

OMNICHANNELX

ONLINE JUNE 13-16, 2022

Workshop

Improving usability with an omnichannel-ready writing methodology



Sophie Gravel

Speaker

Precision Content
Learning consultant



About me

Sophie Gravel

- Learning consultant and Trainer at Precision Content®
- Key responsibilities:

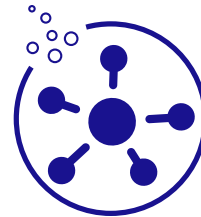
- Writer training
- Training development
- Evolving our content standard



In partnership with:



About Precision Content



Information Architecture

Content Strategy



Content Transformation

Writer Training



Publishing Technologies

DITAinPrint
GET THE WORD OUT

Purpose of this session

Learn some fundamental techniques to re-structure content.

Work through application exercises to apply these techniques.

At the end of this session, you will be able to restructure your content according to the basic principles of the Precision Content® methodology.



Agenda

- A mini-introduction to microcontent
- The five fundamentals of Precision Content® Writing
- Key writing methods
- Application exercise: Applying the methodology

A mini-introduction to *microcontent*



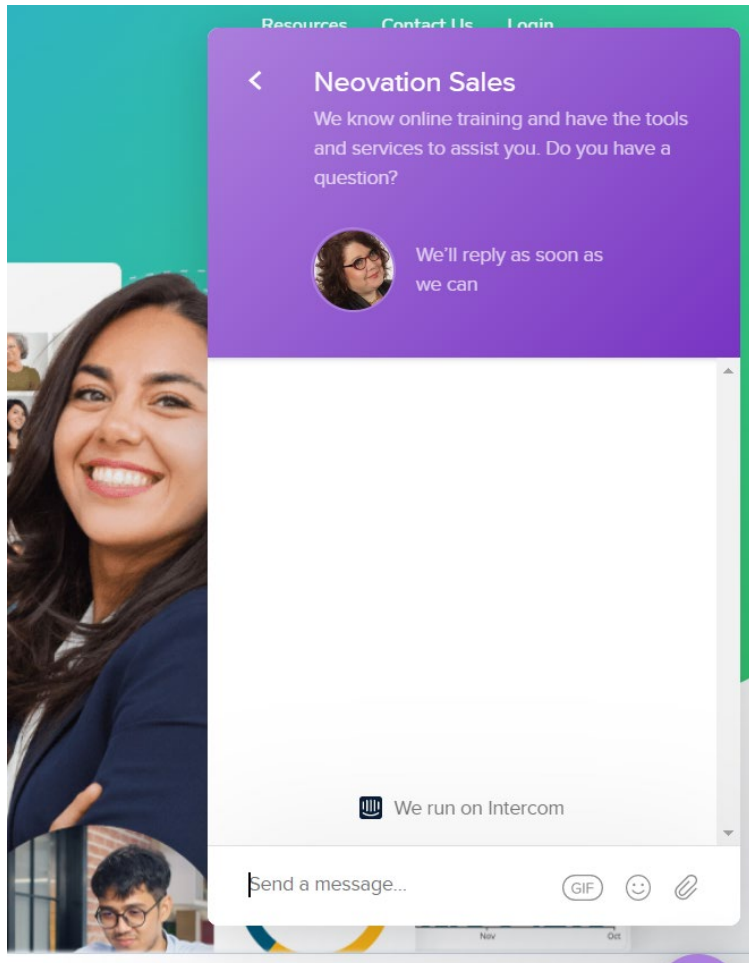
Microcontent

Microcontent is content that is

- about **one primary idea**, fact, or concept
- easily **scannable**
- **labelled** for clear identification and meaning
- appropriately **written and formatted for use** anywhere and any time it is needed, and
- It's awesome!

Microcontent is the **starting point** for effective omnichannel delivery.

It's not microcontent just because it's small.



Hey Siri

Google

how to change a tire



All

Videos

Images

Shopping

News

More

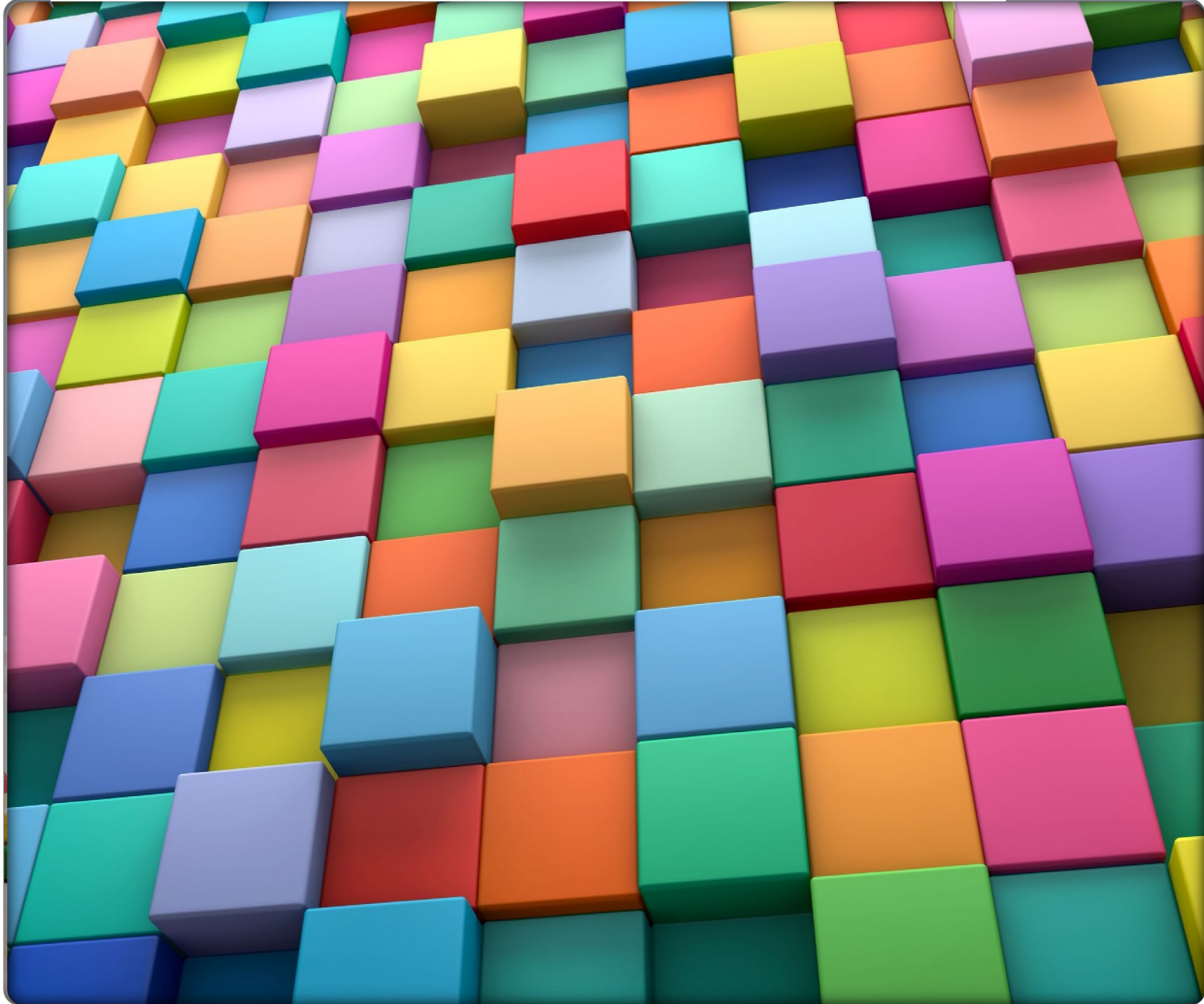
Tools

About 2,540,000,000 results (0.61 seconds)

Stuck with a flat tire? here's How to Change a Tire in 10 steps

1. Find a Safe Place to Pull Over. ...
2. Check for Materials. ...
3. Loosen the Lug Nuts. ...
4. Lift Your Vehicle Off the Ground. ...
5. Remove the Lug Nuts and the Tire. ...
6. Place the Spare Tire on the Car. ...
7. Replace the Lug Nuts. ...
8. Lower Your Vehicle and Begin Tightening.

[More items...](#) • Sept 22, 2017



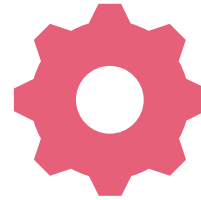
**Building
blocks of
information**

Principles of Intelligent Microcontent



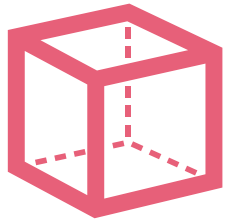
Focus

Microcontent must be
about only one subject



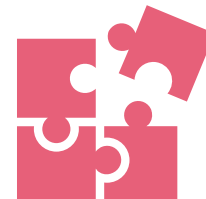
Function

Microcontent must be
categorized to identify user
intent



Structure

Microcontent must use
predictable patterns and
language



Context

Microcontent must be
easily relatable to other
content



Precision Content® Writing Part 1: Fundamentals

Fundamentals

A science-based
approach to structuring
content





A unified content standard is a series of rules and instructions for writing content that is applied across the entire organization.

These rules

- govern the source content, and
- specify the grammar, writing structures, and organization of the source content.

The unified content standard facilitates information sharing and updating across the organization.

One Unified Content Standard



Content appealing to

emotion

- To emotionally engage the reader
- Techniques:
 - narrative style
 - varied vocabulary and sentence structure
 - withholding information
- Writer-driven
- Meant to be READ

logic

- To convey information that readers use
- Techniques:
 - consistent modular structure
 - concise, direct vocabulary
 - use of graphics
- Reader-driven
- Meant to be USED

Two Approaches to content creation

Feed the brain what it needs, when it needs it.



Emotion vs Logic: which is which?

Write a story for your 5 year old.

Emotion

Send an email to persuade your boss to give you a raise.

Emotion

Compare features of a new app with an existing app.

Logic

Present your scientific findings to a pharmaceutical company.

Logic

List the scores from the weekend's soccer games.

Logic

Describe the highlights of a soccer game.

Emotion



Identify your
audience



Identify the **purpose** of
the information



Identify the **intended
user response** of the
information

Three Guiding principles

Use the Three Guiding Principles

Plan a deliverable

Determine the use of specific content

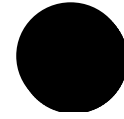
Determine how to write and structure specific content

Determine metadata



Four Organizing functions

Experiment #1: Memorization



How many words can you memorize in 20 seconds?

hockey bear **baseball** Holland *coyote*

cricket wolverine wrestling Switzerland

Germany lynx WOLF COUGAR France polo

Sweden Spain golf fox NORWAY hurdles



Experiment #1: Memorization

HOW many words can you memorize in 20 seconds?

How many did you remember?

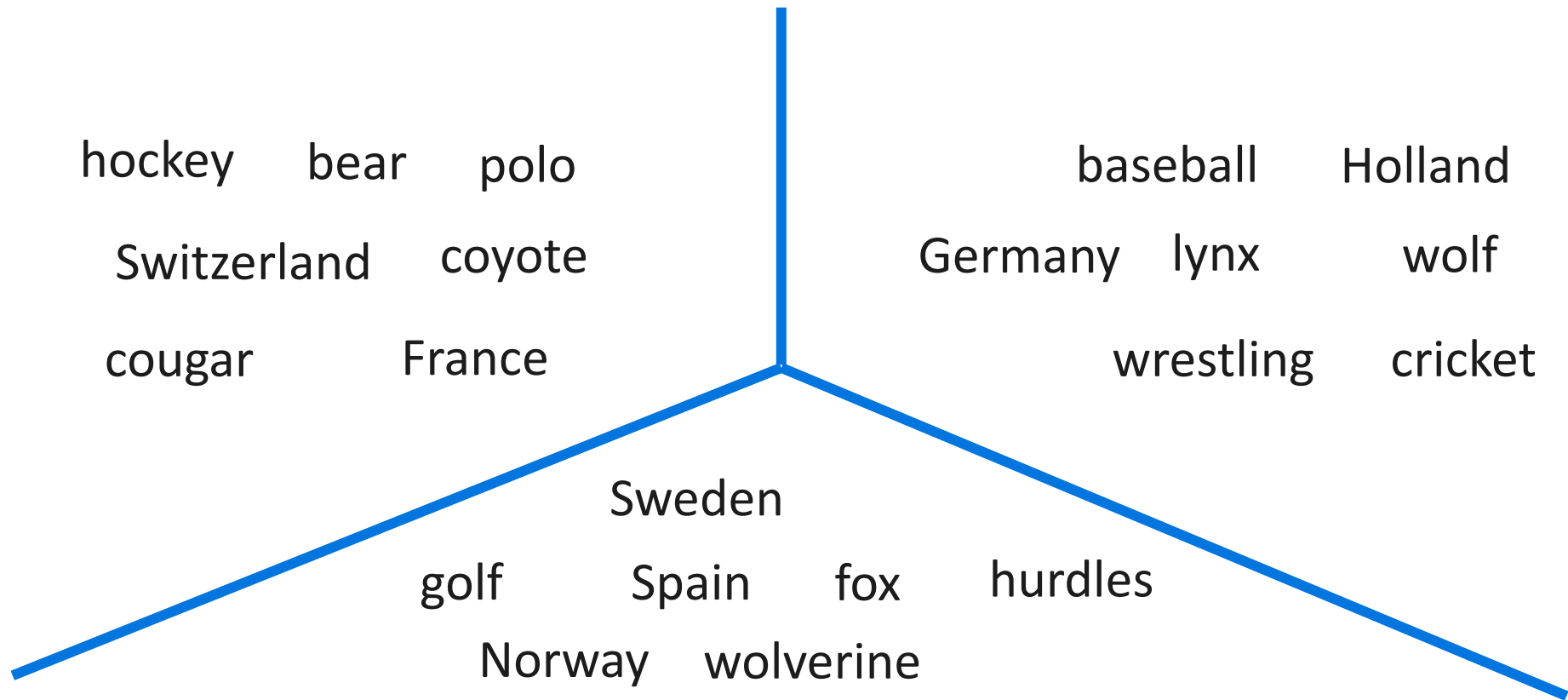
Organizing function: Consistency

1. Filter out the noise

hockey bear baseball Holland
Switzerland Germany lynx wolf
coyote cricket wolverine wrestling
cougar France polo Sweden
Spain golf fox Norway hurdles

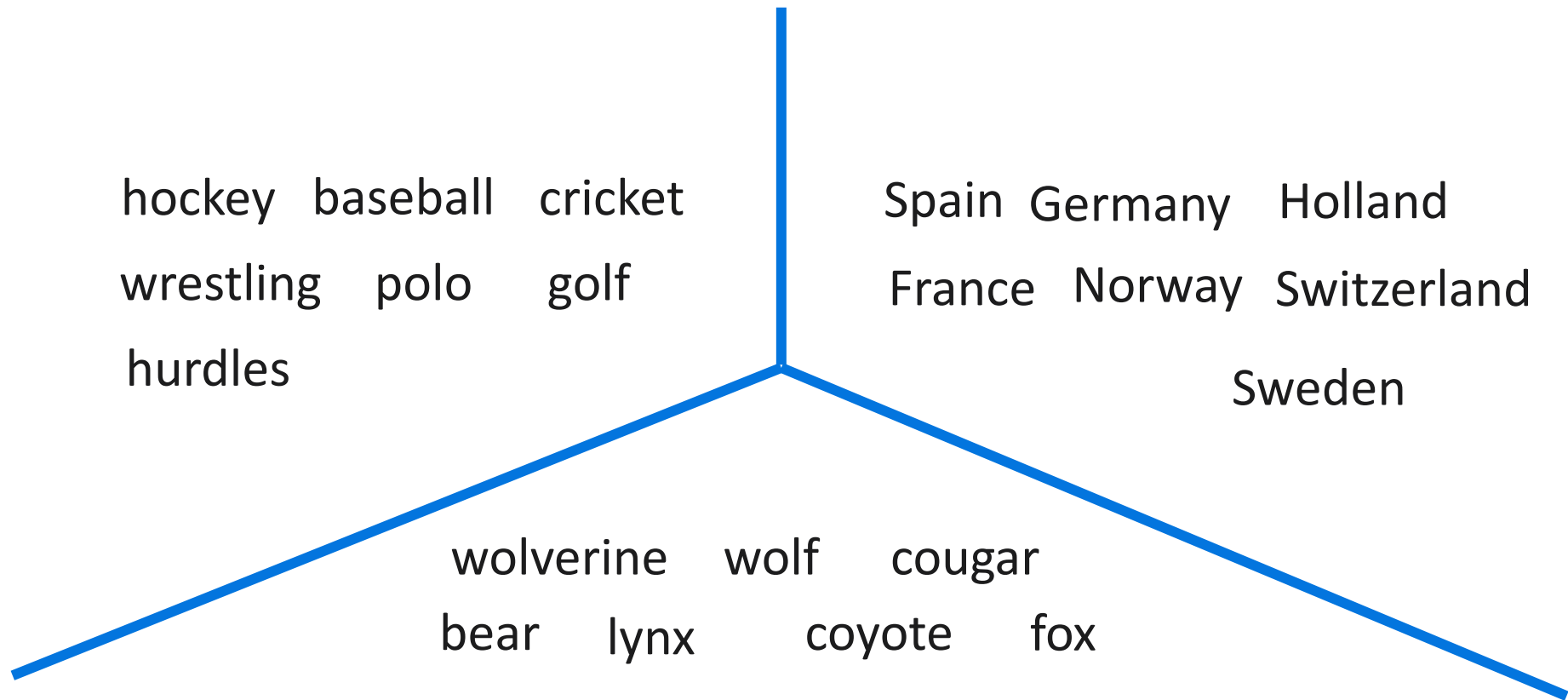
Organizing function: Chunking

2. Break into smaller groupings



Organizing function: Relevance

3. Organize words by similarities



Organizing function: Titling

4. Classify and title the groups

Sports

hockey baseball cricket
wrestling polo golf
hurdles

Countries

Spain Germany Holland
France Norway Switzerland
Sweden

Animals

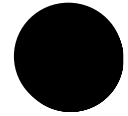
wolverine wolf cougar
bear lynx coyote fox

The result

How well did you do?

Sports	Countries	Animals
hockey	Holland	bear
baseball	Switzerland	coyote
cricket	Germany	cougar
wrestling	France	lynx
polo	Sweden	wolverine
golf	Spain	fox
hurdles	Norway	wolf

Experiment #2: Let's try this again



Now how many words can you memorize in 20 seconds?

Cities	Trees	Farm animals
London	Oak	Cow
Paris	Maple	Pig
New York	Ash	Sheep
Tokyo	Birch	Horse
Sydney	Pine	Chicken
Cairo	Spruce	Goat
Buenos Aires	Cedar	Duck



Experiment #2: Memorization

How many words can you memorize in 20 seconds?

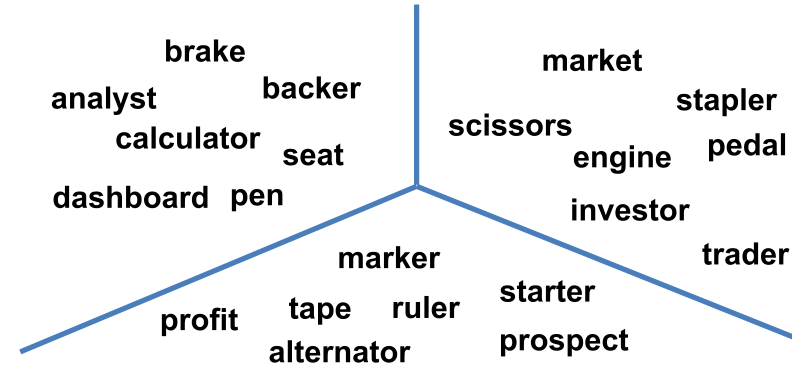
How many did you remember?

The Four Organizing functions

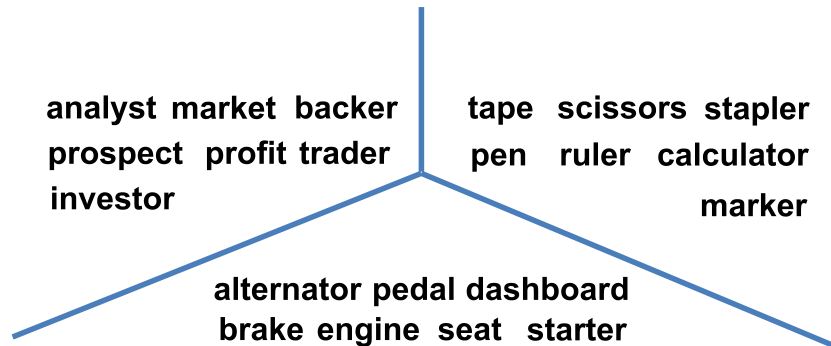
1. Consistency



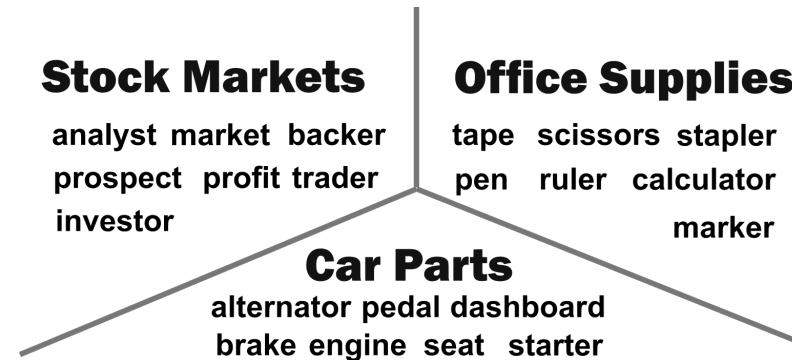
2. Chunking



3. Relevance



4. Titling



Applying the four Organizing functions



Chunking

Create bite-sized pieces. Up to 7
+/- 2

- items in a list
- rows in a table
- blocks in a topic, or
- topics in a map.



Titling

Name everything.

- Name every block.
- Name every map.
- Name every table column.



Relevance

Group similar items.

- Separate relevance? Separate block.
- Irrelevant? Delete it.



Consistency

Use similar terms and structures.

- Pick a term and stick with it.
- Use the same sequence of blocks.
- Use consistent styles.



Apply the four Organizing functions

Chunking

Chunking is an organizing function that requires a writer to break content into small, digestible pieces of information, or chunks, for improved reader comprehension. Chunking creates easily digestible pieces of content to solve the information overload problem for users. Always split content into small, focused chunks that adhere to the recommended limits. Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2). Avoid breaking content into more than nine items. When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

Chunking

Chunking is an organizing function that requires a writer to break content into small, digestible pieces of information, or chunks, for improved reader comprehension.

Purpose of chunking

Chunking creates easily digestible pieces of content to solve the information overload problem for users.

Chunking rule

Always split content into small, focused chunks that adhere to the recommended limits.

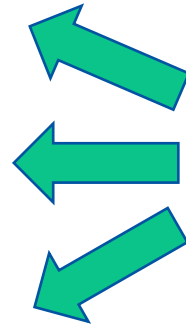
Chunking limits

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2). Avoid breaking content into more than nine items. When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

What questions are we asking?

Chunking

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What is chunking?

What is the purpose of chunking?

What are the chunking rules?

What are the chunking limits?

What questions are we asking?

What is chunking? 

Chunking

Chunking is an organizing function that requires a writer to break content into small, digestible pieces of information, or chunks, for improved reader comprehension.

What is the purpose of chunking? 

Purpose of chunking

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Always split content into small, focused chunks that adhere to the recommended limits.

What are the chunking limits? 

Chunking limits

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2). Avoid breaking content into more than nine items. When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

Apply the Organizing functions

Application exercise

1. Chunk the content by **relevance**
2. Add a **title** to each chunk
3. Apply **consistency**

Information typing is a classification system for content, based on the function of the content.



Five Information types



Precision Content Information types



Reference

STATES something the reader needs to **KNOW**



Process

ILLUSTRATES to the reader **HOW SOMETHING WORKS** and **WHAT HAPPENS**



Principle

ADVISES the reader about what they need **TO DO** or **NOT DO**, and **WHEN**



Task

INSTRUCTS the reader **HOW TO DO** something



Concept

EXPLAINS something the reader needs to **UNDERSTAND**

Information Type examples



If the goal of the information is to ...

- list the nutritional facts for Cherry Cola
- explain what a soft drink is
- warn you not to drop a Mentos in your cola bottle
- illustrate how cola is bottled
- instruct you on how to safely open your can of cola
- advise you on the best practices for recycling cans
- tell the customer this week's sale price for cola
- show you how you can turn your cola can into a nifty craft project

Then use the
information type

...Reference

Concept

Principle

Process

Task

Principle

Reference

Task

Our questions

Reference: STATES something the reader needs to **KNOW**

Principle: ADVISES the reader about what they need **TO DO** or **NOT DO**, and **WHEN**

Concept: EXPLAINS something the reader needs to **UNDERSTAND**

Process: ILLUSTRATES to the reader **HOW SOMETHING WORKS** and **WHAT HAPPENS**

Task: INSTRUCTS the reader **HOW TO DO** something

What does (something) mean?

What do I do next?

How do I do (something)?

What happens?

How does (something) work?

What should or must I do or not do?

What does (something) look like?

What are its parts?

What are the facts?

Reference

Concept

Principle

Process

Task





Apply the Information types

Application exercise

Identify the [information type](#).



- Title standards
- General Writing Rules
- Characters and punctuation
- Plain Language
- Writing structures for information types

Precision Content® Writing Part 2: Methods

Effective titles for blocks and topics

Information type	Title	Example
Reference	What is it about, and what about what it's about?	"Consolidated core mainframe release schedules"
Concept	The term being defined in plural form when possible	"SSRI inhibitors"
Principle	Conveys the weight of the principle such as caution or guide. Formula = principle + gravity	"Data security regulations"
Process	Activity described in gerund form ("...ing") OR How [the items] work	"Hiring employees" OR "How drug testing works"
Task	Command, 2 nd person active-voice	"Change a cardholder address"

Apply the title standard

Application exercise

For each chunk, write an [effective title](#).
Ensure it adheres to the standard for that
information type.

Information types in a topic

Concept

Chunking

Definition

Chunking is an organizing function that requires a writer to break content into small, digestible pieces of information, or chunks, for improved reader comprehension.

Reference

Purpose of chunking

Chunking creates easily digestible pieces of content to solve the information overload problem for users.

Principle

Chunking rule

Always split content into small, focused chunks that adhere to the recommended limits.

Principle

Chunking limits

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2).

- Avoid breaking content into more than nine items.
- When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

Information types inform writing style

Structure of
titles

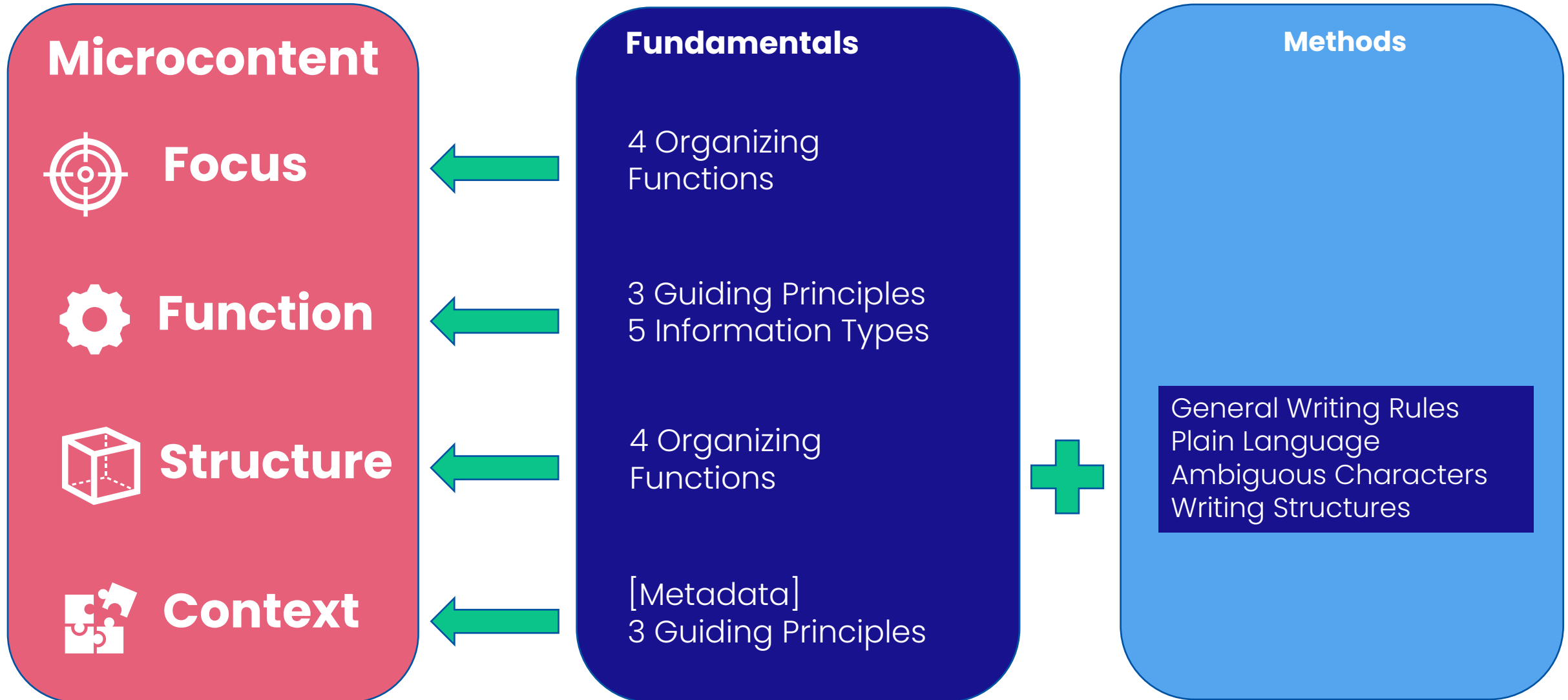
Block and
topic
construction

Writing style
for voice and
tense

Specific
writing
structures

Rules for short
descriptions

How the Principles of Intelligent Microcontent relate to the Precision Content Fundamentals



General writing rules

// The fundamental purpose of scientific discourse is not the mere presentation of information and thought but rather its **actual communication**

It does not matter how pleased an author might be to have converted all the right data into sentences and paragraphs;

it matters only whether **a large majority** of the reading audience **accurately perceives what the author had in mind.** //

George Gopen and Judith Swan

The Science of Scientific Writing



Write sentences to describe **one main point** including

- one main agent
- one main action, and
- one main outcome.

Write sentences using the **appropriate perspective**.

Place the verb after the subject with **as few intervening words as possible**.

Place the main idea **at the end** the sentence or phrase, in the **stress position**.

Present multiple stress positions as an **unordered list**.

Constructing sentences

Agency and perspective

An **agent** is the **person initiating** the action.

The **perspective** is the **point of view** of the sentence.

In the sentence

“Peter sent Jane an invitation in the mail.”

Peter is the agent. We also read this action from his perspective

Is this also the case in the sentence

“Jane received an invitation in the mail from Peter.” ?

What about *“The invitation reached Jane by mail.”* ?

Stress position examples

Place the main idea **at the end** the sentence or phrase, in the **stress position**.

Place the main idea at the **end the sentence or phrase**.

OR

At the end the sentence or phrase, **place the main idea**.

An agent is the person **initiating the action**.

OR

The person initiating the action is an **agent**.

Microcontent is the starting point for **effective omnichannel delivery**.

OR

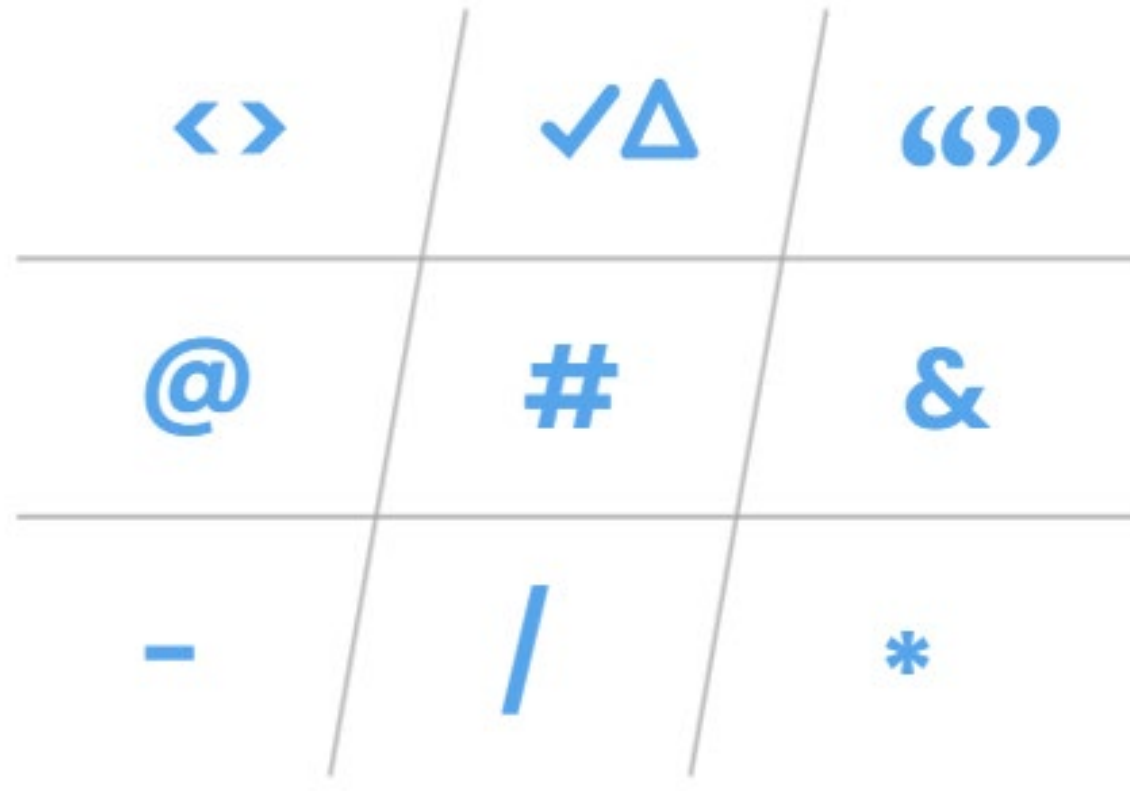
The starting point for effective omnichannel delivery is **microcontent**.

Characters and punctuation



Ambiguous characters

Avoid ambiguous characters.



Replace these characters with their **equivalent words**.

Use Parentheses appropriately

Reserve parentheses for “also known as” explanations, such as

- spelling out abbreviations or acronyms, and
- providing common or commercial names.

Where parenthetical content adds a new idea to a sentence, **separate the idea** into its own sentence.

Where parenthetical content simply restates or reinforces a point, **evaluate the content for redundancy**.

Use of commas

Always use the **Oxford Comma** with serial sentences

For example, "We ate apples, grapes, and pears."

Do not end list items with commas.

Rewrite your sentence without a comma when it makes sense to do so.

**I like
cooking my family
and my pets.**

**Use commas.
Don't be a psycho.**

Plain language fundamentals



Plain language

Plain language is content designed for your intended audience to

- quickly **find and understand** what they need, and
- **use** what they find.

Plain language principles

Key principles of plain language include:

- Writing must be easy to read, understand, and use.
- Writing must be clear, correct, concise, and complete.

Plain language test

If the audience can find, understand, and use content easily and correctly, then the content is plain language.

Plain language parts

Appropriate structure	Effective sentences	Effective words
<p>Provide useful titles follow the titling principle</p> <p>Write in short sections and sentences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use blocks, and • avoid long sentences. 	<p>Direct your writing to the user, based on their needs</p> <p>“you [must]”, rather than “all employees [must]”</p> <p>Use active voice, and the simplest tense possible</p> <p>“the child climbs the tree” rather than “the tree is climbed by the child”</p> <p>Use simple present tense wherever possible</p> <p>“completes”, rather than “is completing” or “will complete”</p> <p>Use lists and tables follow the best practices of lists and tables</p>	<p>Use clear, familiar words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “requires”, rather than “necessitates” • “must”, rather than “shall” <p>Avoid excess words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “before”, rather than “in advance of” • “to”, rather than “in order to” • “this is critical”, rather than “this is really critical” • “give notice”, rather than “give advance notice”

Apply the general writing rules

Application exercise

Do the following tasks to the Application exercise:

- apply the **general writing rules**
- apply **plain language**, and
- remove the **ambiguous characters**.

Core writing structures

Paragraph 



List 

Table 

Visuals 

Lists

Unordered list	Ordered list	Item-description list
<p>All cakes require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• flour• butter, and• a liquid such as milk or water. <p>Inline list All cakes require (a) flour, (b) butter, and (c) a liquid such as milk or water.</p>	<p>These are the most common drinks ordered in our restaurants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Coffee2. Tea3. Juice4. Carbonated water	<p>Each month has an associated birth stone.</p> <p>January – Garnet February – Amethyst March – Aquamarine April – Diamond May – Emerald</p>

List best practices

- Stem sentences
- Four-or-more rule
- Easy to read
- Parallel construction

Stem sentences

A stem sentence is a lead-in phrase or sentence used to introduce any list, table, or figure.

The punctuation of the stem sentence varies, depending on its structure and what it introduces.

Stem sentence punctuation for unordered lists

If the stem sentence ...	Then ...
forms a complete sentence	use a colon.
is a sentence fragment	use no punctuation.
introduces a list of standalone sentences	use a colon.

Four-or-more rule for lists

Always use a list when

- there are **four or more list items**, or
- at least one list item has **four or more words**.



Application of the four-or-more rule

The team included a writer and a SME. ✓

The team included a new writer and an experienced SME. ✓

~~The team included a new writer and a witty, engaging facilitator.~~ ✗

The team included

- a new writer, and
- a witty, engaging facilitator.

~~The team included a new writer, an experienced SME, an editor, and an enthusiastic sponsor.~~ ✗

The team included

- a new writer
- an experienced SME
- an editor, and
- an enthusiastic sponsor.

Parallel construction

Parallel construction is a writing technique in which similar clauses or sentences use the same grammatical structure.

To test for parallel construction in an unordered list, read the stem sentence with each list item separately.

The sales department has

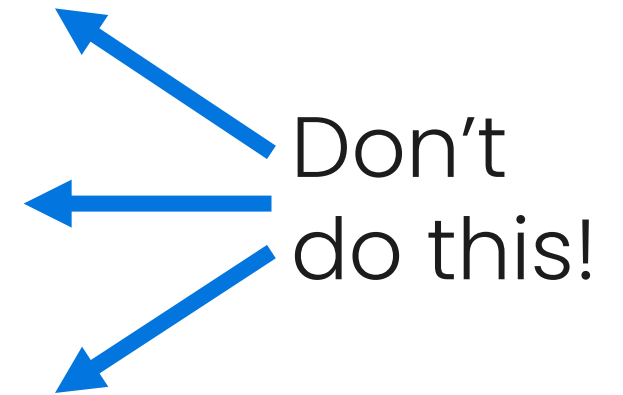
- 25 Sales reps
- 12 Junior sales reps
- manages a \$2.3 million annual budget, and
- hires 4 to 5 interns per year.

The sales department ~~has~~

- **has** 25 Sales reps
- **has** 12 Junior sales reps
- manages a \$2.3 million annual budget, and
- hires 4 to 5 interns per year.

Lists must be easy to read

- The mean percentage of Type I PNH RBCs was 33.198% in the Drug A group at baseline and this reduced to 6.114% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -28.159% . In the Drug B group, the mean of Type I PNH RBCs was 28.040% at baseline and this increased to 37.466% at Week 16, a mean CFB of 8.701%.
- The mean percentage of Type II PNH RBCs was 20.219% in the Drug A group at baseline and this reduced to 2.518% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -15.086% . In the Drug B group, the mean percentage of Type II PNH RBCs was 22.654% at baseline and this reduced to 16.511% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -6.194% .
- The mean percentage of Type III PNH RBCs was 46.581% in the Drug A group at baseline and this increased to 91.337% at Week 16, a mean CFB of 42.738%. In the Drug B group, the mean percentage of Type III PNH RBCs was 50.276% at baseline and this reduced to 46.044% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -3.509% .
- In both treatment groups, changes from baseline in the proportion of PNH granulocytes and monocytes were minimal. In the Drug A group, the CFB ranged from 0.53% to 1.53% between Week 2 and Week 16. In the Drug B group, the CFB ranged from -0.062% to 5.00% from Week 2 to Week 16.



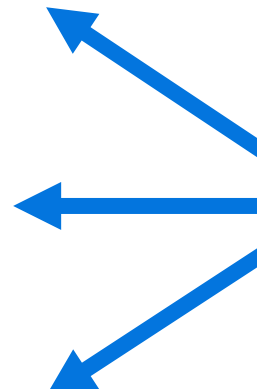
Don't
do this!

Tables

Generic rules for tables

Tables must be easy to read

Measure	Details
Type I PNH RBCs	The mean percentage of Type I PNH RBCs was 34.198% in the Drug A group at baseline and this reduced to 6.114% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -28.084%. In the Drug B group, the mean of Type I PNH RBCs was 24.040% at baseline and this increased to 33.466% at Week 16, a mean CFB of 9.426%.
Type II PNH RBCs	The mean percentage of Type II PNH RBCs was 21.219% in the Drug A group at baseline and this reduced to 3.508% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -17.711%. In the Drug B group, the mean percentage of Type II PNH RBCs was 23.654% at baseline and this reduced to 17.511% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -6.143%.
Type III PNH RBCs	The mean percentage of Type III PNH RBCs was 46.581% in the Drug A group at baseline and this increased to 91.337% at Week 16, a mean CFB of 44.756%. In the Drug B group, the mean percentage of Type III PNH RBCs was 50.276% at baseline and this reduced to 46.044% at Week 16, a mean CFB of -3.509%.
PNH granulocytes and	In both treatment groups, changes from baseline in the proportion of PNH granulocytes and monocytes were minimal. In the Drug A group, the CFB ranged from 0.53% to 1.53% between Week 2 and



Don't do this!



Tables must be easy to read

Drug A had significant impacts on all three PNH RBC types.

Measure	Drug A	Drug B
Type 1 baseline	34.198	24.040
Type 1 week 16	6.114	33.466
Type 1 mean CFB	-28.084	9.426
Type 2 baseline	21.219	23.654
Type 2 week 16	3.508	17.511
Type 2 mean CFB	-17.711	-6.143
Type 3 baseline	46.581	50.276
Type 3 week 16	91.337	46.044
Type 3 mean CFB	44.756	-4.232
PNH granulocytes and monocytes baseline	0.530	0.062
PNH granulocytes and monocytes week 16	1.530	5.000
PNH granulocytes and monocytes		

Two types of reference tables

1. Comparison



Tables must be easy to read

Drug A had significant impacts on all three PNH RBC types.

Drug	Baseline	Week 16	Mean CFB
Type 1 PNH RBCs	34.198	6.114	-28.084
Type 2 PNH RBCs	21.219	3.508	-17.711
Type 3 PNH RBCs	46.581	91.337	44.756

Two types of reference tables

2. Look-up

Visuals

Generic rules for visuals
Stem sentence structure

Visuals

Examples of visuals

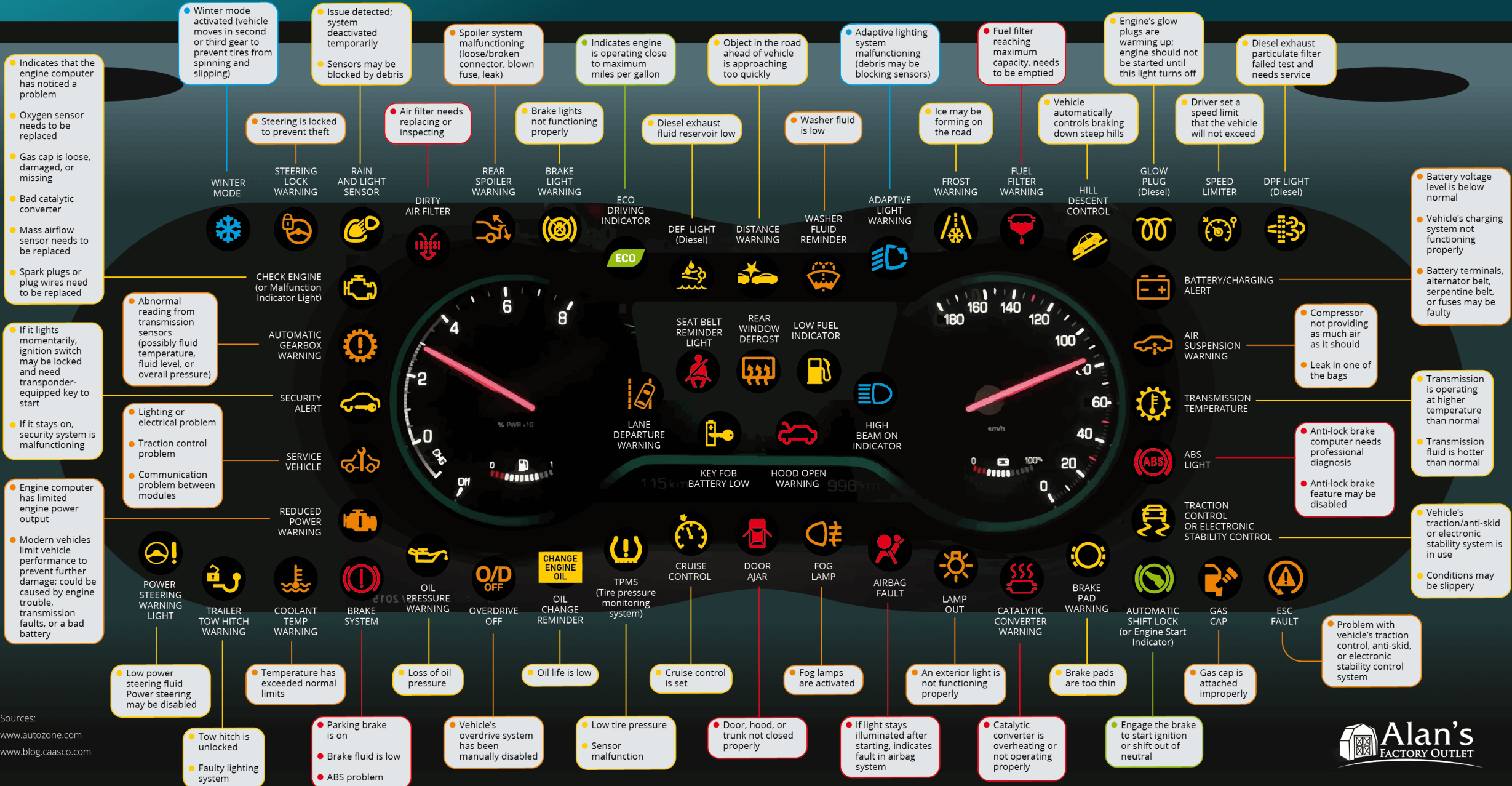
Examples include

- graphic references
- graphic principles
- graphic process
- diagrams
- graphs and charts
- videos, and
- animations.

General rules for visuals

- Keep visuals clear and simple.
- Avoid positional references – "below" or "the following".
- Always use a period to end the stem sentence.
- Write the stem sentence to summarize the visual.

The Meaning of 52 Car Dashboard Indicators





Precision Content Writing structures

Reference

- Unordered list
- Inline list
- Item-description list
- Ordered list
- Look-up table
- Comparison table
- Graphic reference
- Graph or chart
- Diagram
- Part-description
- Part-function

Concept

- Unordered list
- Inline list
- Item-description list
- Ordered list
- Definition
- Example
- Counter-example
- Analogy
- Contrast table

Principle

- Unordered list
- Inline list
- Principle statement
- Graphic principle
- Principle note

Process

- Unordered list
- Inline list
- Ordered list
- Stages
- When-then condition tree
- Graphic process

Task

- Unordered list
- Inline list
- Ordered list
- Steps
- If-then decision tree
- Graphic task

Core writing structures

Paragraph  List  Table  Visuals 

Chunking

Concept

Definition

Chunking is an organizing function that requires a writer to break content into small, digestible pieces of information, or chunks, for improved reader comprehension.

Reference

Purpose of chunking

Chunking creates easily digestible pieces of content to solve the information overload problem for users.

Principle

Chunking rule

Always split content into small, focused chunks that adhere to the recommended limits.

Principle

Chunking limits

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2).

- Avoid breaking content into more than nine items.
- When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.



Identify your
audience



Identify the **purpose** of
the information



Identify the **intended
user response** of the
information

Three Guiding principles

Precision Content Writing structures

Principle statement

Principle article

- Sub-article
- Sub-article

Chunking limits

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 ± 2).

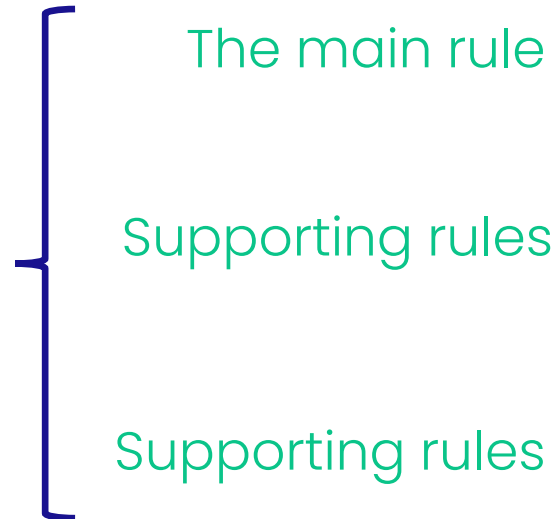
- Avoid breaking content into more than nine items.
- When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

Precision Content Writing structures

Principle statement example

Written in 2nd person, active voice,
present tense, imperative

Written as
complete,
standalone
sentences



Chunking limits Standard title structure

Limit the number of items in a chunk to between five and nine (7 +/- 2).

- Avoid breaking content into more than nine items.
- When you have more than nine items, create another chunk.

More supporting rules (sub-articles),
as needed, up to the chunking limit



Structure of a Principle topic

Principle statement is the principle itself

Applicability describes the conditions under

Outcome is what happens if the user does not follow the principle

Resolution is what the user does if they have violated the principle

Miscellaneous support blocks make the principle statement clearer to the user.

Principle

Title

Principle statement

Applicability

Outcome

Resolution

Miscellaneous support blocks



Structure of a Process topic

Process introduction is an overview of the process.

Context is information that is relevant to the process.

Stages block is the core content of the process.

Result is the outcome of the process.

Example is a demonstration of the process.

Process

Title

Process Introduction Block

Context

Stages

Result

Example



Precision Content Writing structures

Process stages structure

Stages block

Stem sentence

Stage description



Stage description

Stage detail

Stage Info

Stage Result



Stage detail

Timeframe (optional)

Actor

Actions

Stages block example

3rd person, active voice, present tense

Recruiting new employees

Standard title structure

Stem sentence to introduce the stages

These are the stages of recruiting a new employee.

Stage

1. The Human Resources administrator

- writes a job description, and
- advertises the vacancy on job search sites.

Stage

2. Within two business days of receiving an application, the recruiter

- contacts the applicant to schedule an interview, or
- informs the applicant that they are not being considered for the job.

Timeframes

Stage

3. One week after all interviews are conducted, the recruiter offers the job to the successful applicant.

Actor

Actions



Putting it all together



Before

Time-based synchronization, also known as distributed clock synchronization, is characterized by the use of an external timing source such as GPS, 1588, or an external IRIG generator. The system timing module uses the external time reference to determine the present time and create a clock that is locked to the external source. The individual clocks of each module and device in the system are synchronized to the same external source, ensuring synchronization between nodes no matter how far apart they are. Devices act on timing signals originating from a local clock that is synchronized to the other clocks in the system, so instead of sharing timing signals directly, the devices periodically adjust their local timing sources to match the chosen external time reference.

Using the time-based synchronization method, you can perform the following actions:

- Create future time events that execute at a specific board time to control clock and trigger signals.
- Write and read timestamps to measure clock skew, record the start time of data acquisition, and troubleshoot timing issues.
- Create timed loops that run at a specific time of the day.
- Discipline the backplane clock to an external time reference.
- Return the current data and time, or the date and time when a measurement was taken.
- Generate a sample clock that starts and stops at a specific board time.

Synchronizing distributed clocks requires constant adjustment. A clock is essentially a two-part device that consists of a frequency source and an accumulator. In theory, if you set two clocks identically and their frequency sources run at the exact same rate, they are synchronized indefinitely. In practice, however, clocks are set with limited precision, frequency sources run at slightly different rates, and the rate of a frequency source changes over time and temperature. Most time-based TimeCo timing and synchronization devices use an over-controlled crystal oscillator (OCXO) or a temperature-controlled crystal oscillator (TCXO) as a frequency source, but even these highly accurate frequency sources vary due to initial manufacturing tolerance, temperature and pressure changes, and aging.

After

How time-based synchronization works

The individual clocks of each module and device in the system synchronize to the same external source. Devices act on timing signals originating from a local clock that synchronizes to the other clocks in the system. Instead of sharing timing signals directly, the devices periodically adjust their local timing sources to match the chosen external time reference.

Why synchronization is required

A clock is consists of a frequency source and an accumulator. Synchronization is required as follows:

In theory ...	In practice ...
you set two clocks identically	you can set clocks with limited precision
their frequency sources run at the exact same rate	frequency sources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • run at slightly different rates, and • change rate over time and temperature
they are synchronized indefinitely	distributed clocks must be synchronized continually in frequency and phase

Time-based TimeCo device frequency sources

Most time-based TimeCo timing and synchronization devices use one of the following as a frequency source:

- an over-controlled crystal oscillator (OCXO), or
- a temperature-controlled crystal oscillator (TCXO).

Sources of variation

Even these highly accurate frequency sources vary due to

- initial manufacturing tolerance
- temperature and pressure changes, and
- aging.

Advantages and disadvantages of time-based synchronization

There are advantages and disadvantages to time-based synchronization.

Disadvantage

A time-based system is generally not as accurate as a signal-based system.

Advantages

Time-based synchronization enables you to

- synchronize complex systems with many different nodes distributed over a large area with no loss of accuracy, even when the nodes are moving, and
- measure the location, speed, and altitude of a node when using the GPS timing protocol.

Before and after

Before

QUESTION
What frequency sources do most time-based timing and synchronization devices use?

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QUESTION
What are the advantages of time-based synchronization?

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Wrap up

- A mini-introduction to microcontent
- The five fundamentals of Precision Content writing
- Key writing methods
- Exercises: Applying the methodology

Now go and [practice!](#)



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Thank you

Raffle



Questions?



Keep in touch



Are you ready to upgrade, transform, and future-proof your content?
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[Precisioncontent.com](https://precisioncontent.com) | sophie@precisioncontent.com | 1(647)265-8500

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Sophie Gravel

Speaker

Precision Content
Learning consultant

