

01

Plan Your Way to Writing Success



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Better planning, better writing

Here's a secret. When it comes to creating readable, persuasive text, the time you spend actually writing is very short. Great planning and editing are far more important.

This stuff isn't rocket science. Whether this is new material or stuff you learned years ago - it'll all seem like common sense. The truth is, the only way to fail at planning is to not do it at all.

As labour-intensive as it may seem, proper planning will save you time in the long run. As you get better at it, some of these steps might happen in your head. For now, write everything down. You'll be surprised at how much it forces you to clarify your thinking.

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIVES

Being clear about your objectives before you start to write will make everything simpler.

How to define an objective

Your objective can be a bullet list or a sentence, and must answer these four questions.

- What am I writing?
- Who am I talking to?
- Why do I need to write this?
- What one action do I want my reader to take?

Exercise: Define an objective

Think about a writing project you have coming up. Pick one element of it, one article, page or email, for example, and create an objective for it

IDENTIFY YOUR AUDIENCE

Before writing, work out who your audience is, and define this group as a single, representative person. You'll instinctively adjust your writing to suit that person. If you're writing for a single person already, take the time to think about them clearly. This will ensure you're writing in a way that will properly connect with them.

How to choose your person

- **Representative:** the most common kind of person in the target audience. If your audience is made up of mostly middle-aged, white women, your person will best represent this group.
- **Aspirational:** the person your target audience would most like to be. Thinking about that audience of middle-aged white women – perhaps you target their younger selves.
- **Influential:** the person who will influence the behaviour of your target. For example, the buyers of toys are likely to be those middle-aged white women again, but you target the ones who influence the buying decision: their kids.

Exercise: Define your audience as a single representative person

The following questions may help you to be specific. This is just a start point, not a comprehensive list.

- What is your person's name, age and gender?
- What does he or she look like?
- What does your person do for a living?
- What home life do they have?
- What hobbies does your person enjoy?
- How would you describe your person to a colleague?
- How would your person behave at a party?
- What motivates your person to engage with your product or service?

Key takeaways

Write two or three things from this section that will have the greatest impact on your writing.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

