The Ten (0x10) Commandments for Documentation Standards: Code and Comments

1. The *sine qua non* for good program documentation is that it makes the code easy to follow and understand.

2. Comments must exist.

3. Comments should describe *what* the code does, not *how* it does it.

4. Comments must be clear, concise, correct and complete.

5. Just as a well-written essay consists of sequence of paragraphs each developing a single point or idea, a well-designed program consists of a sequence of logic blocks of code each performing some well-defined task. Preceding each should be a comment line describing what that logic block does.

6. Comments should stand out from the code

7. Law of Proximity: statements that contribute to some common function should be located close to each other. The ordering of the statements should be natural, following the inner logic of the logic block.

8. Form follows function.

9. Effective use should be made of vertical (blanks lines) and horizontal (indentation) spacing both of code and of comments.

   A. If you are indenting too heavily you may need to consolidate that code into a function and call the function.

   B. There should be no wrap around lines or comment; no line in the program may be greater than 80 characters. Be aware that tab settings differ among text editors.

   C. Spelling errors are unacceptable.

   D. Any documentation style adopted should be consistently applied throughout the document.

   E. Use meaningful identifiers.

   F. Do not comment the obvious

10. Comments are like seasoning; used sparingly and well they will enhance the document.