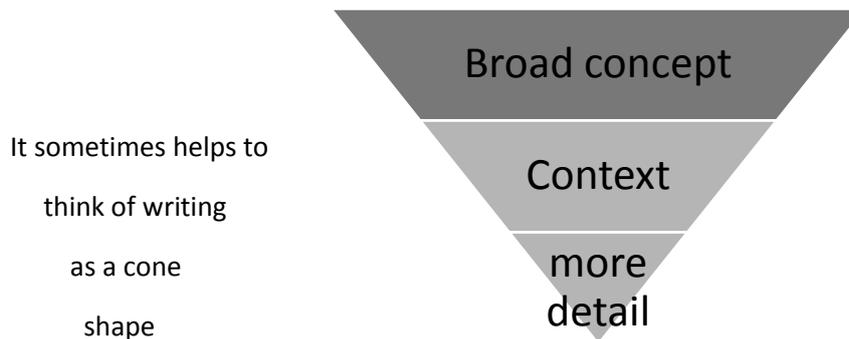


Hopefully helpful writing tips

It helps people to understand something if the first sentence is easy to grasp. Don't worry too much about leaving out detail, because that's what the second and third sentences are for. So for example:

We are helping people with a serious illness and their families explain what treatment they want.

Often when someone is very ill or nearing the end of their life it's hard for them or their loved ones to explain what their wishes are. We're working with the NHS and other organisations to come up with a solution to that.



We all hear the words internally and move our tongue as we read something. Keep the flow of your words and thoughts by avoiding – *marmalade* - unusual or unfamiliar words or jargon.

Think of the analogy of a river, you don't want to break the flow of understanding by blocking it with a rock (tricky word or concept – like the random word *marmalade* in the sentence above), or let the flow wonder off into an eddy that leads away from the stream of thought.

Shorter sentences are good. Where possible try to break things down. Smaller chunks, like food, are easier for our brains to digest. It's sometimes good to read it out loud, just to make sure you don't run out of breath.

Look at your language

Are you *demonstrating the value of interventions* or *showing how valuable this work is*?

Are you talking about COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) or severe breathing problems?

What are you creating? Are you *aiming to devise a tool to implement better communication around end of life care* or *finding a better way of seriously ill patients and their family having a say in their treatment*?

Hopefully helpful writing tips

If you have too many words, or not enough space for your writing

- One thing that I was always taught as a journalist is 'always sub from the back'. In effect if you have done all you can to take out spare words or non-essential phrases, then cut (sub/sub-edit) words from the end of a piece of writing. If you are writing well it should still make sense. For example:

We have been instrumental in bringing the public into health research, and increasing how they see the value of our work.

Each area of research has a member of the public at the centre of its team, and they make important decisions about what research areas to look at.

There are 35 members of the public who work with researchers at CLAHRC Wessex and they all add value to what we do. *[This sentence is nice but not essential]*

Remember who you are writing for?

It may not always be obvious. In that case play safe with the reader's knowledge of jargon – avoid it if you can. In the case of these added value case studies, the information will go into our annual report. That in turn may go on to a minister who may well be stood in front of a treasury department trying to defend research against cuts. Give them a fighting chance with clear and impactful examples, backed by evidence. For example: Our novel approach to helping people with a long term illness saved the NHS £275 per patient a year. It kept them out of hospital and made their lives much better. All by better linking them to the support that was already in their community.

Ministers, commissioners and everybody likes a story. If we can tell it well from start to finish they will remember it and use it as an example. How often do we recall and refer to a well told story? What makes it interesting, relevant and illustrative? Think of that when you think about how to write your summary. That's where figures giving context can help. For example: Severe breathing problems are one of the biggest killer worldwide behind cancer.

It's a 'wow I didn't know that' kind of fact, which impels you to want to know more.

Don't be afraid to take a step back or ask someone else to take a look.

That expression 'can't see the wood from the trees' springs to mind. When we focus on something so intently we don't always see the wider, simpler answer.

I know it may feel like a box ticking exercise,

but often the value to you is being able to think and recognise the brilliant work you do in simpler terms. You can also see how you measure its success and how much it means to people. Enjoy that sense of pride in you and your team.