



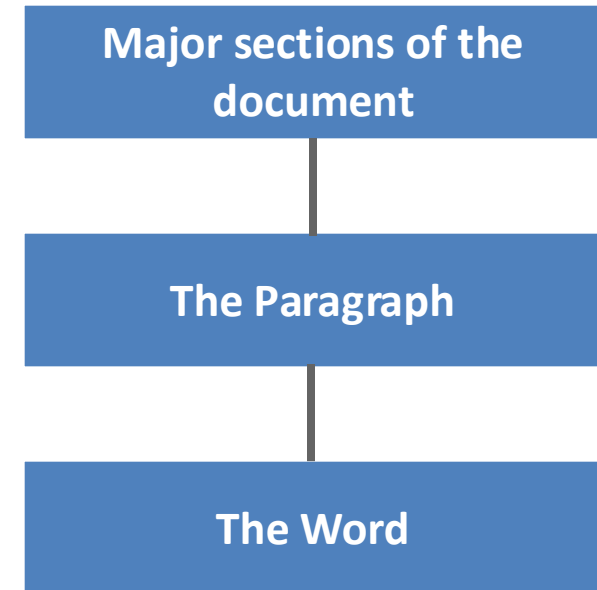
Grant Proposal Development Principles: An Overview

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Effective and Persuasive Written Technical Communication

Persuasive Grant Proposal Writing is a four-step process that entails consideration of three structural levels of the document.

- I. Analyze the structure of the proposal to meet reviewer expectations in terms of type of content and scope of detail (feeding into the length of each section/subsection)
- II. Classify each section into two categories:
 - Extended “storytelling” in a narrative form (1 or more connected paragraphs)
 - Factual “catalog” in lists, tables, or a narrative form
- III. Convey information (either a story or a catalog) in a balanced manner between writing and visual aids (tables, figures, infographics). Ideally, do not exceed one visual aid per page.
- IV. Weave novelty in terms of word choice, concept/model branding, and in all aspects of the visual aids.



Formatting Your Proposal Structure For Max “Readability”

- “Readability” = Effort expended in comprehension
- Readability is enhanced by many aspects of a proposal
 - Different subsections of information should appear in their proper order, anticipating reader expectations
 - Visual cues: Spacing, underlining, bolding, numbered subsections. **Avoid a “Wall of Text”**
 - Proper use of paragraphs: What are paragraphs for? What is their internal structure?
 - The relationship of sequential paragraphs to each other.
 - General to specific ordering

General Readability Principles Across the Entire Proposal

- Establish your topic and purpose
- Use key words prominently
- Limit # of different acronyms
- Explain key concepts for nonspecialist readers
- Use standard terminology for specialist readers; avoid synonyms just for the sake of variety.

What unites these visual and text principles?

They all **reduce the cognitive load** on the reader's **short-term memory** capacity, enabling more detail to be transferred **to long-term memory**.

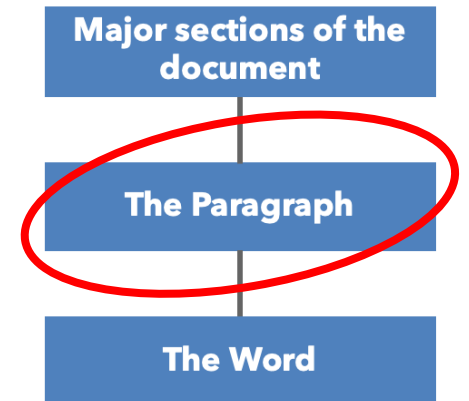


“Readability” When Applied to Writing Narrative Sentences

- Given the inherent decay of information in short-term memory, excessively long, complex sentences will involve more memory loss, **with more forgetting occurring early in the sentence.**

Given the inherent decay of information in short-term

- Each sentence in a paragraph **should begin with transition information** alluding to the material previous sentence.
- This “Given” Information, or more familiar material, reinforces what was just read, activating new representations already laid down in long-term memory, and serves as an easier to process transition to “New” or unfamiliar information.



Convey information between writing & visual aids

Just as STM controls our comprehension, and enjoyment, of novel technical text (aka “readability”), it also conditions the “perceptibility” of visual aids.

- Visual Aids – Tables, Figures, Infographics are powerful tools in an alternate modality of communication that can convey your message effectively
 - Infographic is a broad term for any visual aid outside of the traditional table or figure; infographics often contain icons and creative visual elements that can effectively convey multistep processes or complex network relationships
- Requirements for effective visual aids
 - Must be supported by the text: They generally cannot be a repository for larger amounts of novel information
 - Must maximize perceptibility in font size, font choice, and color

Communicating Visually

- Principles of Color Use

1. Purposeful: Use color to emphasize key elements, indicate grouping, or show progression. Avoid using color purely for decoration (arbitrary).
2. Contrast: Ensure strong contrast between text and background for perceptibility — dark text on a light background or vice versa.
3. Consistency: Use a limited, cohesive palette to maintain a professional appearance and reduce cognitive load. Consider cultural implications as well.
 - Ex: B&W, Dark vs. Light Blue, Dark vs. Light Complementary colors

Font Selection

1. Readability Over Style

- **Sans-serif fonts** like Arial, Calibri, or Helvetica are often preferred for digital formats, or conveying technical / modern / current topics
- **Serif fonts** like Times New Roman or Georgia work well for printed materials, or conveying concepts with historic weight
- Try using a font that is a “refined variation” or a “subtle reinterpretation” of a commonly used one.

2. Consistency

- Use a limited set of fonts (one for headings and one for body text) throughout the document.
- Maintain uniform font sizes and styles (e.g., bold for headings, italics for emphasis) to help readers intuitively navigate the information.

The Opposite of Novelty: Use of AI in Writing

- Best for Revising/Summarizing
 - Generate ideas on how to summarize a section to reduce its length in the document
 - Rewriting a section in a different, specified style
 - Create abstracts, keywords, brandnames
- It is not recommended to use AI to create whole sections of your proposal, because:
 - AI tends to write in a style that is verbose and overly general
 - Real experts are able to be appropriately specific in summarizing a literature and in providing necessary methodological details.
 - AI sounds like AI, which is a familiar style to millions of users. If your reader detects an excessive reliance on this tool, they will make assumptions about your capabilities as a scholar or a project manager.



Take Away Points

- I. Your early drafts were created to be easy for you the writer to finish the draft. Your revisions should be solely focused on making your proposal easy for the reader to engage. **Look at your draft as a reader encountering it for the first time.**
- II. Readable grant proposals present information in the order the reader is expecting at the level of detail appropriate to the reader and the proposal requirements. Given how most professors tend to write, **Less is More.**
- III. Persuasive grant proposals **mix fresh, but still familiar language** with supporting visual aids that are of a caliber than reflects your professional credibility.