



Session 1: Elements of Writing and the Deconstruction Method

Administrative Writing for Global
Health Professionals

GHPOD II

Tips for Navigating this Slide Deck

1. Progress to the next slide by clicking anywhere on the slide itself or by using the < and > arrows in the navigation bar at the bottom.
2. View the document in full screen through the navigation bar at the bottom. This will zoom the text to be larger and it will be easier to read.
3. The same practice document is used throughout this session. If you have trouble reading it within these slides, you can access it separately on the course website.

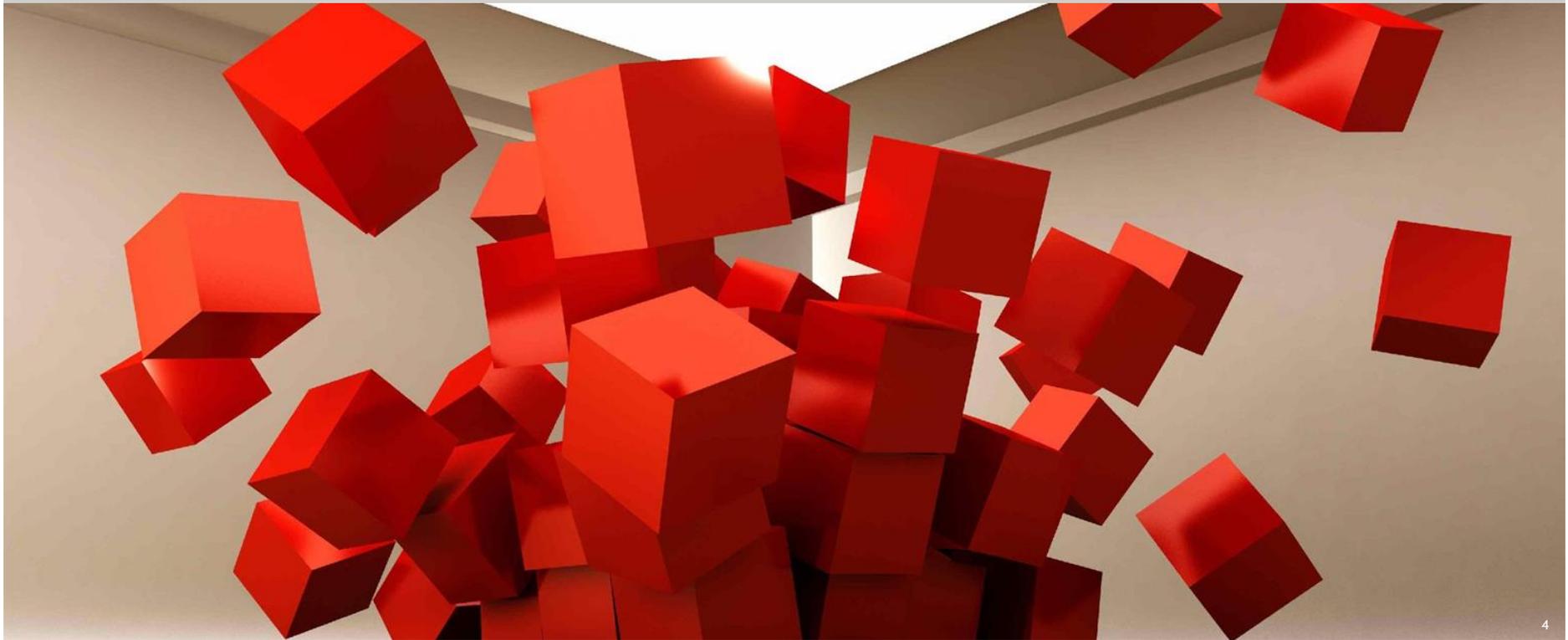
Introduction

Writing is more complicated than sitting down and putting pen to paper.

There are many elements to writing and all of them influence each other.

In this session, we will review the elements of good writing compositions, explore the Deconstruction Method, and practice using the method on a sample document.

Deconstruction Method

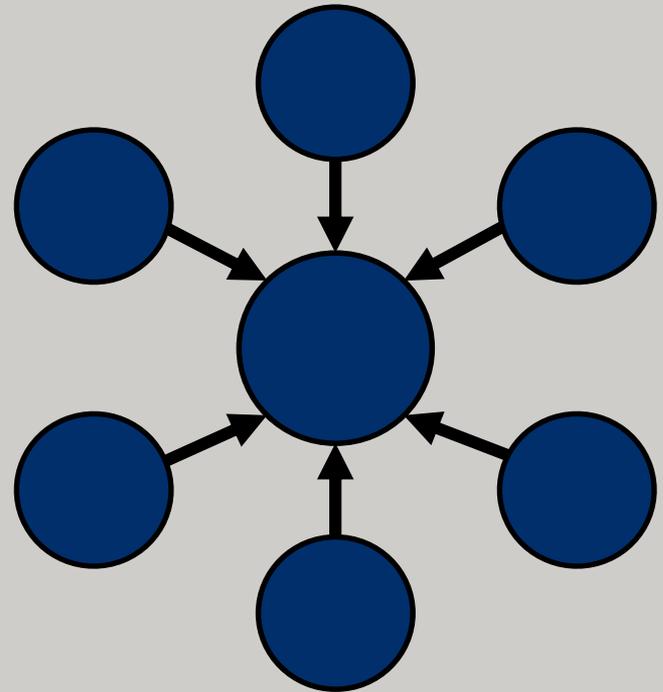


Overview

The Raimes Deconstruction Method is a guiding framework which will help you deliver written content with clarity.

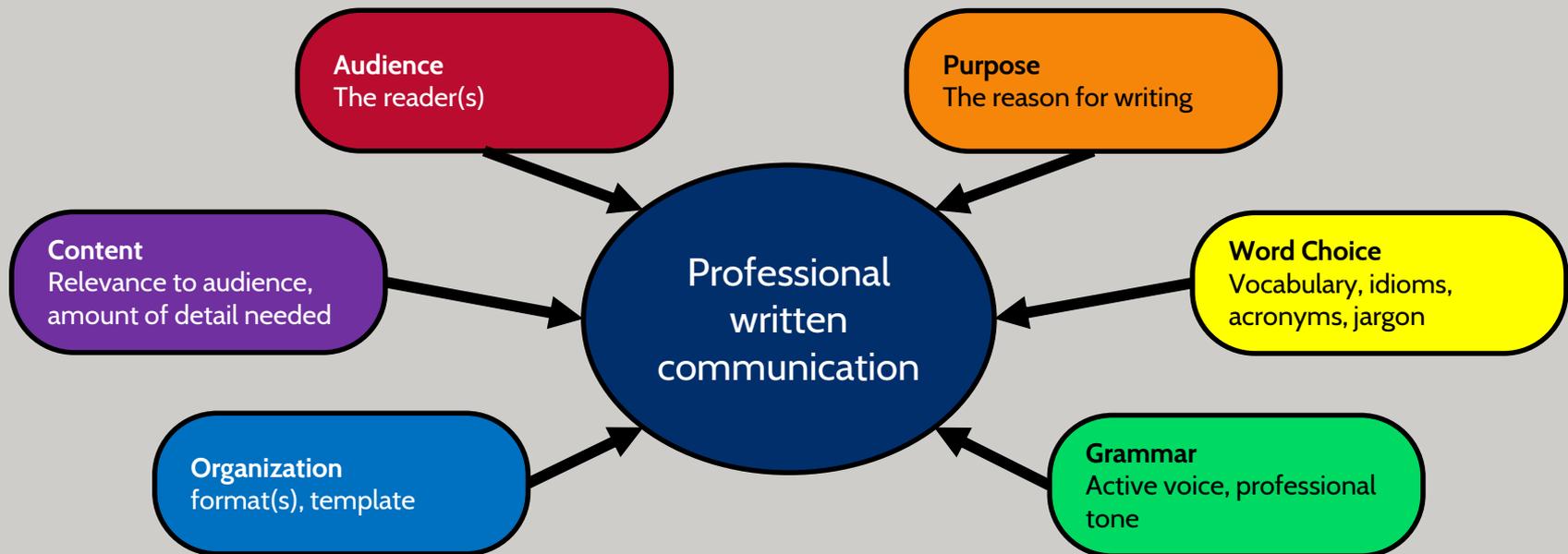
This method takes apart (or deconstructs) a piece of writing in order to recognize its parts. By asking simple questions about it, you will clarify the goals of your task and the needs of your audience.

The method was named after Ann Raimes, an English professor at Hunter College and respected ESL instructor.



Professional and Technical Deconstruction

Clear, fluent, and effective professional communication through writing requires the identification of six elements: audience, purpose, grammar, word choice, organization, and content. All of these elements interact with each other so it is important to think about how a change in one will affect the outcome of the written product. We will review each of these individually.



How we'll review

1

Overview

Read an overview of the element and review guiding questions to ask yourself while writing.

2

Example

Read an example fact sheet and identify how the element is used.

3

Tips

Explore tips for writing your own fact sheets

Audience

The **audience** is the people who will read your written communication.

Consider who will be reading your document. Will you have multiple readers? Have you identified everyone who needs to see or use the document? Each reader may have a different need for the document and identifying each before writing will help you focus your message.

Your audience's relationship with the topic will influence how you write your document. If your audience is already familiar with the topic, you don't need to provide as much background or introductory information as you would for beginners or for the public.

USAID documents frequently have international readers. Writing in plain language increases the ability of your audience to understand your message.

Audience

Look over this document and identify the audience



GLOBAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (GHPOD)

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ADELAIDE GERARDI / SOCIAL IMPACT

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GHPOD provides tailored organizational development (OD) services, professional development (PD), or coaching or mentoring to Missions or Offices in the Global Health Bureau:

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Life of Project:	August 28, 2012-September 30, 2016
Funding:	\$26,351,932
Implementing Partner:	Social Impact
Geographic Focus:	Worldwide

ABOUT USAID

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Contact Information: Michael Wilburn (COR): mwilburn@usaid.gov or Bob Rice (GHPOD Program Director): brice@ghpod.com
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Audience

The **audience** of this fact sheet is health sector staff in *Missions* or *Offices* in the Global Health Bureau.

The audience of USAID fact sheets are external and internal partners so they are informed about the project and the work it does. Examples of fact sheet audiences are *Ministry of Health* officials, local NGOs that work in health, the USAID Mission Director, or the Ambassador.

Do you think this fact sheet identified the appropriate audience? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Purpose

The **purpose** is the reason you are writing.

Consider why you are writing the document. Do you have a purpose or a reason? If not, reconsider writing the document and see if there is a better way to communicate your topic.

What are you trying to convey? Are you sharing information or are there actions you want your audience to take? Knowing your purpose will help you focus your message so you are clear and concise.

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Purpose

The **purpose** of this fact sheet is to communicate the work of the GHPOD project in a concise and factual manner.

All USAID fact sheets share the same purpose.

Do you think this fact sheet achieved its purpose? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Word Choice

The **word choice** includes the vocabulary, idioms, acronyms, and jargon in your document.

Consider the audience of your document. Will they know the acronyms you used and USAID Speak? Acronyms should be spelled out in the first use (e.g., Global Health Professional and Organizational Development (GHPOD)) and consider using plain, common words like training in the place of capacity development.

Use words that have meaning. What does it mean to describe your project as “transformational” or “innovative”? These beautiful yet empty words don’t tell your audience anything about your project. Rather than use those types of words, let your work speak for itself. Describe your impact by providing clear details so all audiences can understand your work.

Word Choice

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Word Choice

The **word choice** of this fact sheet includes written-out acronyms and words common to the audience of USAID staff.

In all sections of the fact sheet and wherever possible, use lay descriptions of your work rather than technical words so all audiences can understand your work. Avoid adjectives that do not clarify your work.

Do you think this fact sheet chose appropriate words? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Grammar

The **grammar** includes the voice, tone, agreement, and sentence structure of your written communication.

Consider the grammar necessary for your audience and purpose. The way you write texts to your friends is likely not appropriate for an email that will be read by the Ministry of Health.

Look out for run-on sentences because sentences that are too long are difficult for readers to follow and understand. Punctuation also affects the readers' ability to determine the purpose of your sentence: too much punctuation can be just as confusing as too little.

A key way to ensure your audience can understand is to use the active voice. For example, the sentence "I wrote this document today" provides a clearer picture of the action than "This document was written today" does.

Grammar

Look over this document and identify the grammar



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Grammar

The **grammar** of this fact sheet includes the active voice, a professional tone, and short sentences.

Use the following guidelines for each section of a fact sheet:

- **Summary:** Use active present tense verbs and concise sentences.
- **Goals and Objectives:** Use active verbs, verbs in the infinitive tense (all sentences must be in parallel tense), concise sentences, and bullets no more than one sentence long.
- **Results:** Use active verbs in the past tense if the project is over or in the future tense if the project is just beginning (all sentences must be in parallel tense) and concise sentences

Do you think this fact sheet used appropriate grammar? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Organization

The **organization** is the format of your document, including any template used.

In many USAID documents, there are templates that should be followed such as for reports and fact sheets. Many of these are available through the USAID branding resources package but you may have others specifically within your office, mission, or project.

For other written communication, you should organize your content so you clearly convey your message. Each paragraph should have only one purpose; if your paragraph covers too many topics, create a separate paragraph for each.

Organization

Look over this document and identify its organization



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Organization

The **organization** of this fact sheet was determined by the Project Fact Sheet (PFS) template provided in May 2016.

USAID fact sheets should follow the template provided to you. The template requires you to include a project-related photo, a title (including a subtitle if necessary), fast facts (to be included in the table), contact information, and the date that the fact sheet was last written/approved.

Do you think this fact sheet was organized properly and followed the template? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Content

The **content** is all relevant and necessary information.

Consider your purpose and make sure each sentence you write helps you achieve that purpose. For each sentence you write, ask yourself whether it includes relevant information. If it is not relevant, it is likely going to distract your audience from your purpose. Take pauses to review what you've written to make sure you've included all relevant information and haven't forgotten anything.

You will need to decide whether the information you've included is either too technical or not technical enough based on the intended audience. The amount of technical details for a document that will be read by the ambassador is different than the amount needed for an NGO that work in health.

Content

Look over this document and identify the content



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Content

The **content** of this fact sheet is the services offered to the *Missions and Offices* in the Global Health Bureau.

When creating your own fact sheet, use the following guidelines for each section:

- **Summary:** Three to four sentences describing your project. Be sure to accurately describe the work you do.
- **Goals and Objectives:** Summarize the goals and objectives of your project to no more than four general objectives. Think logically about how you can show the audience that you are successfully reaching your goals.
- **Results:** Choose these according to importance and strength. Do not include all results, but tailor them to the goals you used. This section should include hard data.

Do you think this fact sheet used appropriate content? Is there anything the author missed or could have done better?

Summary

The elements from the Raimes Deconstruction Method help us to create written documents that are clear and concise. Each element impacts all of the others and cannot be considered completely independently of the others.

Now that you have practiced using the Deconstruction Method on the sample fact sheet in this presentation, you will read the fact sheet assigned in the course website and submit your answers to the course instructor.

