?

Developers and engineers write docs

Developers and engineers write docs, most of the time. They tend to be great at writing code, less great at writing instructions for beginners.



Writers write the docs

Technical writers, if you're lucky.

The writer is an expert at writing, not necessarily at the technology they're writing about.

Better if both write docs

- The best documentation is written by several people
- Bare minimum is a writer, an editor, and a SME (subject matter expert)

Ideal doc writing team

According to an Opensource.com article, the ideal writing team needs:

- A **developer** with a deep understanding of the software being described
- A **software user** who can explain the application within the context of the application's domain
- An **educator** who understands the principles of learning
- An **information architect** who understands how to structure material
- A **writer** who writes clearly and concisely with good grammar
- Someone who speaks **English as a first language** (for English docs)
- A **translator** who is good at translating docs into multiple languages
- A **DevOps person** who can set up doc-build pipelines
- A **community builder, facilitator, and coordinator** who can inspire collective action, capture offers of help, and help all these different personas collaborate

Here's what I can do

- An educator who understands the principles of learning
- An information architect who understands how to structure material
- A writer who writes clearly and concisely with good grammar
- Someone who speaks English as a first language
- A community builder, facilitator, and coordinator who can inspire collective action, capture offers of help, and help all these different personas collaborate

What I can’t do, but maybe you can

- A developer with a deep understanding of the software being described
- A software user who can explain the application within the context of the application's domain

Community and docs

Where does community come in?

The great thing about open source is that our docs are your docs.

Help us help you.

Become a better documentarian

Upgrade your writing skills!

- Google Tech Writing course
- Microsoft Style Guide
- Read the project style guides

Don’t fix it because you should
Fix it because you might be
the only one who can!

How to help - contribute in small ways

If something simple is wrong, fix it with a PR.

- Fix typos.
- Correct grammar errors.
- No fix is too small!

How to help - contribute in larger ways

If something is wrong or missing, file an issue or submit a PR.

- Point out documentation gaps.
- Suggest examples or use cases.
- Add documentation: new topics or sections.

Install on Debian or Ubuntu

Grafana v7.0 (latest)

› Installation › Install on Ubuntu/Debian

This page explains how to install Grafana dependencies, download and install Grafana, get the service up and running on your Debian or Ubuntu system, and the installation package details.

Edit this page
Request doc changes
Get Support
Community

How to help - contribute!

If you have a question that’s not answered by the documentation, consider adding to help out the next person who asks.

Contributor resources - Grafana

- CONTRIBUTING.MD
- The contribute folder in grafana/grafana
- Contributing to documentation guide
- Grafana documentation style guide
- #docs channel in Grafana Labs public Slack
- grafana/grafana/docs folder README.md

Branch: master ▾ grafana / contribute /

Create new file | Upload files | Find file | History

jsoref Docs: Fix table of contents link (#24339) ✕ Latest commit 91a83b7 16 days ago

..		
architecture	Fix typos in the communication documentation (#21774)	4 months ago
style-guides	Docs: Fix table of contents link (#24339)	16 days ago
templates	Docs: Update README.md (#23660)	last month
README.md	Docs: Clean up contribute docs (#19716)	7 months ago
create-pull-request.md	Docs: Clean up contribute docs (#19716)	7 months ago
developer-guide.md	End2end: Make it possible to run e2e tests with BASE_URL (#24041)	19 days ago
documentation.md	Docs: Clean up contribute docs (#19716)	7 months ago
triage-issues.md	Docs: Clean up contribute docs (#19716)	7 months ago

Conclusion

Join us now for live Q&A

- The YouTube portion of this presentation has concluded.
- To join the live chat Q&A with the speakers and the Grafana Labs team, please head over to **slack.grafana.com** and join **#grafanaconline** channel now.