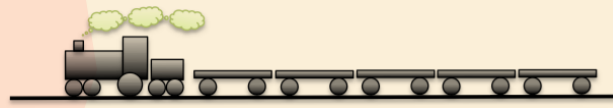


PRINCIPLES & TACTICS

The Locomotive pulls the Train



First impressions set the stage. If the first experience is good, your reader will forgive a lot later on; if the first part is a puzzle, the reader may not even get to 'later on'. Experienced writers indicate that 50% of the work goes in the first part: in the first chapter of a book, the first section of a chapter, the first sentence of a paragraph.

Three spans of attention



The Curse of Knowledge

You, the author, know a lot about the subject you are writing on, your audience less. For you, many things seem 'obvious' because they're in the back of your head. Not so for the reader. It's like tapping your favourite tune with your pen on the table: in your head you hear the entire orchestra. Not so your table companion. Try to imagine their perspective.

USE YOUR DESIGN SKILLS

Plan before you write

Genre and argument. Decide if you are writing an empirical, review, or position paper. 30 second message. Decide and formulate your 'elevator pitch'.

Basic materials

Place together the key references, observations, and visuals you intend to use in your story. With these outline elements, you can get feedback on New and Relevant. In the writing, you can then focus on Clear and True.

Work these in 3 Powerpoint pages, and discuss them. Then you can set course before you deal with comma's and word choice (CNR).

Iterate

Don't expect to get it right in one go. Write, then review it as a reader. Then write. Let it lie down for a night. Then rewrite. Even experienced writers will have a dozen or more draft versions in writing a paper.

DON'T DROWN IN RULES AND TIPS

Write!

Don't let the tips and rules hold you back. Just start writing, then review. It's like what Schön said about sketching: you have a dialogue with your materials. So, get started.

PITFALLS: 3 COMPETING GENRES

For most of us, academic writing doesn't come naturally, and we are easily lured into more natural ways of writing. Sometimes we don't notice before we're several pages further. Keep your eyes open to see when you drift off into tempting genres:

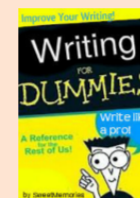


The Personal Diary

"I did this, and then I did that, and then I did that, ...and there's that... ...and this..."

A chronological account of your exploration. But the reader thinks: 'Where is this going, and why do I need to know this?'

Academic writing conveys information efficiently



The Instruction Manual

"You must do this, and this needs to be done so, ... And you must do that..."

A series of instructions with opinions of how things should be done, without giving proof why this is the necessary way.

All claims and values come with an argumentation



The Mystery Novel

"Keep on reading, You're puzzled now, but all will be revealed in the end..."

It took the author a long way to come to the conclusion, and he lets the reader share that suffering. Possibly with a disappointing end.

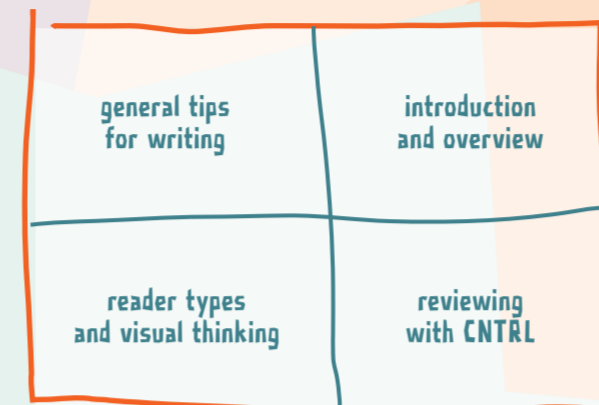
Conclusions should be easy to find

All these genres have their place, even in science, but rarely in an academic paper. So why does this map not give full argumentations? Because it is an instruction manual, not an academic paper.

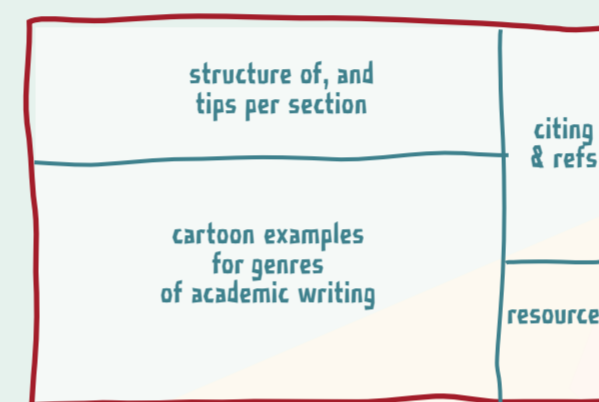
HOW TO USE THIS MAP

Maps have been compiled by explorers for centuries, to help those that come after them to travel the terrain. Likewise, these maps contain overviews, backgrounds, and tips to help designers make sense of a piece of terrain. //pj

FRONT



BACK



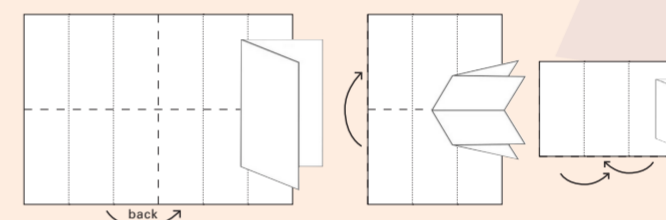
Academic writing follows conventions that are meant to optimize effectiveness (quality of findings) and efficiency (how easily the reader can find what he needs).

This Map brings together a number of lessons, tips, and hints about communication in general and academic writing in particular, paying special attention to the (visually oriented) skills and needs of designers as readers and writers.

Many of the principles in here are not just for academic papers. Also infographic posters, presentations, videos, and even agendas have to be clear, offer something new, true, and relevant, and do well to spark a like. But they have different makeup formats, and different opportunities for interaction and visual language.

COLOFON

Dear reader, this map is an ID4216 C&C draft version for a stand-alone information sheet with tips for writing (and other forms of communication). It is shaped like a tourist city-map, intended for A2. You may receive it in A3 format, unfolded. In that case, you may have to fold it yourself: the main page should be folded in two twice, then the result should be three columns, with this column ending up as the backside. Happy folding and unfolding.

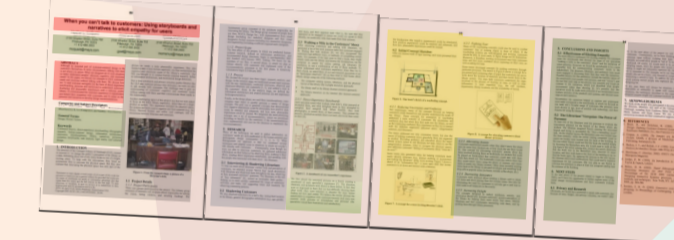


<https://studiolab.ide.tudelft.nl/studiolab/mapofwriting/>
Pieter Jan Stappers, IDE TU Delft

version 0.9 - October 2020

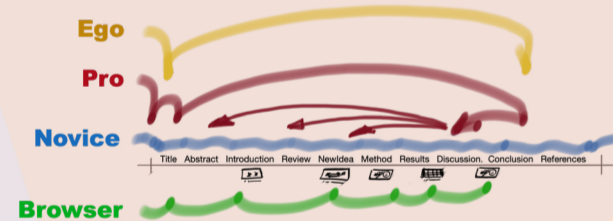


map of READING REVIEWING & academic WRITING



Academic reading (dis)orders

Not everyone reads from the beginning through the end. For a piece of fiction, yes, but for academic writing, no. It may help you to understand how your readers navigate your work:



The Novice or a student who doesn't know why he should read the text, may start at line one, and plod line by line to the end.

The Professional has an information need and is looking for it. She starts at the title, then does the abstract, jumps to the conclusions, and works her way back to the discussion. At each stage she may conclude "no, this isn't going to be it and stop". **So make sure your abstract also summarizes the findings, i.e., is not just an introduction.** After the discussion, the pro may go to the review (to check it's well connected), the introduction (only if she feels she's new to the topic), or the methods (especially if she doesn't trust the conclusions).

The Browser, or Visual Reader, will skip through the pages, and react to what pops out: visuals and tables. **Use visuals to highlight your main ideas or claims, and make sure your captions lure the reader to the text.**

The Ego, or Social Reader, will start with the names and references: does this writer cite the works I know? Do I know him? Do I know his university? **That's why there is blind peer review: so reviewers focus on the content.**

Serve the Visual Reader

In browsing for information, we all use quick scanning to pick up promising bits. Visually-oriented people (designers?) even more so.

Even in a text-dominated channel, such as an article, it helps to 'catch the eye'. Visuals can also organize a complex set of data, give a visual summary of an argument, or give a feel for 'the real thing'.

Your title appears in a table of contents. Will your reader see it and recognize what it is about? **The keywords** are a mini-summary, just like terms in a search query.

The abstract summarizes the entire paper, not just the introduction, but also the findings and conclusions!

A visual can attract attention and summarize or highlight important text. The caption leads the interested reader to a further explanation.

Visuals

Diagrams highlight (abstract) relations in an argument. **Tables** allow for comparison in several directions. **Photos and quotes,** can show evidence and explanation as instances for an abstract claim. Use these deliberately: eye-candy (just pretty pictures, not connected to the content) is likely to damage your message (unless maybe if you are making a commercial brochure, but that doesn't count as 'academic communication').

Make a Thumbnail Sketch

Designers often are visual thinkers. Academic writing formats are often very fixed (e.g., 4 pages, 2 columns fontsize 10). Before you start writing, (1) think of

which core photos, diagrams, and tables you need to make your point, and make thumbnail sketches to see how large the different sections can be.



FIGURES, TABLES, CAPTIONS

Especially in academic publications, there are rules to how you use figures (and tables):

number each of them; **refer** to the number in the running text (preferably before the picture occurs in the layout).

Give it a **caption** that points out what the reader should notice. The evidence does not speak for itself. Compare these four examples of captions. Which one would make you want to read the connected text? Tip: don't postpone writing captions. Do them right away!



Figure 23



Figure 36 Senseo coffee maker



Figure 46 Picture of a bicycle



Figure 87 The two-part grille is BMW's visual signature

REVIEWING & WRITING WITH CNTRL

Reviewing with the CNTRL Criteria

Academic outlets use (peer) reviewers, who critically look at the value of submitted papers, give an evaluation (to the editor) and constructive criticism (to the author). Often, the review is double blind, which means authors and reviewers don't know each other's names.

In reviewing papers (or posters, reports, etc), reviewers use a set of criteria to judge the work.



CLEAR

Ask Do
Can I see what the author wants to say?
Is the whole thing a puzzle for me?
Can I see the 30 second message?

Do
Attend to your spelling, grammar, word use, definitions, examples, visuals.
Communicate your main theme clearly and early (in the introduction and abstract)



NEW

Ask Do
Do I learn anything I didn't know yet?
Did the author add value?
Is it more than a summary?

Do
Make clear what your contribution is and how it goes further than what the audience already knows. Even a literature review brings something new.



TRUE

Ask Do
Am I convinced?
Is evidence given?
Is the claim proven?
Do I trust the reasoning?
(not: Is it my opinion too?)

Do
Cite sources, give evidence and argue why it warrants the claims. Explain, define, visualize.



RELEVANT

Ask Do
Can I use this?
Will it help me do my job?
Does it connect to the theme?

Do
Consider the expectations of your audience, their interests, and needs.



LIKE

Ask Do
Does it excite me?
Is there a spark?
Something special that doesn't fit CNTR criteria? (feel free to be subjective here)

Do
Bring something original, show excitement, bring lively quotes and examples, have an evocative title or visual.

This is where it begins. If it's not clear, the other criteria cannot be judged

Here's where communities have their specific rules, demands, and expectations

And yes, there's more than just these rules

