

The Five “C’s” of Quality Specifications

1. Be Clear

- Organize the discussion logically
- Get to the point and stick to the point
- Phrase things in the positive
- Use plain words rather than fancy ones
- Avoid euphemisms
- Test to see if each “point” is clear and complete enough to stand alone

2. Be Concise

- Keep the specification simple
- Use bullet points
- Use words that you use everyday
- Use specific words rather than general ones
- Avoid redundancy

3. Be Concrete

- Use examples and scenarios
- Avoid jargon and clichés
- Have clearly defined causes
- Have clearly defined outcomes
- Avoid confusing compound statements
- Avoid negative statements

4. Be Complete

- Be sufficiently descriptive for the level of requirements and objectives of the project
- Use your checklists and validation techniques
- Document all possible, conditions and responses (branches) e.g., what if expected result doesn’t happen?
- Support verbs such as ‘calculate’, ‘update’, or ‘modify’ with required detail. e.g., the formula, what data is updated, etc.
- Check for operations without defined events
- Check for operations without all outcomes defined
- Specify all required data elements e.g., data definitions, rules, etc.

5. Be Consistent

- Use the same terms for synonyms like client and customer, sales rep or sales person, vendor or supplier throughout the document
- Use the same fonts and styles throughout the document