

ULTIMATE PROOF'S

10 TOP TIPS FOR WRITING WELL

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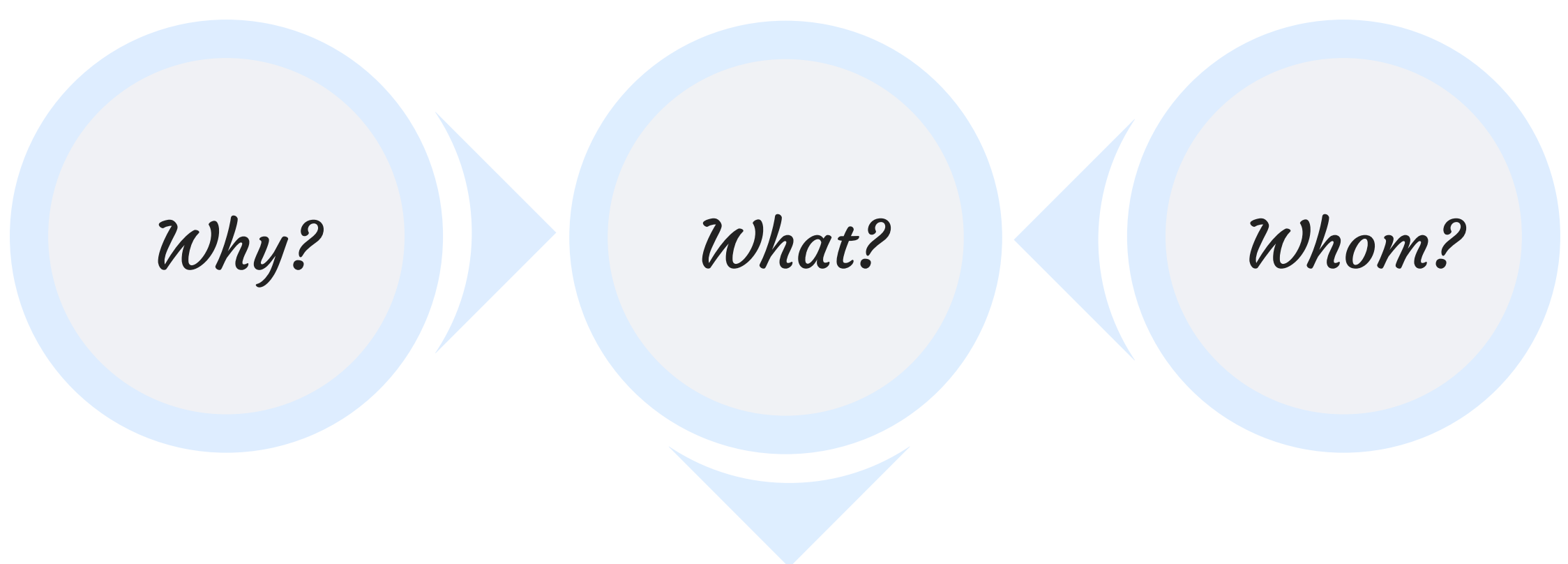
01

KNOW YOUR READER

Keep your reader in mind as you write.
Ask yourself **why** you are writing, **what** you are
trying to say and to **whom** you are saying it.

Do you want to inform, engage or influence?
Accordingly, decide whether your content should
be factual, inspiring or persuasive.

Be clear about the action you want your reader to
take. Then you'll **tell them what they need to know**,
not simply what you've found out or want to say.



02

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO SAY

Put important messages at the start. Test them out aloud before you commit them to paper: if you can't make sense of them, how will your reader?

Organise your thinking at the planning, not the writing, stage. Order your material to be **logical** and **transparent** to your reader.

03

USE MEANINGFUL SUBHEADINGS

Use subheadings to show readers at a glance how your themes develop.

So, instead of writing 'Section 4', describe the content of that section, e.g., 'Our safeguarding policy'.

04

B E D I R E C T

Write **to** people, not about them.

Use '**you**' and '**we**' or '**I**' to make your writing more confident, more transparent and more personal.

Write, too, about **what concerns your readers** rather than your business processes.

Before

Members of the public are asked to send our head office examples of community activities they would like to see in their local area.

After

Please send us your ideas for new community activities in your area.

05

K I S S ! (KEEP IT SHORT & SIMPLE)

Use **plain English** (language you use when talking).

Only use jargon when you are certain your readers will understand it, and never for external or non-expert readers.

Use abbreviations and acronyms sparingly.
Explain them at the first mention.

Cut out **redundant words** (very unique..., estimated at about..., past experience..., etc).

Use verbs rather than nouns: it's the verbs that make language dynamic.

Avoid too many heavy nouns ending in -tion or -sion, e.g. recommendation. This nominalisation (creating a noun from the verb) makes writing clunky and boring to read.

Before

The aim of this document is to provide an outline of systemic operations to facilitate the implementation of methodology that will assist the team in the avoidance of inconsistency in the wording used in our publications.

After

This document outlines how we can be consistent with the wording we use in our publications.

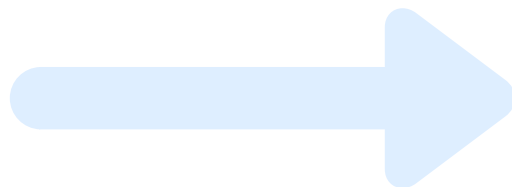
06

USE THE ACTIVE VOICE

Using the active voice more is **the single biggest thing** that will give your writing a bit of life. It also makes writing more confident and more authoritative, as it makes clear who is responsible for doing what.

The active voice always puts the 'doer' first.

Reference was made
to the document
(by Jane).



Jane referred to
the document.

07

KEEP PARAGRAPHS SHORT

Stick to **one main point** per paragraph.

If you can't sum up that point in a few words, you have probably tried to cram in too much.

08

ONE SENTENCE, ONE IDEA

Keep your sentences **short**. Aim for an average of 17 words per sentence, although don't let the word count stifle your flow.

Vary your **rhythm**: try inserting the odd two- or three-word sentence for impact. It's easy. And it will help keep your reader's attention.

Before

Whilst the organisation currently relies on sponsorship from small enterprises and individuals, the co-operation of large corporate bodies, without whose funding we will not be able to campaign successfully for legislative changes, is now essential if we are to improve the quality of life of many sectors of the population.

After

We need funding to lobby for changes in the law to improve people's quality of life. At the moment, we rely on sponsorship from small enterprises and individuals. But this is not enough. Financial support from large corporate and public bodies is now essential if we are to campaign successfully for change.

09

EDIT, TWICE!

Be rigorous in your editing.

Are you using the best word for the job? What do you mean? Is there a simpler way to say it? When you think you've finished, try cutting by a third.

10

PROOFREAD

Proofreading isn't an optional extra: make time for it.

Print the document out and come back to it when you're fresh – ideally the next day.

Try to proofread away from your desk: this will help you read it as a reader, not as the writer.

Use a ruler to guide you and a pencil to point to each word individually. This will stop your brain reading what it expects to see rather than what's actually there.

If possible, call in some professional help...

NEED HELP?

Employing the services of a professional editor or proofreader is a cost-effective way to ensure your writing works well.

As a specialist business editing and proofreading company, **Ultimate Proof Ltd** won't baffle you with jargon and confusing mark-up symbols.

We understand that businesses need to work with people who can edit and scrutinise their text efficiently and accurately, working effortlessly with designers and communications professionals.

We also create simple **business copy style guides** that you can share with your staff and suppliers, to ensure all your writing works well.

We hope these tips have helped you, if you'd like to know more, please get in touch.

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