Professional Writing

Becoming a writer

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In reality:

- Good communication takes time and effort.

- However there are clear rules and processes you can learn quickly and apply to everyone.

Professional ~~Writing~~ Communicating

Becoming someone people listen to

- We'll start with writing, but the principles are directly applicable to public speaking and data visualization.

Things we won't talk about

- Grammar

- Spelling

- Proof reading

Things we will talk about a little

- Sentence structure

- Word choice
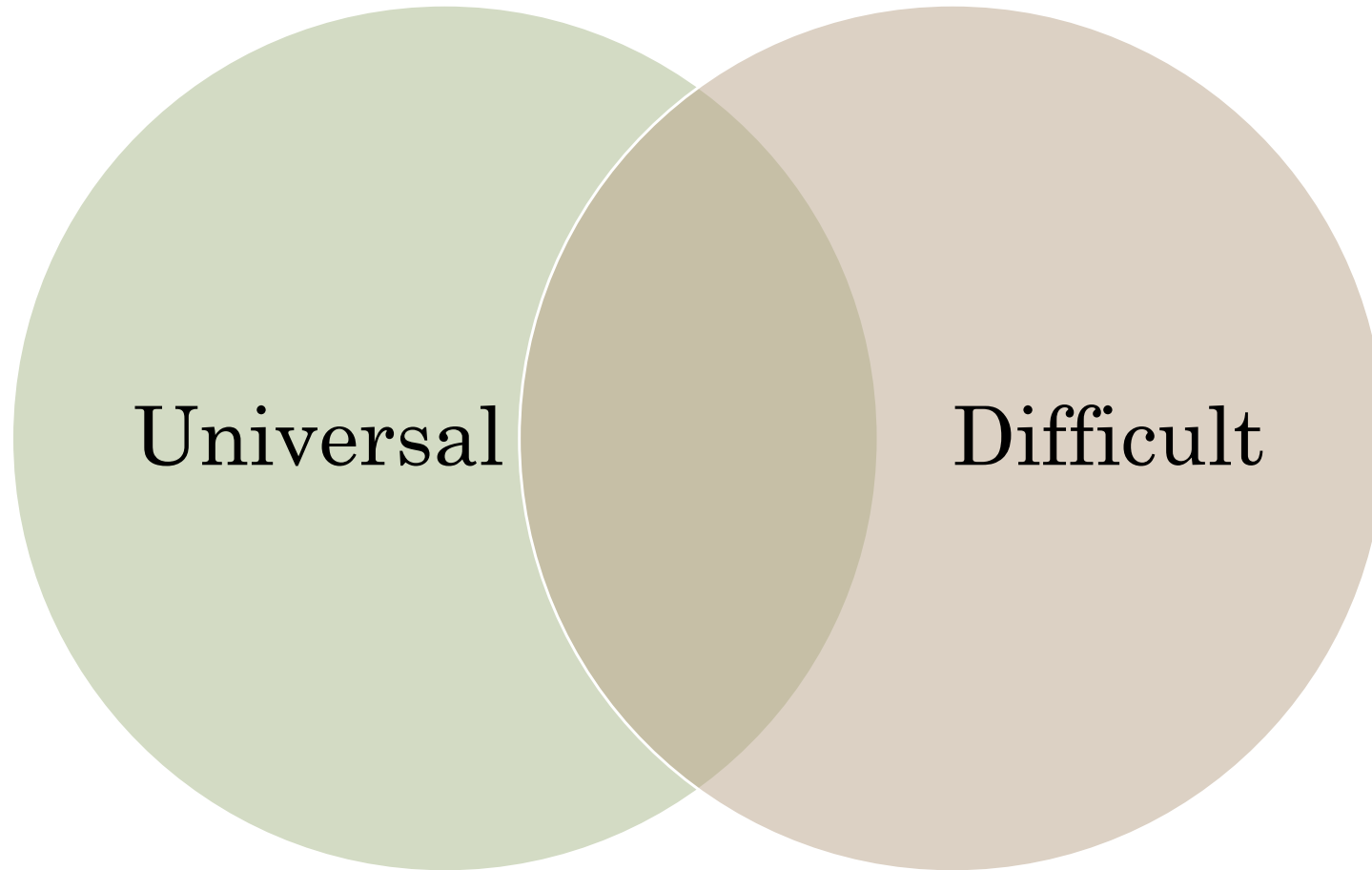
Things we will talk about a lot

- Organizing ideas in your mind

- Organizing those ideas for others

- Editing
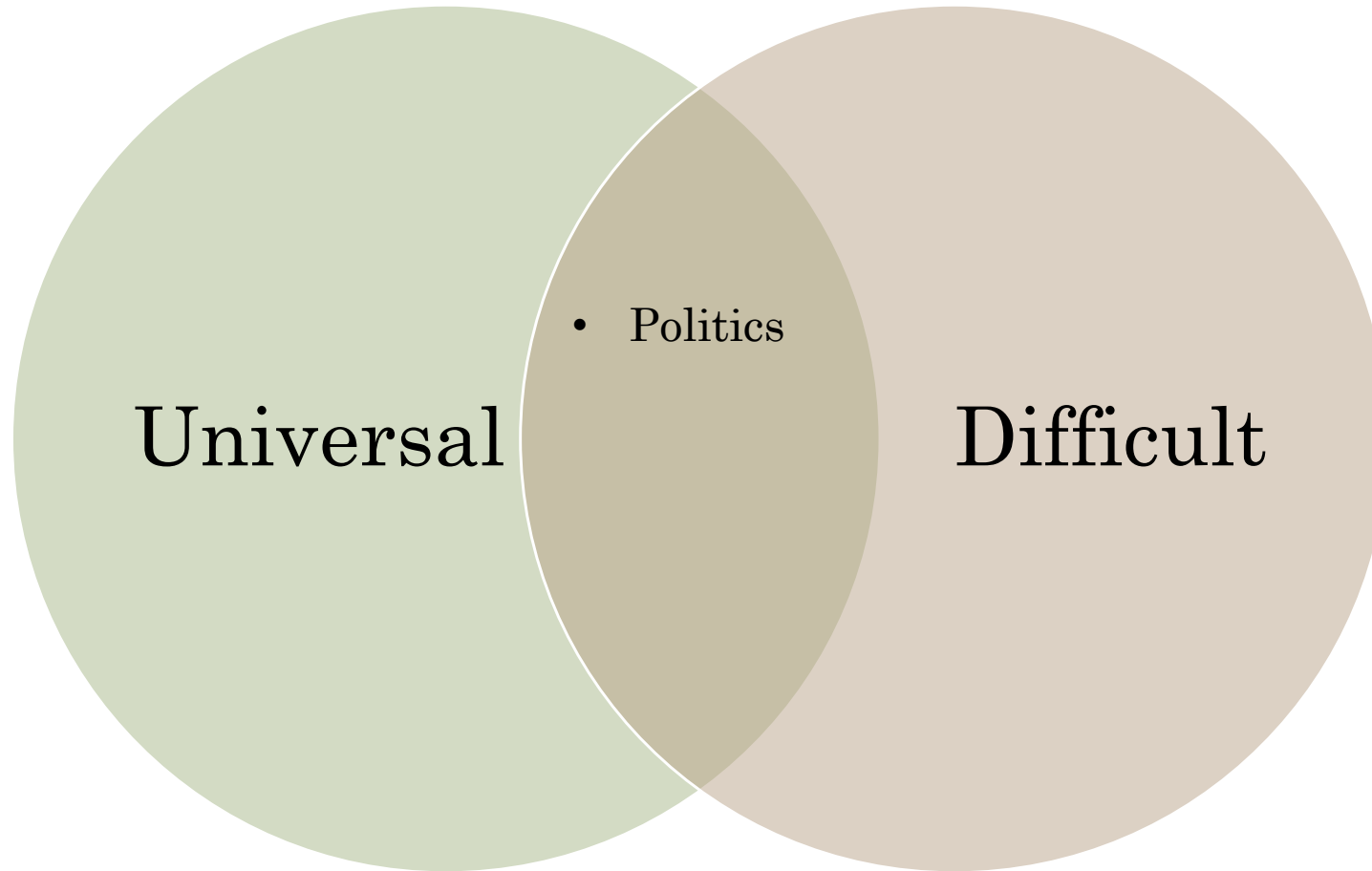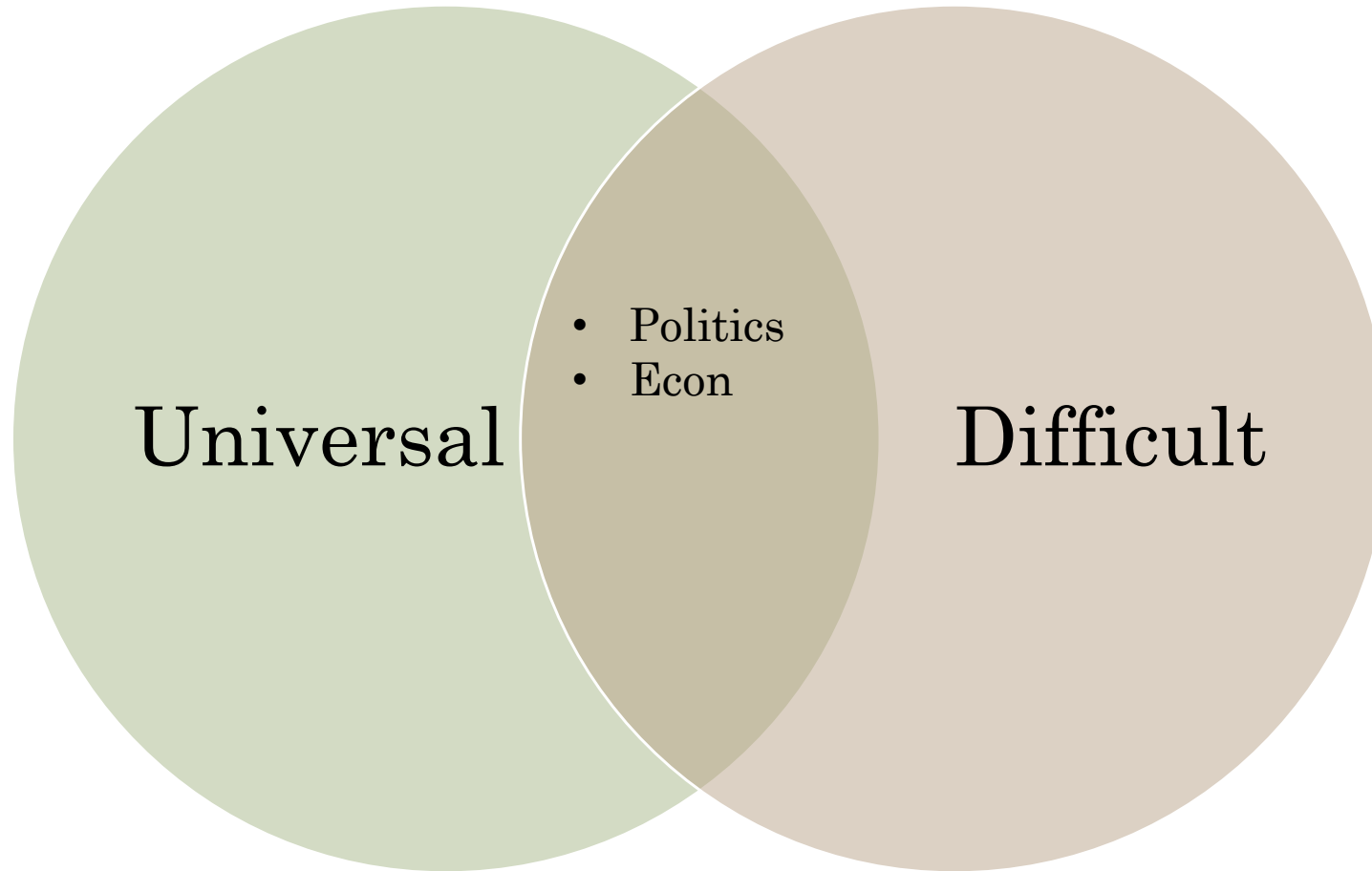
Where bad opinions come from
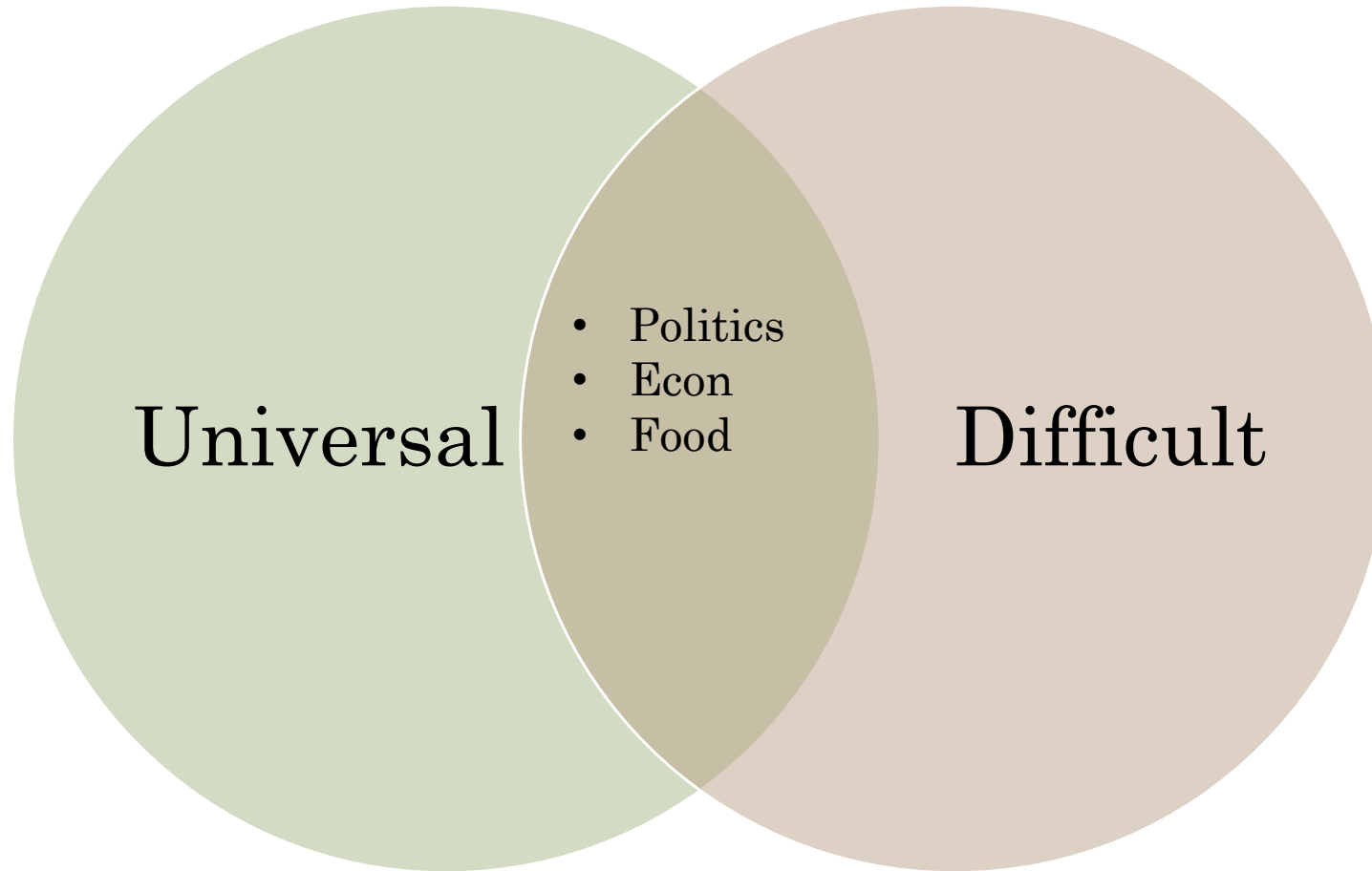
Universal

Where bad opinions come from

Universal

Difficult

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Difficult

- Politics

Where bad opinions come from

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- Politics
- Econ
- Food

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Difficult

- Politics
- Econ
- Food
- Medicine
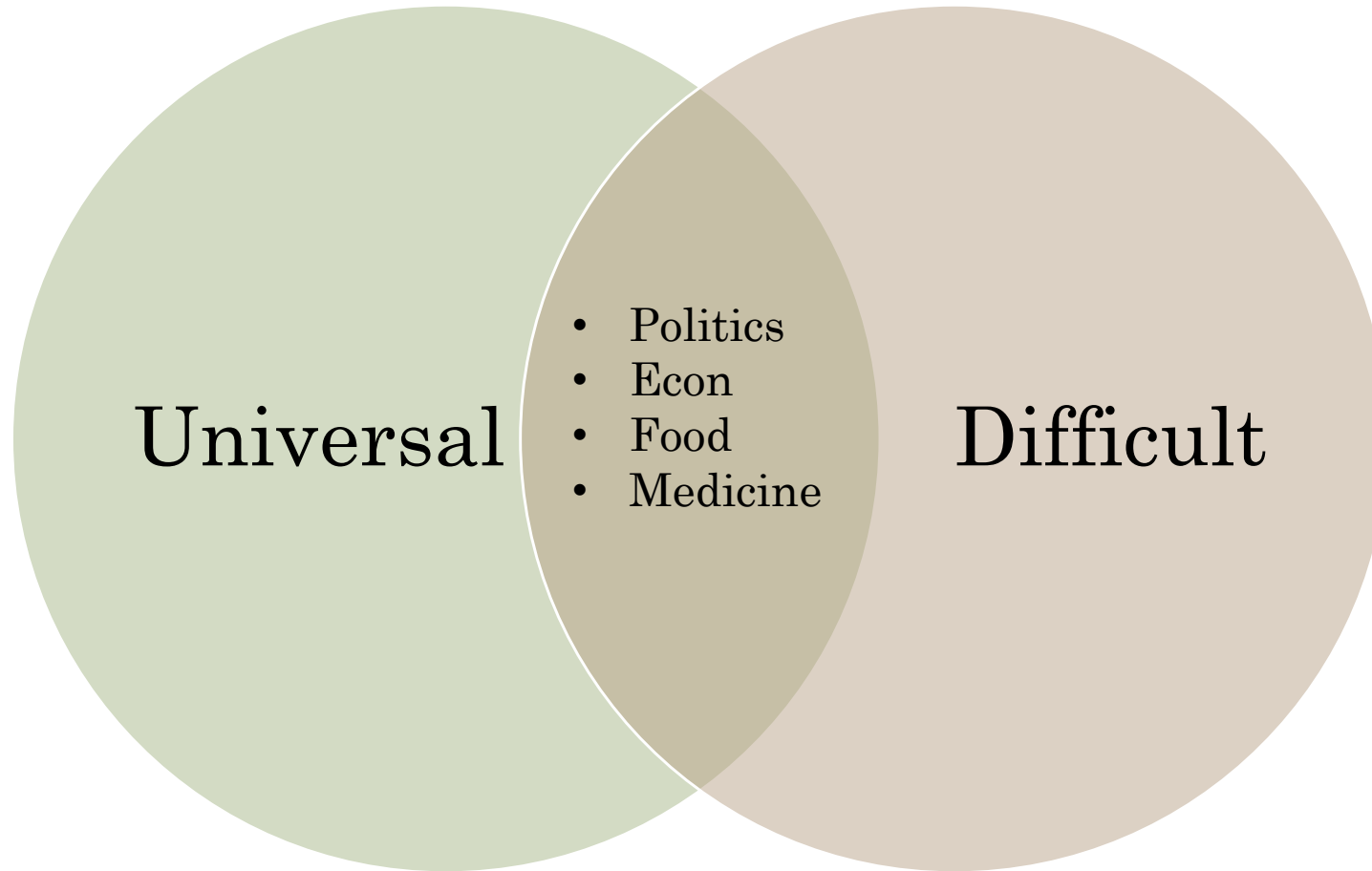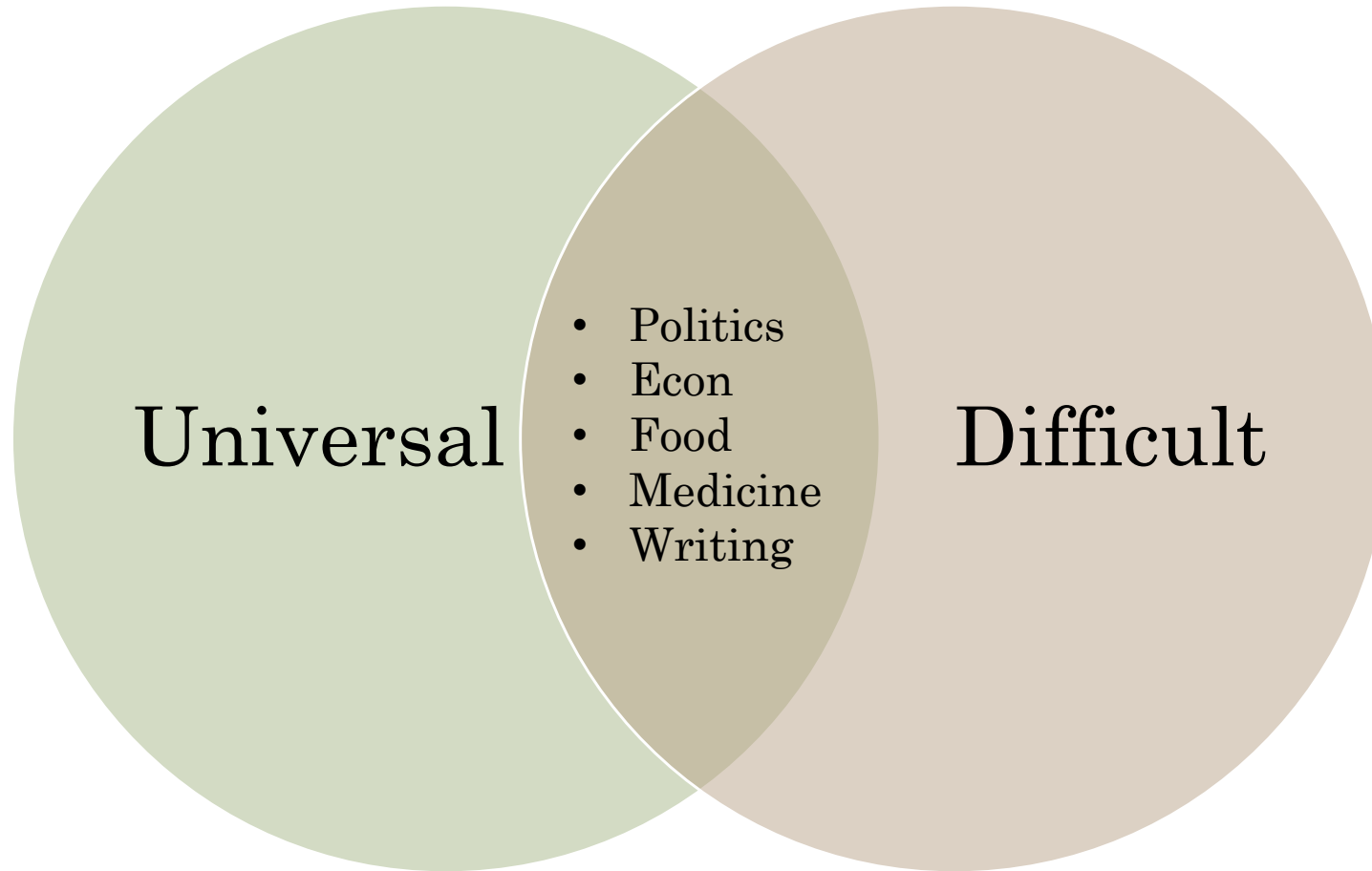
Setting expectations

- Suspend your prior notions about writing

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- Take feedback gracefully

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- The goal isn't mastery, but orientating you in the right direction

Process Overview

What time allocation looks like for most writers

Planning → Drafting → Editing

What it should look like

Planning → Drafting → Editing

Planning/Outlining
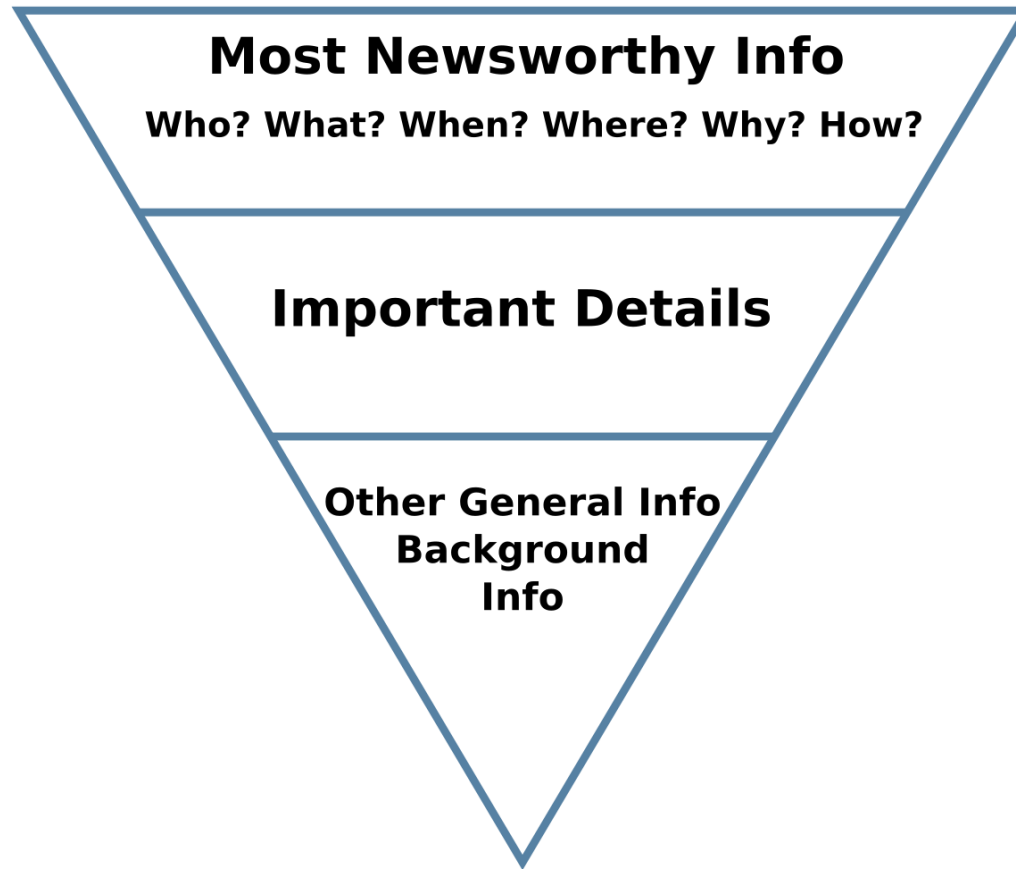
Clear writing follows clear thinking.

Objectives

1. Do it.

2. Your goal in planning is to create a cohesive narrative for your paper.

3. Expose all of the shortcomings in your current thinking and attack those.
   - What's unorganized in my mind?
   - What do I struggle to explain?
   - Which claims am I more or less certain in?
   - What do I not have enough information about?

Process

- Start with your thesis/hypothesis/question. Build with:
  - Whatever structure the information follows in your head.
  - What you currently know (with citations/sources).
  - What you don't know.
  - Questions

- Find the organization that will most effectively lead the reader to your conclusion.

- You may have multiple outlines depending on how developed your thinking is

- You may find it helpful to think in paragraphs

BLUF and the Inverted Pyramid

Most Newsworthy Info

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Important Details

Other General Info
Background
Info

Drafting

- Place yourself in the background.

- Do not write 'breezily'.

- Be concise.

- Write with nouns and verbs.

- Use the active voice.

- Draft first, edit later.

BLUF all the way down

"In the BLUF format, the first sentence of each paragraph will sum up all of the information in the paragraph. A good BLUF should cover all of the information in a paragraph, like an umbrella. If the paragraph contains any information that doesn't fall under the BLUF's "umbrella," that information should be moved to a more appropriate paragraph or the BLUF should be changed to include the additional information. Following the BLUF, the component sentences in the paragraph should be arranged from most to least important."

Editing

"Forgive the long letter; I didn't have time to write a short one."

"Forgive the long letter; I didn't have time to write a short one."

"I have made this longer than usual because I have not had time to make it shorter"

Editing

- Editing != proofreading

- Revision is an essential part of all writing and presentation.

- Expect to rewrite and delete significant portions of any documents

- Remove any unnecessary words (e.g. "that", "in order to", "due to the fact that").

- Remove passive voice.

- Remove unnecessary information and over explanation.

- Rewrite and reorganize for clarity.