



MGMT 117: Business, Ethics, and Society

Prof. Ryan Fuller, PhD, MBA

Redefine the Possible™



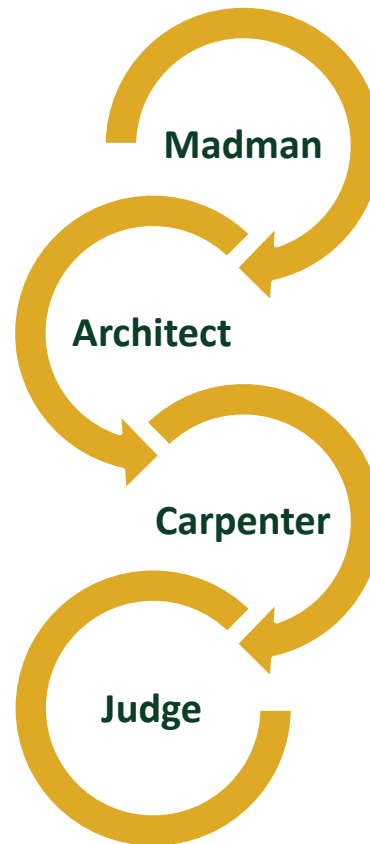
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Writing for MGMT 117

Ryan P. Fuller, PhD, MBA

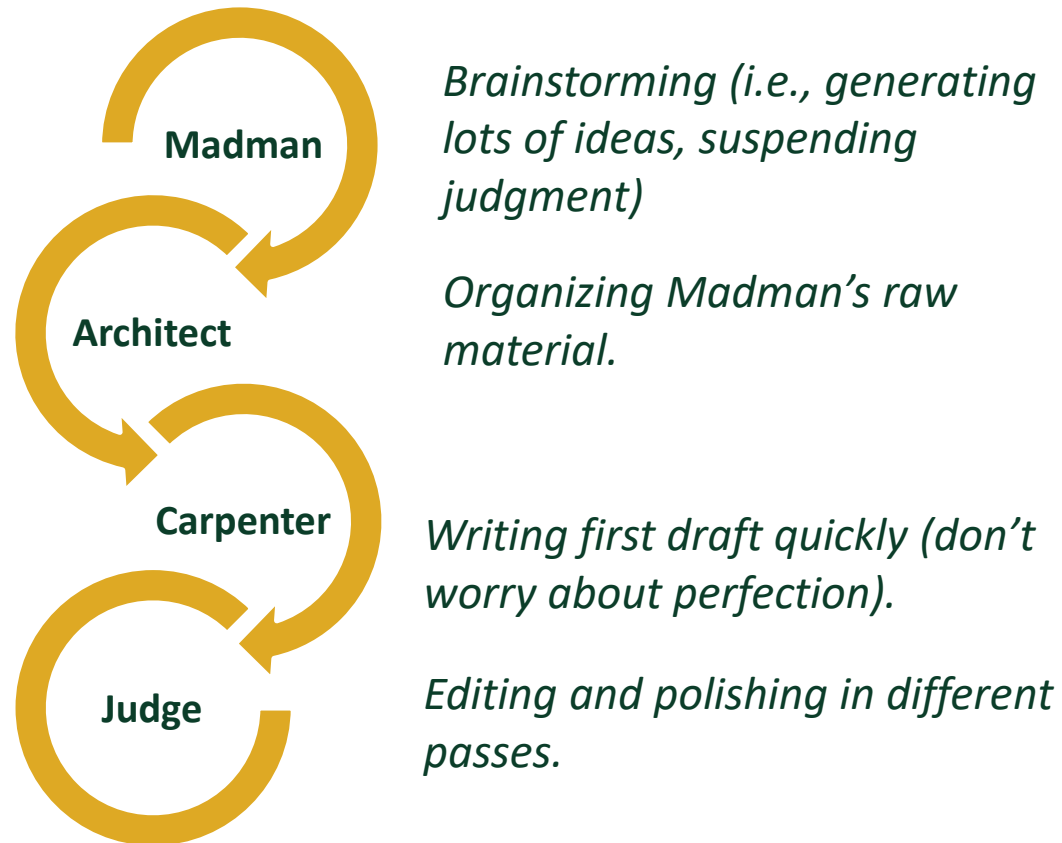
Redefine the Possible™

Divide Writing into 4 Stages



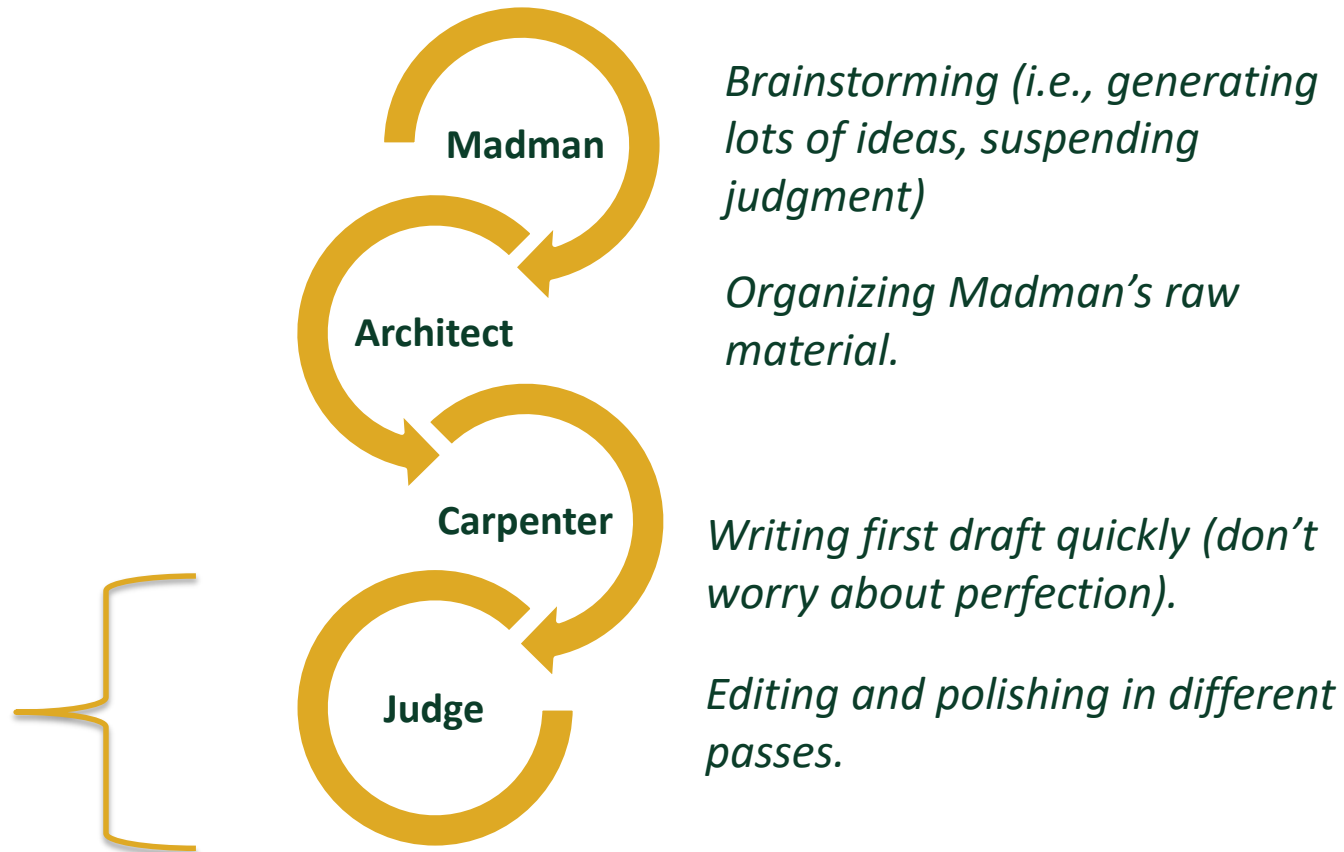
Garner, 2012

Divide Writing into 4 Stages



Garner, 2012

Divide Writing into 4 Stages



Garner, 2012

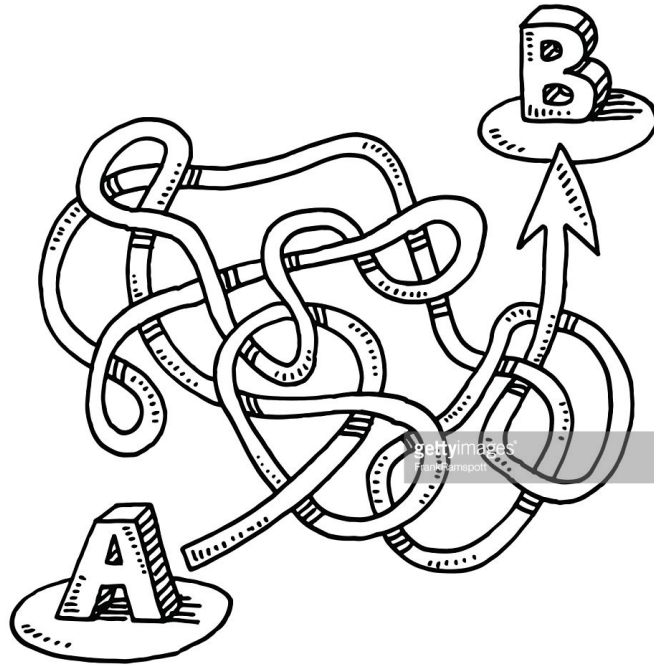
Bottom-line writing tells the readers the purpose & expectations up front



Fielden & Dulek, 1984

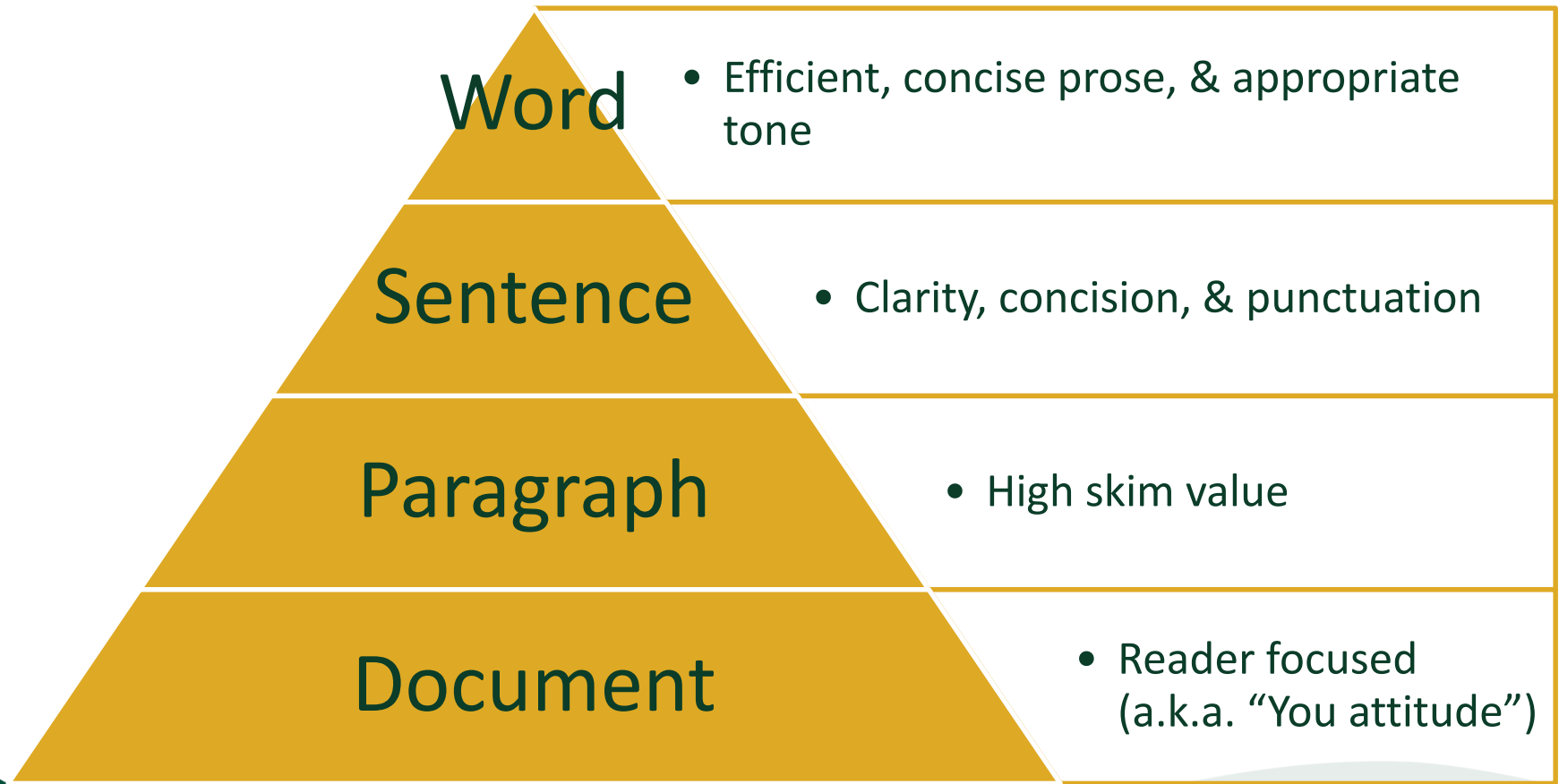
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Non-bottom-line writing writes backwards & arrives at purpose later



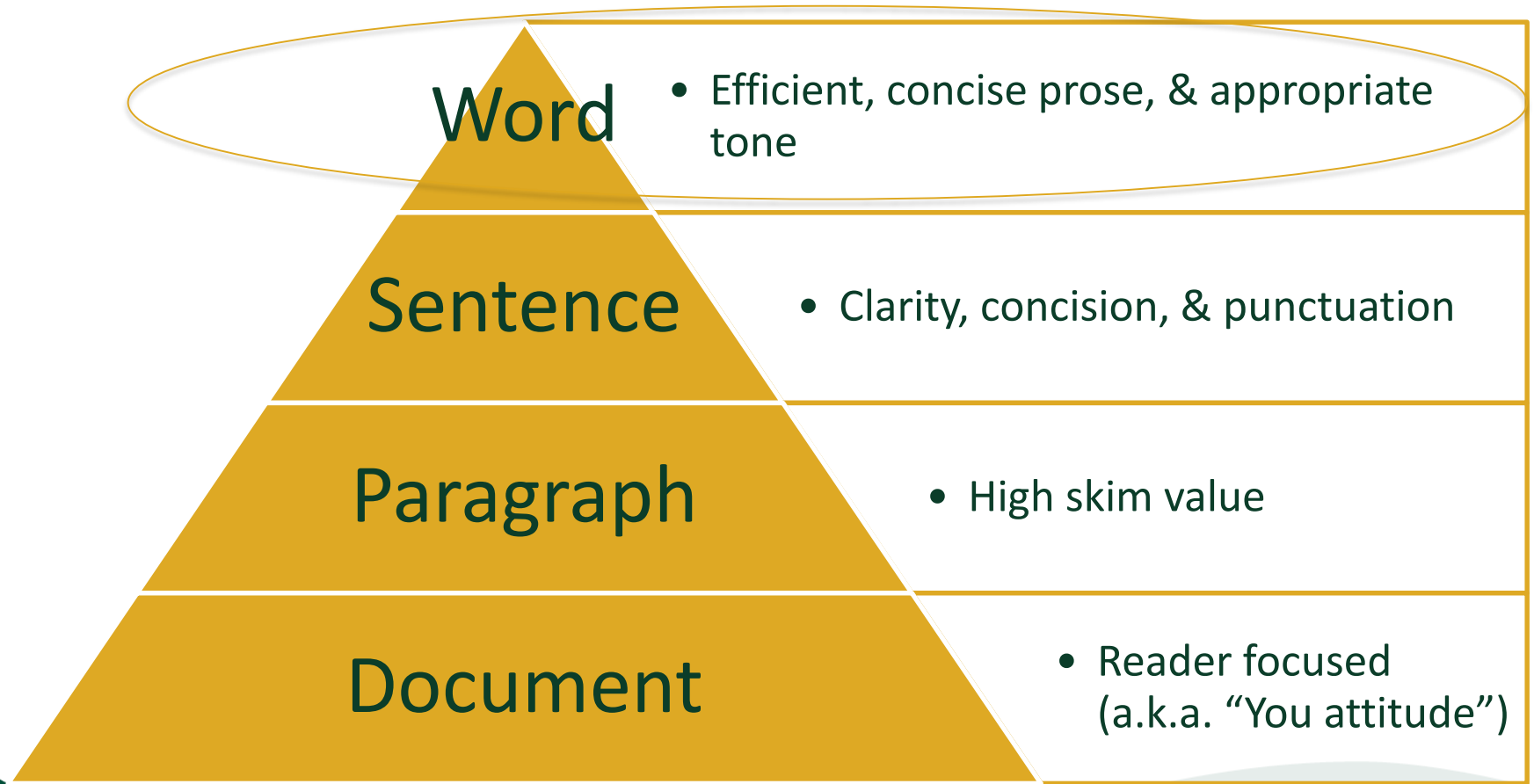
Fielden & Dulek, 1984
Image credit: Google Images

You write for BLUF at word, sentence, paragraph & document levels



Adapted from P. Harms

Your word choices should reflect concrete subjects with active verbs



Adapted from P. Harms

Select words precisely

- **Denotative** meaning: objective, similar to a dictionary definition based on common usage.
- **Connotative** meaning: subjective and emotional meaning. Based on person's prior experiences or associations with the word.

Veltsos & Hynes. 2021.

Selecting words precisely

To act unfairly to gain an advantage

Co-generated with ChatGPT



Selecting words precisely

To act unfairly to gain an advantage

Cheating (-)

- Deceiving
- Misleading
- Tricking
- Pulling a fast one
- Gaming the system
- Manipulating
- Circumventing
- Engaging in dishonesty

Euphemism (+)

- Taking shortcuts
- Bending the rules
- Finding creative solutions
- Working outside established guidelines
- Pushing the boundaries
- Bypassing limitations
- Thinking outside the box

Co-generated with ChatGPT

Balance abstract and concrete words

- **Concrete:** More specific and create clearer picture for readers.
- **Abstract:** Vague and produce more general interpretations.

Veltsos & Hynes. 2021.

Balance abstract and concrete words

High (Abstract)

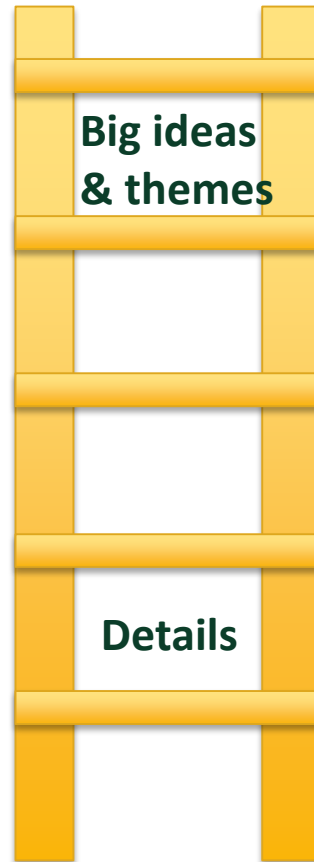


Low (Concrete)

Level	Examples
Abstractions	Life, beauty, love, time, success, power, evil, good
Broad groups of names with little specification	People, women, young people, industry, goals, things
More definite group	Teenagers, middle class, clothing industry, college campus, house plants
Specific, identifiable nouns	Air Jordan Nikes, my albino Guinea pig, Popcorn

Balance abstract and concrete words

- Theories
- Themes
- Big questions



You need both!

- Quotes
- Specific descriptions (with details of actions and behaviors)
- Names of people or entities

Balance abstract and concrete words

Instead of this...	Try this...
Volkswagen's deceptive practices.	<i>Volkswagen engineers installed a defeat device in diesel vehicles to cheat on emission tests.</i>
Wells Fargo's misconduct.	<i>Wells Fargo employees opened unauthorized deposit and credit card accounts to meet the company's aggressive sales targets.</i>
College admission scandal.	<i>Thirty three wealthy parents were charged in a nationwide scheme to buy their children's way into elite colleges such as Stanford and Yale.</i>
FIFA soccer scandal.	<i>FIFA officials accepted bribes in exchange for awarding hosting rights and marketing contracts for international soccer events.</i>
Astros' cheating.	<i>The Houston Astros stole opposing teams' signs and relayed them to batters during games.</i>

Co-generated with ChatGPT

Avoid false & vague subjects to improve clarity

- It + “to be” verb; There + “to be” verb
 - i.e., is, are, am, was, be, been, being, seems, appears
 - Ex: **It is** understood that good writing is re-writing.
 - Fix: **Editors** agree that good writing is re-writing.
 - Ex: **There seems** to be trouble with the attachment.
 - Fix: **I** can’t open the attachment.

Avoid false & vague subjects to improve clarity

- If you see these phrases in your writing, cut them out!
 - It is important to bear in mind that
 - It is interesting that
 - It is notable that
 - It is worthwhile to note
 - It should be pointed out that
 - It will be remembered that

Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Avoid demonstrative constructions to clarify the subject

- "This is," "that is," "these are," "those are" constructions
- To avoid confusion and increase clarity, insert a specific subject (i.e., a noun)
 - Ex: That was informative. → That **report** was informative.
 - Ex: Those are incorrect. → Those **data** are incorrect...
 - Ex: This was flawless. → This **presentation** was flawless...

Minimize passive voice to improve tone and reduce wordiness

- **Active voice:** Presents parts of sentence in the order expected by English speakers.
 - Subject of the sentence is the actor; the verb presents their actions; and they act on an object.
- **Passive voice:** Reverses the order of the sentence. The subject is acted on in a way depicted by the verb. PV is generally more lengthy and roundabout way of writing.

Veltsos & Hynes. 2021.

Minimize passive voice to improve tone and reduce wordiness

- Passive voice sometimes omits “the doer” of a sentence, making writing less specific.
- “To be” verb (is, are, am, be, been, being, seems, or appears)+ past participle (-ed).
 - Ex: Research **has been conducted** on the topic.
 - Fix: Smith **researched** the topic.

Passive voice is sometimes appropriate when ...

- You want to distance the subject from the action.
- You want to emphasize the receiver rather than the doer.
- You want to leave the subject unnamed or don't know the subject.
- Readers know the subject or the subject is obvious.
- In sensitive or controversial matters, passive voice is more diplomatic because it de-emphasizes the doer.

Passive voice is sometimes appropriate, & here's such a case

- If your credit card **is lost or stolen**, you are not responsible for unauthorized charges.

Avoid 'camouflaged' verbs to reduce wordiness

- A camouflaged verb is a verb + nominalization (i.e., a verb converted into a noun or adjective, or an adjective converted into a noun)
 - Ex: We **made a decision** about who should attend the tradeshow.
 - Fix: We **decided** on tradeshow attendees.
 - Ex: Your employment offer **is dependent** on a background check.
 - Fix: Your employment offer **depends** on a background check.

Use plain language

- In general, avoid jargon (bizspeak) and use common words.
- Sometime you need to use technical language to speak to members of a particular discipline or community.
- Define any terms that the reader is not familiar with.

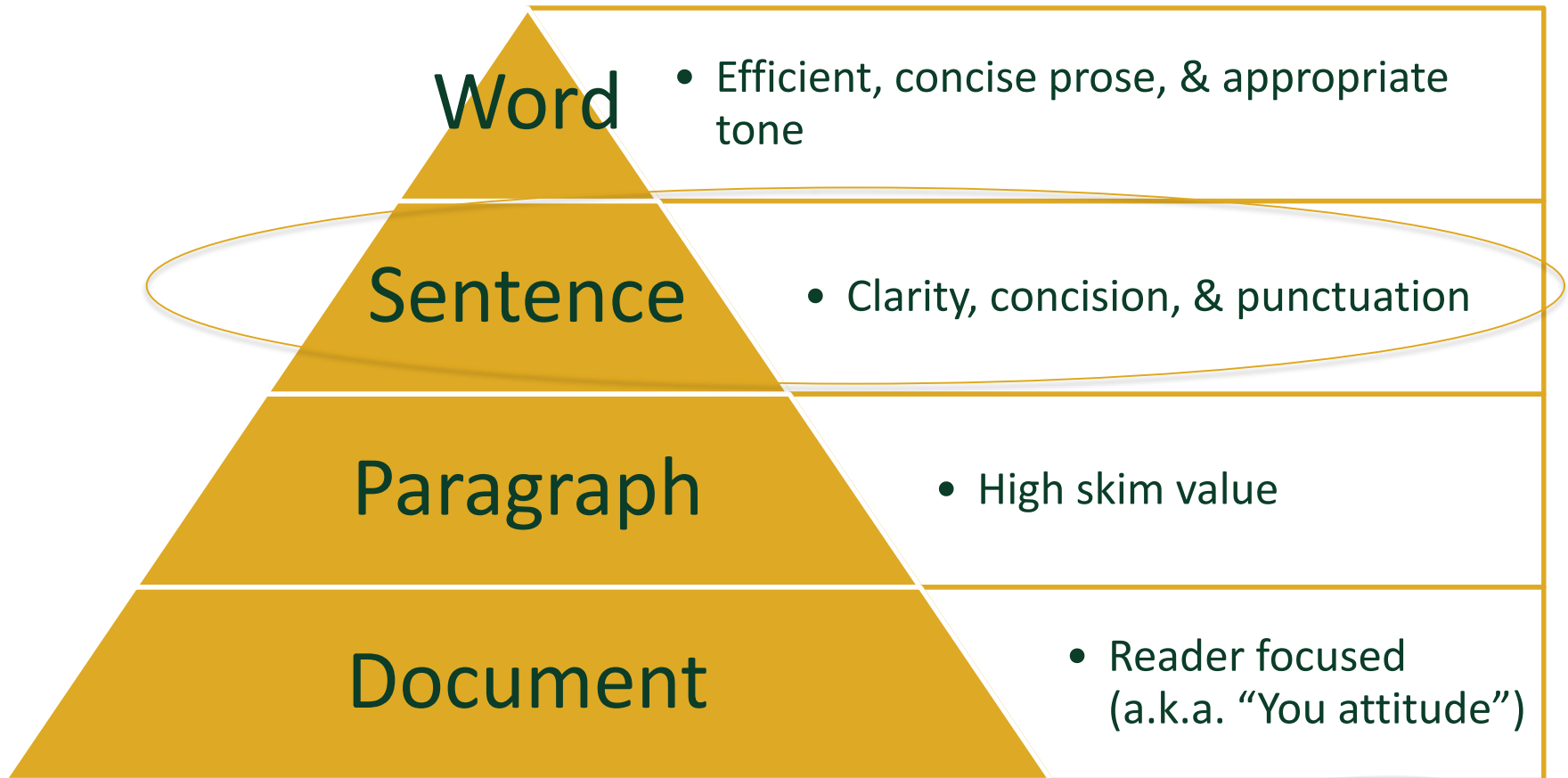
Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Use plain language – avoid bizspeak such as the following words

- Actionable
- Agreeance
- As per
- Back of the envelope
- Bandwidth
- Bring our A game
- Client-centered
- Core competency
- Drill down
- Ducks in a row
- Forward initiative
- Going forward
- Go rogue
- Guestimate
- Harvesting efficiencies
- Hit the ground running
- Impact (as verb)
- Incentivize
- Impactful
- Kick the can down the road
- Leverage (as verb)
- Liaise
- Mission critical
- Monetize
- On the same page
- Optimize
- Out of pocket
- Paradigm shift
- Parameters
- Per
- Planful
- Pursuant to
- Push the envelope
- Recontextualize
- Repurpose
- Rightsized
- Sacred cow
- Scalable
- Seamless integration
- Seismic shift
- Smartsized
- Strategic alliance
- Synergize; synergy
- Think outside the box
- Throw it against the wall and see if it sticks
- Throw under the bus
- Turnkey
- Under the radar
- Utilization; utilize
- Value-added
- Win-win

Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Write short sentences with subject & verb close by & correctly punctuate



Adapted from P. Harms

Put the subject & verb close together

- Words and phrases that go together should stay together
 - Ex: Ms. Peterson, whose leadership at McLaughlin Enterprises has been credited with that firm's turnaround, will take the reins here on June 1.
 - Better: Credited with turning around McLaughlin Enterprises during her four years as CEO, Ms. Peterson starts work here on June 1.

Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Keep sentences to 20 or fewer words

- This is a general recommendation, but not a hard rule. Short sentences can be easier to understand and express one main point. As a counterpoint, too many short sentences in a row can sound monotonous and unsophisticated.

Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Keep sentences to 20 or fewer words

- **Not this:** We are unable to fill your order at this point in time because there is an ongoing dock strike that affects our operations. (23 words)
- **But this:** We cannot fill your order right now because of the dock strike. (12 words)

Garner: *HBR Guide to Better Business Writing*

Vary sentence structure to avoid sounding monotone/unsophisticated

Use three possible sentence constructions:

- Complete Incomplete
- Incomplete, complete
- Com, incomplete, plete (can use dash or parenthesis as well)

Vary sentence structure to avoid sounding monotone/unsophisticated

Complete incomplete:

- I presented my research to the class despite feeling anxious.

Vary sentence structure to avoid sounding monotone/unsophisticated

Incomplete, complete:

- Despite feeling anxious, I presented my research to the class.

Vary sentence structure to avoid sounding monotone/unsophisticated

Com, incomplete, plete (can use dash or parenthesis as well):

- I presented my research – despite feeling anxious – to the class. (em dash emphasizes)
- I presented my research (despite feeling anxious) to the class. (parentheses de-emphasize)
- I presented my research, despite feeling anxious, to the class. (off-set idea not worried about emphasis)

Use correct punctuation marks to improve clarity



Image Credit: Google Images

Commas join complete sentences with a coordinating conjunction

- Anytime you have a full sentence on both sides of a coordinating conjunction, you need a comma after the first sentence and before the coordinating conjunction.

Coordinating Conjunctions:

And, But, For, Or, Nor, So, Yet

Commas join complete sentences with a coordinating conjunction

- Ex: Our stock lost value in Q1, **but** we are on track to post gains in Q2.
- Ex: We are on track to post gains in Q2, **so** you can have greater confidence in your recent investment.
- Ex: You can read our annual report online, **or** you can peruse the hard copy we mailed to you.

Don't join two independent clauses with a comma (comma splice)

- **Incorrect:** I have attached my report, I welcome any feedback about it.
- **Correct:** I have attached my report. I welcome any feedback about it.
- **Correct:** I have attached my report, and I welcome any feedback about it.

Use commas for introductory phrases

- Anytime you have an introductory phrase before a main sentence, set it off with a comma.
 - Ex: In this report, I recommend ways to reduce spending and increase efficiency.

Use commas for an inserted idea

- When a sentence starts on one side of an inserted idea and finishes on the other side of an inserted idea, add commas around the inserted idea. (Com, incomplete, plete pattern)
 - Ex: I developed a budget, based on estimates we discussed, for fiscal year 2023-2024.

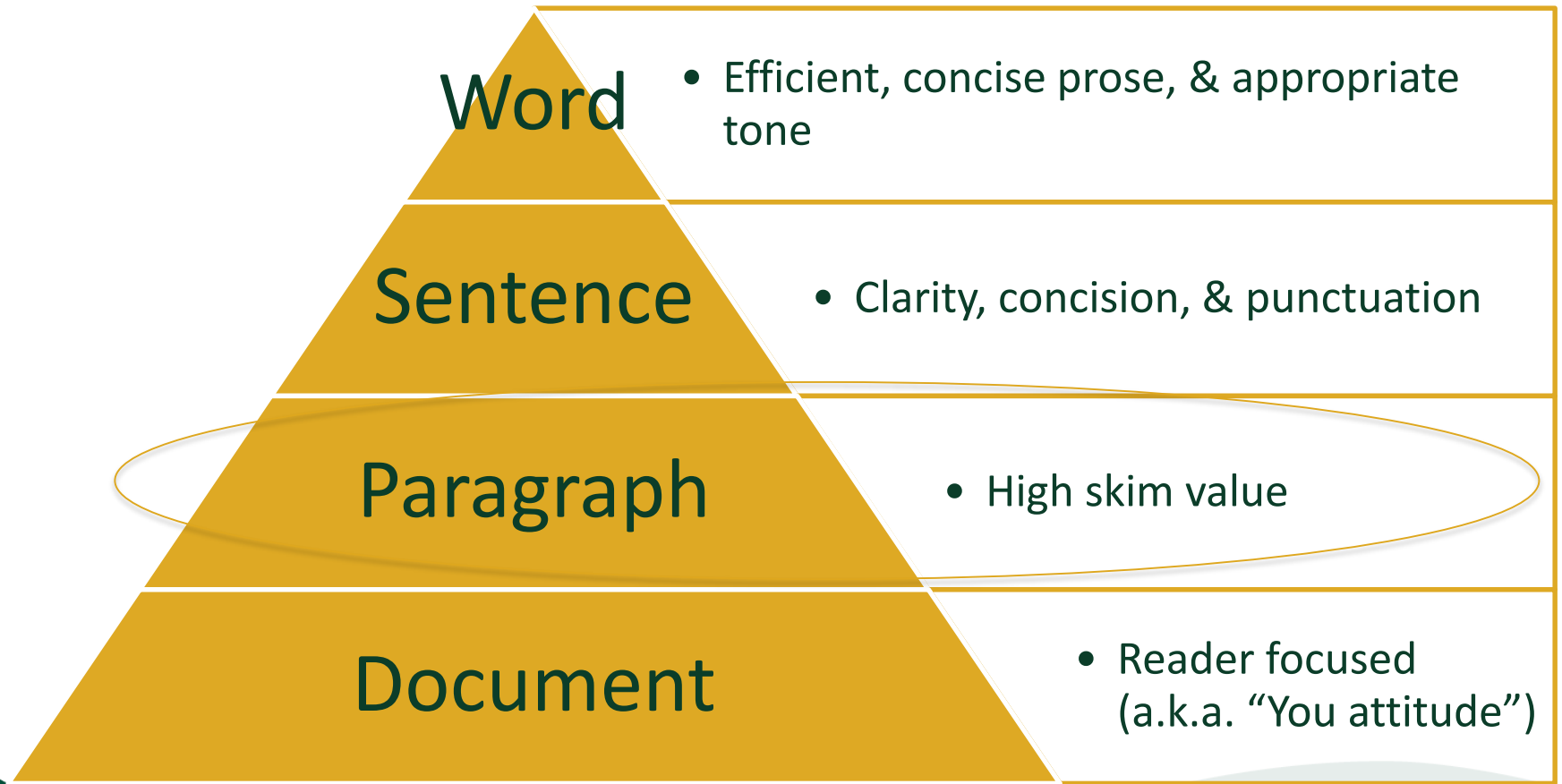
Use commas in a series

- When you have three or more items in a series, separate them with commas (Oxford comma, a.k.a. serial comma).
- **Dis-preferred:** Business letters should include the name, title and address of the recipient.
- **Preferred:** Business letters should include name, title, and address of the recipient.

Use commas in a series

- Sometimes omitting the serial comma is incorrect (or ambiguous). Using it is never incorrect.
- **Ambiguous:** “This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand and God.”
- **Clearer:** “This book is dedicated to my parents, Ayn Rand, and God.”

Write paragraphs that put the topic in first position & focus on only one idea



Adapted from P. Harms

Put the topic sentence in the first position to improve skim-ability

- Your topic sentence dictates your paragraph, and should give away the main idea and controlling idea for the paragraph.

Focus on only one topic per paragraph

- If you have content that isn't covered by the umbrella of the topic sentence, you should either:
 - Remove information that doesn't fit
 - Or, revise the topic sentence to include the information

These two writing patterns will help you keep a tight focus

Explanation/Description	List/Number
Topic sentence	Topic sentence
Key ideas and/or unfamiliar ideas	Key ideas and/or unfamiliar ideas
Examples	List
So what?	So what?

The explanation/description pattern provides more detail

Explanation/Description	
Topic sentence	Announce the paragraph's focus
Key ideas and/or unfamiliar ideas	Explain, expand, clarify the topic sentence
Examples	Illustrate key or unfamiliar ideas
So what?	Show why the information is important

Here's an example of a paragraph with explanation/description

Topic	{	When notifying customers about a potential data breach, companies must consider how to deliver the bad news.
Key ideas & examples	{	Two such approaches are direct and indirect organization. The direct strategy states the bad news, provides an explanation, and closes with an expression of good will. In contrast, the indirect strategy provides an explanation, delivers the bad news, and closes with good will. Conventional business writing advice suggests an indirect strategy for bad news to avoid threatening the reader's self-esteem. However, according to Jennifer Veltsos (2012), the direct strategy captures attention, encourages action, leads to shorter messages, and makes information easier to find, making it a better fit for data breach notifications.
So what?	{	

List/number pattern highlights key issues/tasks & opens up the text

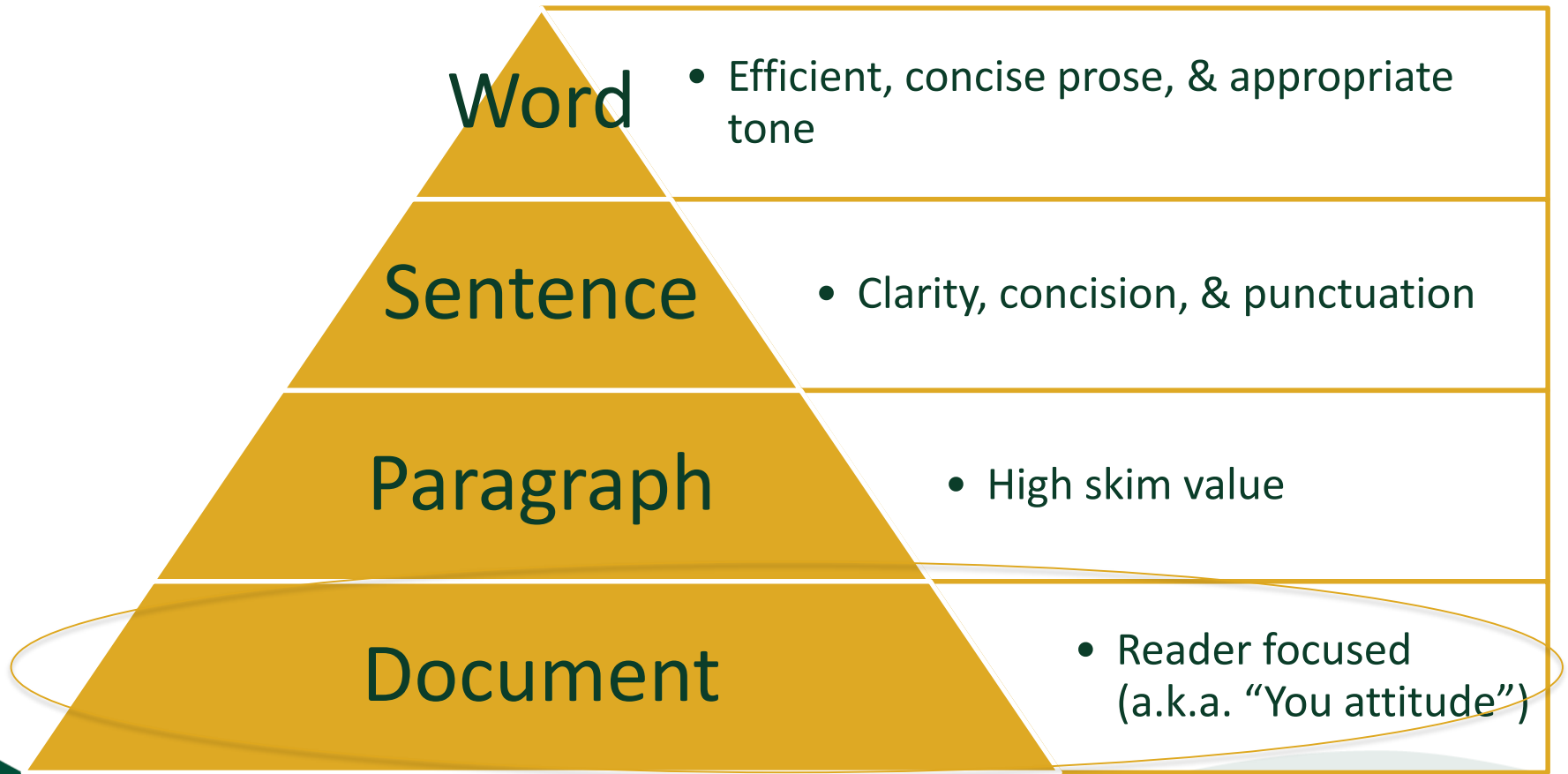
List/Number

Topic sentence	Announce the paragraph's focus
Key ideas and/or unfamiliar ideas	Explain, expand, clarify the topic sentence
Examples	Use bulleted or numbered items
So what?	Show why the information is important

Here's an example of BLUF paragraph with list/number approach

Topic	When notifying customers about a potential data breach, companies must consider how to deliver the bad news. Two such approaches are direct and indirect organization. The direct strategy:
Key ideas & examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• states the bad news,• provides an explanation, and• closes with an expression of good will. <p>In contrast, the indirect strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• provides an explanation,• delivers the bad news, and• closes with an expression of good will.
So what?	Conventional business writing advice suggests an indirect strategy for bad news to avoid threatening the reader's self-esteem. However, according to Jennifer Veltsos (2012), the direct strategy captures attention, encourages action, leads to shorter messages, and makes information easier to find, making it a better fit for data breach notifications.

Use headings & forecasting for the reader's benefit



Adapted from P. Harms

Include a forecasting (preview) statement in the introduction

- The preview (forecast) allows readers to quickly see and grasp your main points. The statement provides a blueprint for your document.

Include a forecasting (preview) statement in the introduction

Purpose

This paper analyzes the problem of workplace bullying and develops recommendations for human resources (HR) professionals to mitigate the issue. Workplace bullying directly affects 1 in 4 American adult workers (Namie, 2014). According to bullying expert Pamela Lutgen-Sandvik, "... adult bullying at work is frequent, ongoing aggressive communication and behavior that harms targets and organizations, and which targets cannot easily defend against, prevent, or end" (2013, p. 4). I argue that organizational cultures reward aggressive behavior, which impedes HR professionals' efforts to address

Preview

workplace bullying. First, I situate workplace bullying as a problem for the human resources profession. Second, I examine current academic research on underlying causes and consequences of workplace bullying. Finally, I offer two recommendations to HR professionals to reduce workplace bullying, and conclude the paper.

Align information rich headings with forecasting statement

First, I situate workplace bullying as a problem for the human resources profession. Second, I examine current academic research on underlying causes and consequences of workplace bullying. Finally, I offer two recommendations to HR professionals to reduce workplace bullying, and conclude the paper.

1. Industry Problem → HR professionals struggle as bullying targets turn to them
2. Literature Review → Workplace cultures reward aggressive behavior
3. Recommendations → Reward people for modeling positive workplace behaviors

Align information rich headings with forecasting statement

- Section headings offer many advantages for your readers, such as:
 - Identifying parts of the document they need to read
 - Reinforcing key talking points
 - Serving as transitions between sections