Process

Vs

Instructions

Context

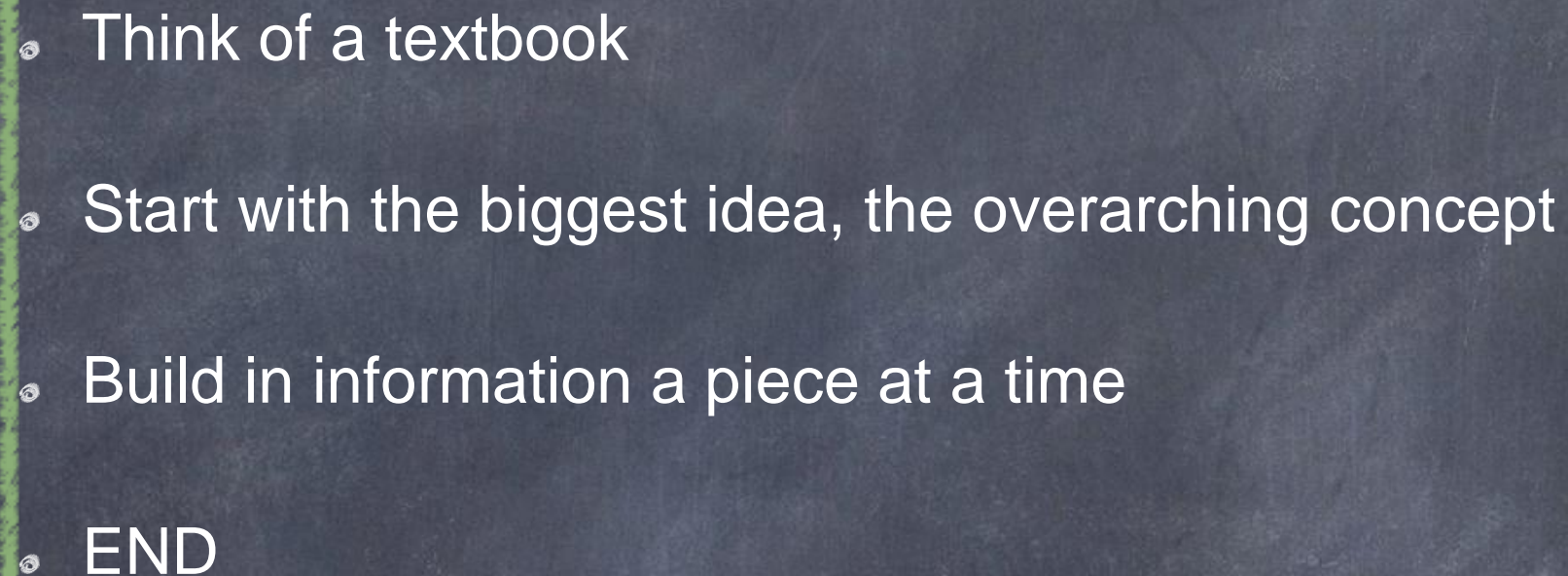| Context	Process	Instructions
Purpose	Explain why things are this way, and background for use	Explain how to do something
Scenario indicators	"Conventions", "standards", "best practices", "SOP"	"How do I....", "instruction manual"
Audience	Knows how, not the background context	Uninformed, or struggling user
Secondary audience	Monitoring agency	--
Author cues the reader...	"Standards", "best practices", "users guide", "Reference"	"Instructions", "how to...", "Form"

Form

Form	Process	Instructions
POV	Use 2nd to refer to reader	2nd implied in telegraphic commands
Pace	Medium	Fast!
Tone	Formal	Medium
Written as...	Progressive level of disclosure	Stages and steps in chronological order

Process : pattern

- Written as <u>progressive level of disclosure</u>

  - Think of a textbook

  - Start with the biggest idea, the overarching concept

  - Build in information a piece at a time

  - END

- In a textbook, you can comprehend the ending, because you read all other parts before.

- No conclusion!

Instructions : pattern

- Written as <u>stages and steps</u>.

    - Think of online help as an example.

    - Break the task down into big stages, ordered by time.

    - Make the stage a heading.

    - Under the stage heading, number each step that begins with a command.

    - Keep the number of steps low.

    - END

- No conclusion!

Skills

Skills	Process	Instructions
Cognitive (thinking)	Remembering what assumptions have become unconscious	Chronological order (e.g., use of "before" or "after)
Writing	Organizing in Progressive level of disclosure	Organizing in stages and steps
Ethical scenarios	Over use of "must"	Deemphasizing error conditions
When used?	Standards, conventions, memory of project decisions	Online instructions, how to guides, manuals for devices

Examples

Process

Best practices guide
User guide
SOP
RFC
Architecture doc
System reference
Employee handbook
Tax guide
"Tips for use"
Textbook
Manifesto
USA constitution

Blurred

Owner manuals
Joy of cooking
"Dummy" books

Instructions

Online help
User manuals
Tax form
Recipe

At a company, your job will be writing process content.

At a company, there is usually a separate technical communications department responsible for writing instruction content.

Later ... On the job

- If applicable for your purpose, allow these two patterns to merge. For example...

  - If you have instructions focus, start with the process description, follow it with step-by-step instructions. Similar to owners manuals.

  - If you have process focus, don't feel constrained, but add in numbered instructions where needed. Similar to Dummy books.

- I recommend that you write process as you make decisions about a project's design, so you don't have to remember later what standards you agreed to.

In-class exercises

In your writing group, discuss...   Time??

- Share the manual you brought from home.

- Who is the audience?

- Have the authors followed the conventions discussed? For example: Is the manual written as process description or instructions? Or a combination of both?

- Is the manual effective? What makes it work? Or what are the problems with it?

Process practice exercise

Think about the instructions you wrote for your reading homework...

Switch gears from instructions and create an outline of a process document covering that topic.

Creating a process outline

Brainstorm about conventions, traditions, standards, SOP, best practices, assumptions, why?

Be okay with uncertainty ....

Reorder topics into groups/topics (make each topic a heading)

Organize headings into progressive level of disclosure

Voila! Your outline is done.

Assignment #2

A few Specific instructions

Parallelism

- Parallelism means that elements of the same level have the same English construct

- This rule applies for all of the following...

    A. Numbered Lists or steps

    B. Bullets

    C. Elements in a list

    D. Headings of the same level

For examples of parallelism, look at my presentations