Abstraction lets you focus on only those details which are actually important to you.
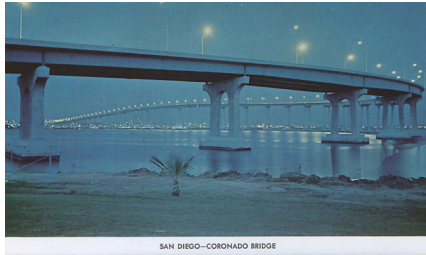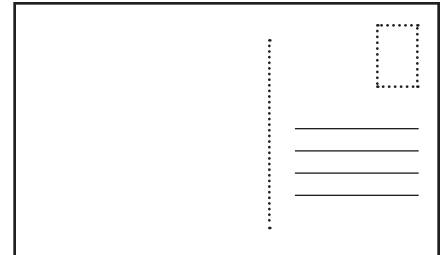
Many abstracted ideas may be combined (like Voltron) to produce a larger idea.

SAN DIEGO—CORONADO BRIDGE

a vintage, mostly bluish, postcard of san diego's coronado bridge at night

This image and caption feature a fairly low degree of abstraction


a postcard

This image and text, however, feature a moderately high degree of abstraction

By abstraction, I don't mean that I make everything *vague:* that would be counterproductive.

Instead, by abstraction I mean doing away with the information that is contextual fluff (what color ink, which post office, what kind of postcard, which relatives, &c.)
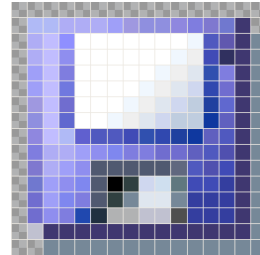
vague idea   thing

↓

paper

↓

card

↓

postcard

↓

specific object
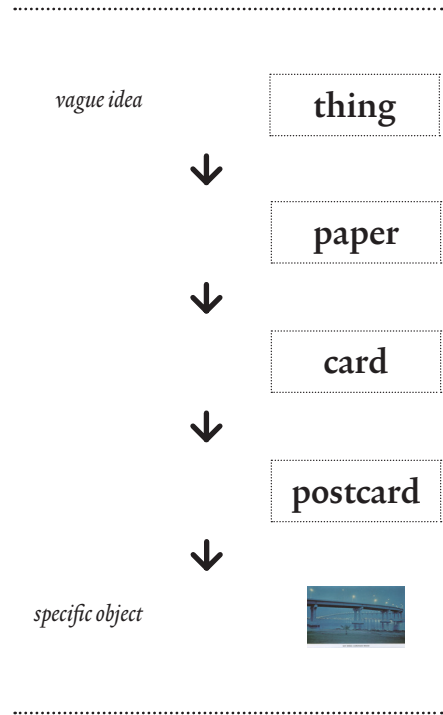
Abstraction is a gradient between hyperspecific and ultravague. Depending on the context or intent, you dial in your level of specificity.

A well picked abstraction is a building block for otherwise complex ideas.
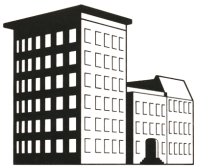
idea   building block   object
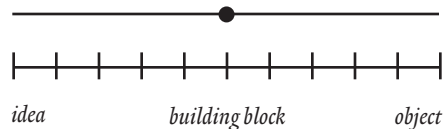
save (*idea*)

↓

↓

save (*action*)

The icon falls somewhere between the gradient of pure concept (I would like to save) and concrete action (save these bits to this file on that drive)

> "Isotype symbols were not meant to completely replace words, but to summarize and support the verbal content of the statistics. Due to this visual *summary*, less text is needed as well – the images give the relations, so that the text can be limited to key words instead of sentences."

The isotypes of Arntz and Neurath are graphic abstractions for the purpose of relaying statistics

gerdarntz.org

Current Events
Special:Recentchanges
Help:Contents
Various tools for experienced users
Navigation box
Toolbox
Special:Statistics
WP:Featured Articles
WP:Contact Us
Main Page discussion
Donations
Main Page
Direct entry to articles
Articles through Feat/DYK/ITN/SEL Ann

Special:User login
WP:Ask a Question
WP:Why create and account?
WP:Featured Content
Special:Random
WP:Community portal
Main Page Header
WP:Quick Index
Collaborative writing
Independent exploration
WP:Page history
Directed Introduction
Top 8 Portals
Wikipedia
WP:Goings-on
WP:Behold
Various Categories
Portal:Browse
WP:Sandbox
WP:Most wanted articles
WP:Introduction
WP:Announcements
WP:About
WP:FAQ
WP:Introduction 2
Encyclopedia
WP:Welcome, newcomers
WP:Introduction 3
WP:Bootcamp
Wiki
WP:What Wikipedia is not
WP:Recent changes
WP:Show preview
WP:Policies and guidlines
User talk:Newuser
WP:Section
WP:Searching
WP:Vandalism
WP:Tutorial
WP:Tutorial (editing)
WP:Your first article
WP:Tutorial (Formatting)
WP:Wikipedians
WP:Tutorial (Wikipedia links)
WP:Edit summary
WP:Tutorial (Relates site links)
WP:Annotated article
WP:Browse
WP:Who writes Wikipedia
WP:Tutorial (External links)

WP:How to edit a page

WP:How to edit a page/various subsection

Site maps are a high level abstraction for organizing and understanding the navigation and structure of complex web pages, e.g. wikipedia's home page.

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CONTENTS

....

The table of contents of most books abstracts each chapter into a single idea.

The book is either a jumbled collection of those ideas (in the worst case), or a new idea composed of those basic ideas in some sequence (in the best of cases).

....

The final point here is that abstractions by themselves aren't of any use unless they are composed to create composite ideas.
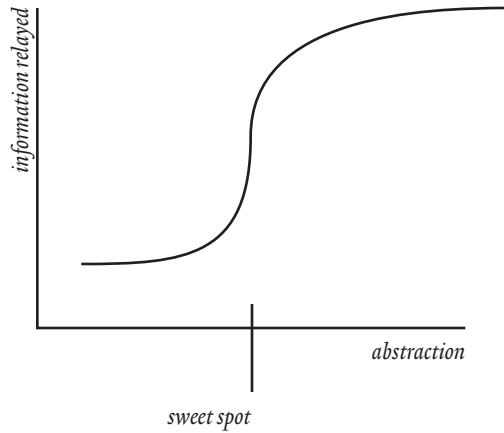
There's a point (the sweet spot) where the rate of
information relayed increases almost infinitely.
At this point, the abstraction reaches a contextual
maximum of usefulness.
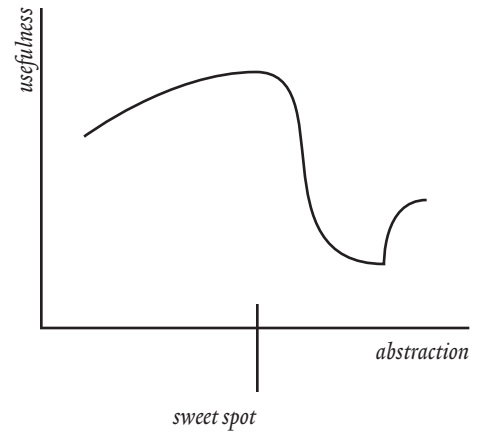
At the same sweet spot, the usefulness of the
abstraction simultaneously reaches a maximum
and it can be used to build more complex ideas.

Marcos Ojeda
30 Sept, 2009