

EARMARK

MACHINES FOR THINKING

TERSE STYLE

PROSE DENSITY AND DIAL FAMILIES

EARMARK OPEN INTELLIGENCE PROTOCOL

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THE PROSE DEFAULT // 01

Prose is the system's first language. Information structure is expressed within sentences -- through subordination, coordination, reference, and punctuation -- rather than externalized into formatting. What makes the style terse is not shortness but density: information per token relative to structural overhead. Many tokens do double duty, carrying semantic content while encoding relation (contrast, causality, modification, reference).

The underlying bet is dual-audience robustness. Human readers and language models both exploit regularities in natural language to recover hierarchy and linkage: clause boundaries, discourse markers, parallel forms, and subordination are common cues. The convergence is practical: clearer grammatical structure usually helps both audiences.

PUNCTUATION AS CONTROL // 02

Punctuation supplies lightweight control. A colon signals "what follows elaborates what came before"; semicolons mark coordinate alternatives; subordinate conjunctions ("when," "which," "because") embed scope hierarchically inside the sentence without indentation. The result is a paragraph that contains its own map: relationships are expressed as ordinary language relations, not as external formatting.

DENSITY OVER BREVITY // 03

The distinction matters. A formatted alternative can state the same principles, but it often externalizes structure into layout and fragments flow: the reader must reconstruct why items sit together, while prose can encode that "why" directly. The point is not "no formatting"; it is "structure expressed in-language."

BOUNDARY CONDITIONS // 04

One boundary condition matters: dense prose is strongest for explanation, synthesis, and causal argument; lists, tables, and stepwise formatting remain correct when the task is comparison, procedure, or random-access lookup. The rule is not "never bullets"; it is "do not replace relationships with layout when relationships are the point."

Cohesion rules

- Use demonstratives (this, that, the X) for backward reference to maintain topic continuity.
- Employ controlled repetition of key terms rather than synonym variation for critical concepts.
- Avoid scaffolding phrases (for example, as mentioned above, in other words) when the relationship can be inferred from structure.

Structural encoding

- Colons signal elaboration: what follows explains, exemplifies, or enumerates what came before.
- Semicolons mark coordinate alternatives: parallel clauses that could stand as separate sentences but are structurally joined.
- Subordinate conjunctions (when, which, because, while) embed scope hierarchically within sentences rather than requiring separate sentences or indentation.
- Parallel syntax expresses enumeration when items share structural shape; reserve bullets for heterogeneous items.

Density optimization

- Target dual function per token: semantic content plus relational signal (contrast, causality, modification, reference).
- Subordinate boundaries rather than split into new sentences when scope preservation remains clear.
- Make boundaries explicit (through punctuation or conjunctions) only when working memory load demands it.
- Optimize for structure-per-token, not minimum token count.

Formatting constraints

- Prefer in-language structure (subordination, coordination, punctuation) over external markup (bullets, indentation, headings) for relational content.
- Use formatted structures (lists, tables, numbered steps) for comparison, procedure, or random-access lookup.
- Reserve bullets for items that resist parallel construction or require independent random access.

Verification signals

These rules serve double duty as the dial inventory for intrinsic signage. Maintain grammatical parallelism within enumerations. Preserve

subordination depth consistency within sections. Keep demonstrative chains unbroken across paragraph boundaries. Use consistent punctuation semantics throughout the text (colons always elaborate, semicolons always coordinate).

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