

Why do I need to know how to write?

Pittsburgh Techfest, June 11, 2016

Ron Stone

“From then on it became necessary to think the law which governed, as it were, the desire for the center in the constitution of structure and the process of signification prescribing its displacements and its substitutions for this law of the central presence-but a central presence which was never itself, which has always already been transported outside itself in its surrogate.”

Jacques Derrida

“Thus the erectile organ comes to symbolize the place of enjoyment, not in itself, or even in the form of an image, but as a part lacking in the desired image. That is why it is equivalent to the square root of minus one of the signification produced above, of the enjoyment that it restores by the coefficient of its statement to the function of the lack of signifier -1.”

Jacques Lacan

And it all came crashing down...

**Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative
Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity**

Alan D. Sokal

Social Text #46/47, pp. 217-252 (spring/summer 1996)

Styles

Styles

Plain

Reflexive

Contemplative

Classic

Practical...











Practical Style

Goals- Clarity and Ease of Parsing

Truth- “Window to the World”

Presentation- Sprezzatura

Scene- Conversation

Cast- the Reader is Intelligent

Practical Style

Language & Thought- Old then New

Structure- Inverted Pyramid

Truth

Truth - “Window to the World”

Do:

Confidently describe what
you want to present

Avoid:

Opinion

Questions about whether the
truth can even be known

Presentation

—

Presentation - Sprezzatura

Do:

Revise, revise, and revise
again

Avoid:

Signposting

Calling attention to yourself
or your writing

“... shat we plan to do.”

No, it's

“... that we plan to do.”

Scene

Scene- Conversation

Do:

Use verbs for description

Avoid:

Nominalizations

The proliferation of nominalizations in a discursive formation may be an indication of a tendency towards pomposity and abstraction.

Writers who overload their sentences with nominalizations tend to sound pompous and abstract.

Helen Sword

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNikHtMgcPQ>

Cast

Cast- The Reader is Intelligent

Do:

Use appropriate, pithy,
words

Avoid:

Simplistic language

Patronizing tone

“They set a slamhound on Turner’s trail in New Delhi, slotted it to his pheromones and the color of his hair. It caught up with him on a street called Chandni Chauk and came scrambling for his rented BMW through a forest of bare brown legs and pedicab tires. Its core was a kilogram of recrystallized hexogene and flaked TNT.”

William Gibson,
Count Zero

Language and Thought

—

Language & Thought- Old then New

Do:

Place known information
first and new information
later

Place the information to be
emphasized at the end

Avoid:

Overly-complicated sentence
structure

Clauses that echo earlier
information rather than
adding new info

A business associate is a person or company, who on behalf of a covered entity or of an organized health care arrangement in which the covered entity participates, but other than in the capacity of a member of the workforce of the covered entity or arrangement, creates, receives, maintains, or transmits protected health information for a function or activity, ...

including claims processing or administration, data analysis, processing or administration, utilization review, quality assurance, patient safety activities, billing, benefit management, practice management, and repricing; ...

or provides, other than in the capacity of a member of the workforce of the covered entity, legal, actuarial, accounting, consulting, data aggregation, management, administrative, accreditation, or financial services to or for the covered entity, or to or for an organized health care arrangement in which the covered entity participates, ...

where the provision of the service involves the disclosure of protected health information from such covered entity or arrangement, or from another business associate of such covered entity or arrangement, to the person.

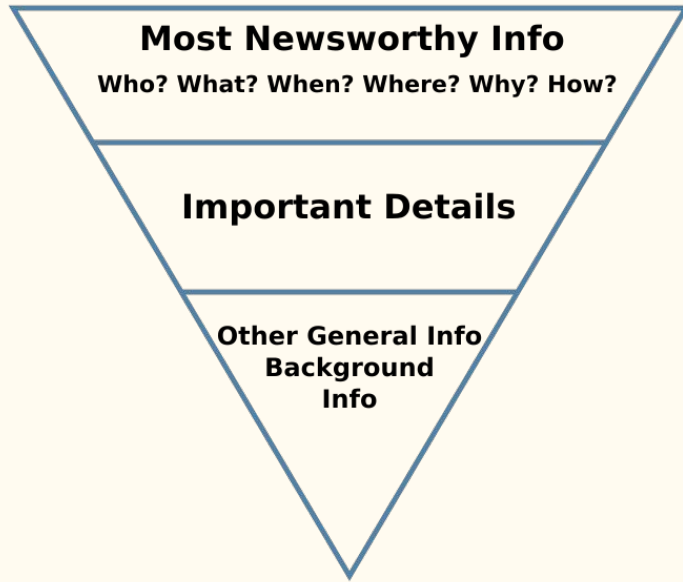
Health Insurance
Portability and
Accountability Act
(HIPAA)

Structure



Structure- Inverted Pyramid

Do:



Avoid:

Placing details before
general information

A business associate is a person or company who deals with protected health information on behalf of a covered entity (or on behalf of an organized health care arrangement in which the covered entity participates).

A person or company is a business associate if they create, receive, maintain, or transmit protected health information. Reasons for doing this include:

- data analysis
- processing or administration
- utilization review
- quality assurance
- patient safety activities
- billing
- benefit management
- practice management
- repricing

Similarly, a person or company is a business associate if they receive protected health information while providing services to or for the covered entity. These services may be legal, actuarial, accounting, consulting, data aggregation, management, administrative, accreditation, or financial services.

Note: a member of the workforce of the covered entity is not a business associate.

Recommended Reading

Bizup, Joseph and Williams, Joseph M., *Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace*, fifth edition, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson Education Inc., 2015.

ISBN-13: 978-0-321-95330-4

Recommended Reading

Pinker, Steven, *The Sense of Style: A Thinking Person's Guide to Writing in the 21st Century*, New York, Penguin Group LLC, 2014.

ISBN-13: 978-0-670-02585-5

Recommended Reading

Sword, Helen, *Stylish Academic Writing*, Boston, Harvard University Press, 2012.

ISBN-13: 978-0-674-06448-5

Recommended Reading

Thomas, Francis-Noel and Turner, Mark, *Clear and simple as the truth*, second edition, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2011.

ISBN-10: 0-691-14743-4