

A grayscale photograph of a person's face and hands. The person is covering their eyes with both hands, palms facing forward. The image is dark and moody, with the person's face mostly obscured by their hands and the overall low-key lighting. The background is a solid dark gray.

Writing in Plain Language for Digital Accessibility

Don't Make Me Read!

A grayscale photograph of a person's face and hands. The person's hands are pressed against their face, covering their eyes and forehead, a gesture often associated with frustration, stress, or feeling overwhelmed. The image is dark and moody, with the person's features partially obscured by their hands. The background is a solid dark gray.

Information Overload

**Don't Make Me Read
Anything Extra!**

What is effective digital content?

Effective Digital Content

- Audience can quickly and easily:
 - **Find** what they need
 - **Understand** what they find
 - **Use** this information to take action

**How do you write
effective digital content?**

Writing Effective Digital Content

- Write **for the audience**
- Only what is needed **by the audience**
- Write **in the audience's words**



You need a passport.

Which would you rather use?

Passports V1:

358 words (excluding link text). 5 links under zero headings.



Passports

For more information see [Passport Application Processing Times](#).

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue or verify United States passports.

New Application for a U.S. Passport

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over [9,000 passport acceptance facilities](#) located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver's license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also [13 regional passport agencies](#), and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You'll need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time: if your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession; if your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago; if your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16; or if your currently valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

For more information on getting a new passport, please visit [How to get a passport](#) page.

Renewal of a U.S. Passport

You can renew by mail if: Your most recent passport is available to submit and it is not damaged; you received the passport within the past 15 years; you were over age 16 when it was issued; you still have the same name, or can legally document your name change.

You can get a passport renewal application form by downloading it from this site.

If your passport has been, altered or damaged, you cannot apply by mail. You must apply in person.

For more information on how to renew a passport, please visit [How to renew a passport](#) page.

Passports V2:

14 words (excluding link text) 19 links under 4 headings.

Get or replace a passport



[I'm applying for the first time as an adult](#)

[Children under age 16](#)

[Children age 16 and 17](#)

[I'm an adult renewing by mail](#)

[I'm an adult renewing online](#)

[Report it lost or stolen](#)

[Change my name or correct an error](#)

Prepare to apply



[Compare a passport book and card](#)

[Find processing times](#)

[Take a photo](#)

[Calculate your fees](#)

[Fill out your form and print it](#)

[Get citizenship evidence](#)

[Get photo identification](#)

Rush my passport



[I need it in less than 6 weeks](#)

[I need it even faster in less than 2-3 weeks. Restrictions apply.](#)

After I apply



[Get email updates about my application status](#)

[Respond to a letter or email](#)

[Using your new passport](#)

What are the differences?

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The difference

- Plain Language
- Readability
- Logical Design



Passports

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Get or replace a passport	Prepare to apply
 I'm applying for the first time as an adult Children under age 16 Children age 16 and 17 I'm an adult renewing by mail I'm an adult renewing online Report it lost or stolen Change my name or correct an error	 Compare a passport book and card Find processing times Take a photo Calculate your fees Fill out your form and print it Get citizenship evidence Get photo identification
Rush my passport	After I apply
 I need it in less than 6 weeks I need it even faster in less than 2-3 weeks. Restrictions apply.	 Get email updates about my application status Respond to a letter or email Using your new passport

Easy to understand

Plain Language

Plain Language is

- Active voice
- Short sentences
- Personal pronouns
- Concrete, familiar words
- No extra words
- No jargon

Plain Language Usability

Plain language increases usability for anyone:

- Impatience
- Short attention span
- Multi-tasking/partial attention
- Low literacy
- ESL
- Slow readers
- Careful and thorough readers
- Cautious clickers
- Cognitive disabilities

EasyRead

EasyRead is a specific format for people with cognitive disabilities.

Plain Language
is **not**
EasyRead

Top tips

Some things to do before you go to the doctor or hospital

- Make a list of your most important questions. Or get someone else to write them down for you.
- Make a list or bring any medicines and pills that you take with you.
- Write down your symptoms. Symptoms are the aches, pains or feelings you have that tell you that you are ill.
- Write down when your symptoms started and say what makes them better or worse.
- Ask your doctor or hospital for someone to support you if you want help at the doctor or hospital.



Plain Language is **Pure**

Plain Language is Powerful

Plain Language is Usable

Specific Usability Needs



- Some Teens
 - impatient
 - short attention span
- Low literacy and ESL
 - slower readers
 - may focus on central content
- Some Older adults
 - careful and thorough readers
 - cautious clickers

Breakthrough #1

Cognitive disabilities amplify normal barriers

- Human perception is a spectrum of abilities
 - Disability is an extreme point
 - Individuals vary in ability based on context
-
- Cognitive disability = severe usability problem
 - First step: Increase Usability for Everyone

Source Clayton Lewis, presentation to TEITAC

Breakthrough #2

Same guidelines work for different reasons

Teens	Older Adults	Low Literacy
Write simply Use words in their vocabulary	Use words that they know, especially for technology	Put the most important information first
Be concise and get to the point	Write with short, simple and straightforward sentences	Write text with a simple sentence structure. Keep pages, paragraphs, sentences short

Similar guidelines for different reasons. Are we more alike than we think?

Same guidelines work for different reasons

Teens	Older Adults	Low Literacy
Use relatively large font sizes (10 points or more)	Make the default type size 12-point or larger	Make text large: 12 or 14 point
Avoid using pictures that don't show anything meaningful	Use captions or meaningful alternative text for images, video and animation	Use information graphics and animations to show processes and relationships

Which is easier to read?

Prescription 1

Rx 145077- 0 04/12/00
 MONOPRIL 10MG TABLET
 Do you require counseling? [] YES [] NO
 ID: 2165 IPD/030310100 PP: PCS Auth#93828830
 R AVICAR _____



Abacus

7800 Camino Real • Miami, FL 33143

(305) 595-7494 (305) 633-8057

Rx 145077 Dr DELGADO, RUBEN

AVICAR, ROBERT M

TAKE ONE TABLET BY MOUTH DAILY.

NSL *NH*

#30
 MONOPRIL 10MG TABLET

SG /

Qty 30 TA 04/12/00 Discard after: 04/01/01

3 refills allowed before 04/12/01 MEAD JOHN

CAUTION: Federal law prohibits transfer of this drug to any person other than patient for whom prescribed.

Rx 145077- 0/MONOPRIL 10MG TABL #30 04/12/00
 0 of 3 PP=PCS T=631.13 C=610.00 A=632.86
 Dr DELGADO BD0630877 362-6828 SG /

Prescription 2



Improving Design

Rx 145077- 0 04/12/00
 MONOPRIL 10MG TABLET
 Do you require counseling? [] YES [] NO
 ID: 2165 IPD/030310100 PP: PCS Auth#93828830
 R AVICAR _____

 **Abacus** *NSC* *NH*
 7800 Camino Real • Miami, FL 33143
 (305) 595-7494 (305) 633-8057
 Rx 145077 Dr DELGADO, RUBEN
AVICAR, ROBERT M
 TAKE ONE TABLET BY MOUTH DAILY.

#30
MONOPRIL 10MG TABLET
 SG /

Qty 30 TA 04/12/00 Discard after: 04/01/01
 3 refills allowed before 04/12/01 MEAD JOHN:
 CAUTION: Federal law prohibits transfer of this drug to any person other than patient for whom prescribed.
 Rx 145077- 0/MONOPRIL 10MG TABL #30 04/12/00
 0 of 3 PP=PCS T=631.13 C=610.00 A=632.06
 Dr DELGADO BD0630877 362-6820 SG /

Avicar, Robert

AMOXICILLIN 500MG

Take: One capsule by mouth
 three times daily.

qty: 30
 refills: No
Dr. Smith
 disp: 02/27/05 REL
 mfr: GENEVA NDC: 00781-2613-05
 (877) 798-2743 Rx: 1234567-0000

 **TARGET PHARMACY**
 900 Nicollet Mall
 Minneapolis, MN 55401

PATIENT INFO CARD

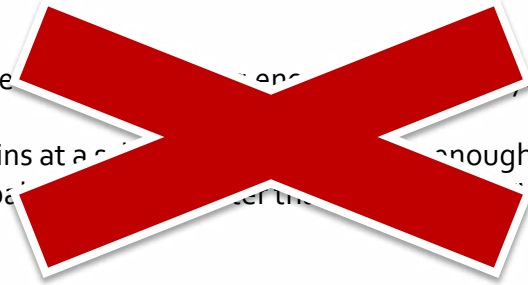
Easy to read

Readability

Readability & Line Length

#1 (140 characters wide)

Gilbert Hicks is an anomaly. He's been principal at the same school long enough for a three-year gym membership purchased in 2007 to expire. Twenty or 30 years ago, when a principal took the reins at a school, he was there long enough to see three or four kids in the same family pass through the hallowed halls. Now, newly hired principals are exiting faster than you can say, "Where's your hall pass?"



#2 (60 characters wide)

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Readability & Justification 1

Left Justified / Right Ragged

Parents who've faced a new principal at the same school each year, for eight or nine years running, could have told you that something was wrong, but they couldn't have said *why* the job's turned into a revolving door. The scientific study by Young and Fuller is the first to address the scope of the retention and tenure problem in Texas and search for the reasons behind it.

Left & Right Justified

Parents who've faced a new principal at the same school each year, for eight or nine years running, could have told you that something was wrong, but they couldn't have said *why* the job's turned into a revolving door. The scientific study by Young and Fuller is the first to address the scope of the retention and tenure problem in Texas and search for the reasons behind it.



Readability & Justification 2

Left Justified / Right Ragged

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Centered

Parents who've faced a new principal at the same school each year, for eight or nine years running, could have told you that something was wrong, but they couldn't have said *why* the job's turned into a revolving door. The scientific study by Young and Fuller is the first to address the scope of the retention and tenure problem in Texas and search for the reasons behind it.



Readability & Case

Mixed Case

Parents who've faced a new principal at the same school each year, for eight or nine years running, could have told you that something was wrong, but they couldn't have said *why* the job's turned into a revolving door. The scientific study by Young and Fuller is the first to address the scope of the retention and tenure problem in Texas and search for the reasons behind it.

Upper Case

PARENTS WHO'VE FACED A NEW PRINCIPAL AT THE SAME SCHOOL EACH YEAR, FOR EIGHT OR NINE YEARS RUNNING, COULD HAVE TOLD YOU THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG, BUT THEY COULDN'T HAVE SAID WHY THE JOB'S TURNED INTO A REVOLVING DOOR. THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY BY YOUNG AND FULLER IS THE FIRST TO ADDRESS THE SCOPE OF THE RETENTION AND TENURE PROBLEM IN TEXAS AND SEARCH FOR THE REASONS BEHIND IT.



Readability Guide: Paragraphs

- Paragraphs
 - 65 characters or less per line
 - Justify left margin but not right margin
 - Do not center text
 - Use mixed case

Readable Fonts – Old Rule

Serif

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Sans-Serif

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Readable Fonts: New Rule

Adobe Research: Online Reading Speed 16 Fonts

- **Glanceable:** few words
- **Interlude:** short passages
- **Long-form:** book

Metrics

- User preference
- Reading speed
- Comprehension score

#	Font	Words Per Minute
1	Garamond	312
2	Oswald	295
3	Lato	292
4	Helvetica	283
5	Times	277
6	Calibri	277
7	Utopia	275
8	Noto Sans	272
9	Montserrat	271
10	Franklin Gothic	271
11	Arial	270
12	Roboto	268
13	Poynter Gothic	266
14	Avenir Next	264
15	Avant Garde	261
16	Open Sans	254

Adobe Research Results

- No single font is best for all users.
- People usually do **not** pick the font that's best for them.

Source:

www.nngroup.com/articles/best-font-for-online-reading

[How to choose a font for responsive web interfaces](#) by Jake Giltsoff

Consider

- Languages
- Suggests sans-serif
- Legibility
- Readability

Font Size

- Research
 - Larger font size increases readability
 - especially reading speed
- Recommendation
 - 12 to 14 point font for all audiences

Readable Styles 1

Italics

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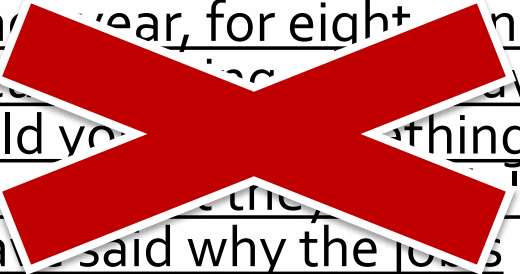


Normal

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Readable Styles 2

Underlined

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Readability Guide: Text

- Paragraphs
 - Make lines 65 characters or less
 - Justify left margin but not right margin
 - Do not center text
 - Use mixed case
- Text
 - Sans-serif
 - Set font size to 12-14 point
 - Underline is only for links
 - Don't use italics

Reader View/Mode in Browsers

Allows reader to focus on main content

Removes distractions (ads, sidebars, backgrounds...)

Adjust font size, contrast, layout as needed

- Firefox (Reader View)
 - Click Reader View icon in address bar 
- Chrome (Reader Mode)
 - Select the More tools menu in the top right corner
 - Select Reading mode
 - Use the toolbar to adjust the font, background color, or font size
 - Drag the side panel to make it larger or smaller

Which do you want to read?

CNN Business Markets Tech Media Calculators Videos

Markets: **DOW** 36,423.26 **S&P 500** 3,594.57 **NASDAQ** 10,265.56

Stocks: **UP** 0.25% **DOWN** 0.75% **NET** 0.01%

MISSION AHEAD

Business > Tech

Lasers could take broadband where fiber optics can't

By Jacopo Prisco CNN

Updated 10:58 AM EDT, The Insider 10/20/2024

4 comments



A rendering of Alcatel's ALTO-F free-space optical communication technology. (Alcatel)

FSO — In the internet industry, it's known as the "last mile" problem. Millions of people and businesses around the world aren't able to access broadband because they're missing the final leg of a broadband network, which connects the user to the backbone of the internet.

This critical infrastructure, ranging from a few hundred feet to a few miles, can often be too expensive or difficult to build, because of challenges with the terrain or because it would serve too few users — issues that are a bigger problem in rural and remote areas.

One solution could come from a technology called "free-space optics" (FSO), which uses

MORE FROM CNN

- 7 fastest internet providers nationwide
- Best fiber internet providers of 2024: A comprehensive guide
- Google Fiber Internet Review: A gamer's dream — if you can get it

CNN BUSINESS VIDEOS

- Canadian official: Fearing of 'backlash' over tariff threats **4:23**
- Amazon's Puffinberger is recruiting the next generation of 'Web 2.0' **5:40**
- Top economist predicts what impact Trump's tariffs will have on Americans **2:43**
- Americans are saying no, no, no to Trump's tariffs, senior data reporter says **2:45**

Lasers could take broadband where fiber optics can't | CNN Business

Jacopo Prisco

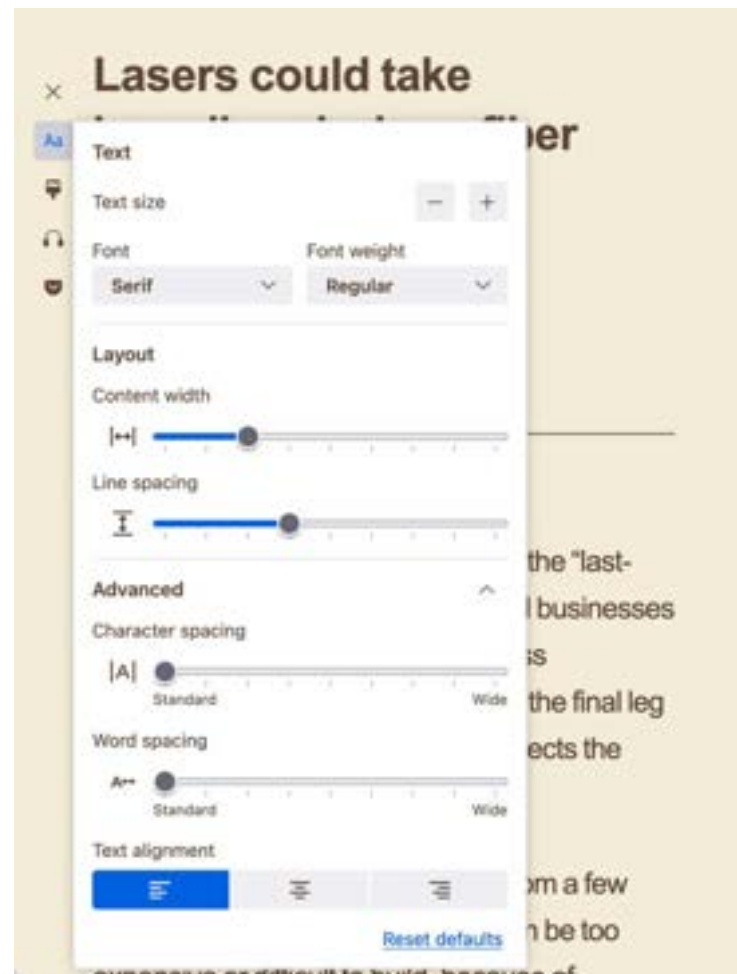
6-9 minutes

CNN —

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Personalize Reader View Settings



Color Contrast Matters

- Can you read me?
- Can you read me now?
- Can you read me now?
- Can you read me now?
- Can you read me now?

Color Contrast

- Text
 - Contrast must be at least 4.5 to 1 between
 - Text color
 - Background color
 - Large Text: 3 to 1
 - Large = at least 18 point or 14 point bold
- Non-Text
 - Non-text elements must have contrast of 3 to 1
- Tools
 - dequeuniversity.com/color-contrast
 - www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/

Use design and layout
that increase comprehension

Logical Design

Is This Easy to Read?

DOTD Issues Winter Weather Travel Advisory

Baton Rouge: With the possibility of snow and rain in the forecast throughout the Mardi Gras holiday weekend, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) announced that department staff is prepared to deal with winter weather. Maintenance forces will be on standby to apply sand and salt over any affected bridges and roadways, to remove fallen trees from the roadway, and to close any roads as needed.

Interim Secretary Sherri LeBas urges motorists to take the threat of winter weather seriously. "In the event of adverse weather conditions, the department will strive to maintain access to Louisiana's highways and interstates; however, we encourage the motoring public to avoid traveling during snow and ice, if at all possible," said LeBas.

During winter weather conditions, the best thing motorists can do is drive slowly and carefully, and avoid driving while distracted. Always allow for extra driving time, reduce speeds when visibility is low, and make sure there is plenty of room between vehicles. Also, look out for black ice, which can form on bridges, overpasses, off-ramps and in shady spots. As always, DOTD reminds motorists to buckle up and refrain from drinking and driving.

Citizens can get the latest updates on real-time traffic and road conditions by using the 511 Traveler Information System simply by dialing 511 from their telephone and saying the route or region about which they are seeking information. Travelers can also access this information by visiting the 511 Traveler Information Web site at www.511la.org.

Motorists can also obtain information regarding road closures by contacting DOTD's Customer Service Center at 1-877-4LA-DOTD (1-877-452-3683). The center is open 7:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Wall of Words

DOTD Issues Winter Weather Travel Advisory

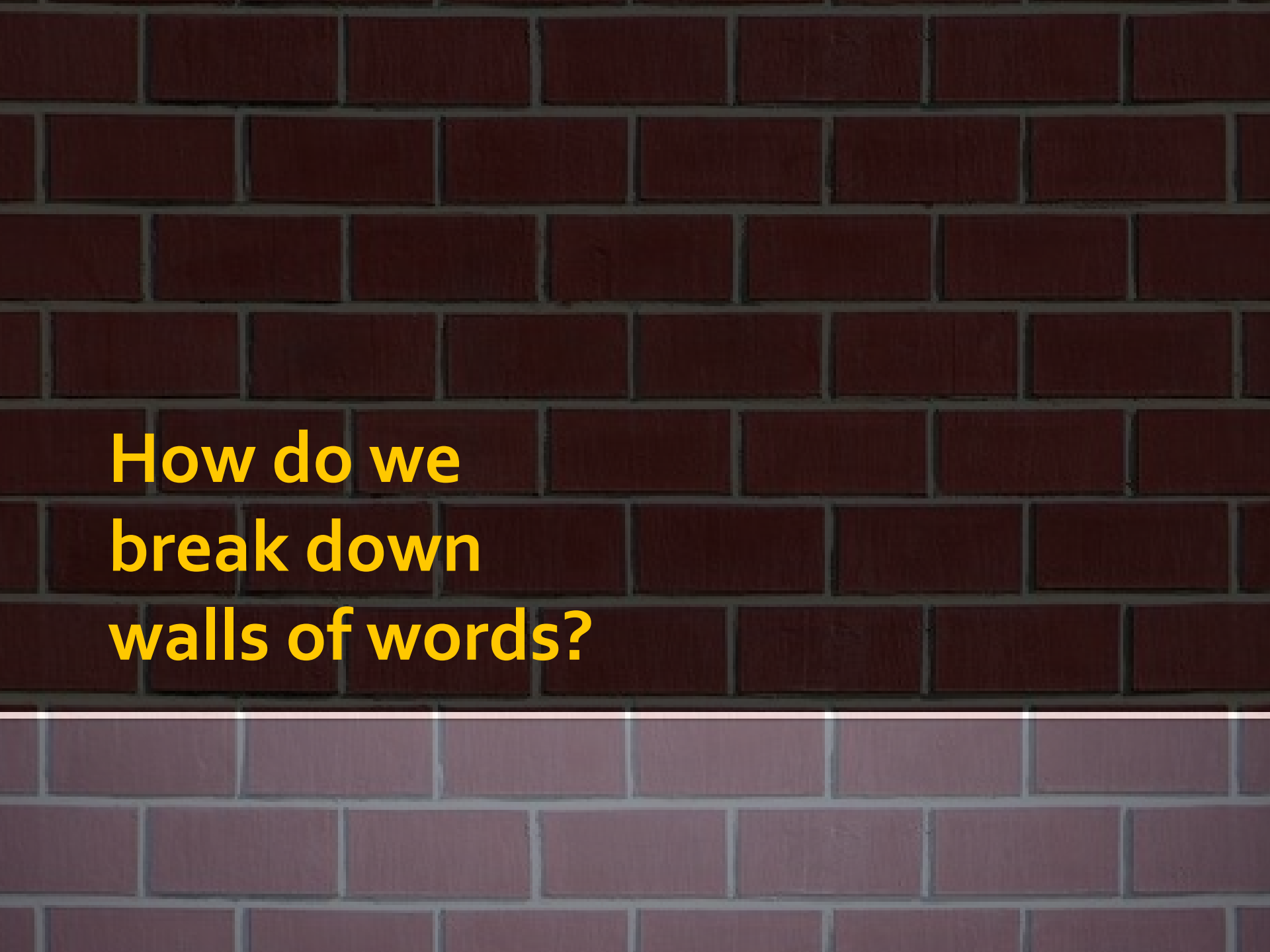
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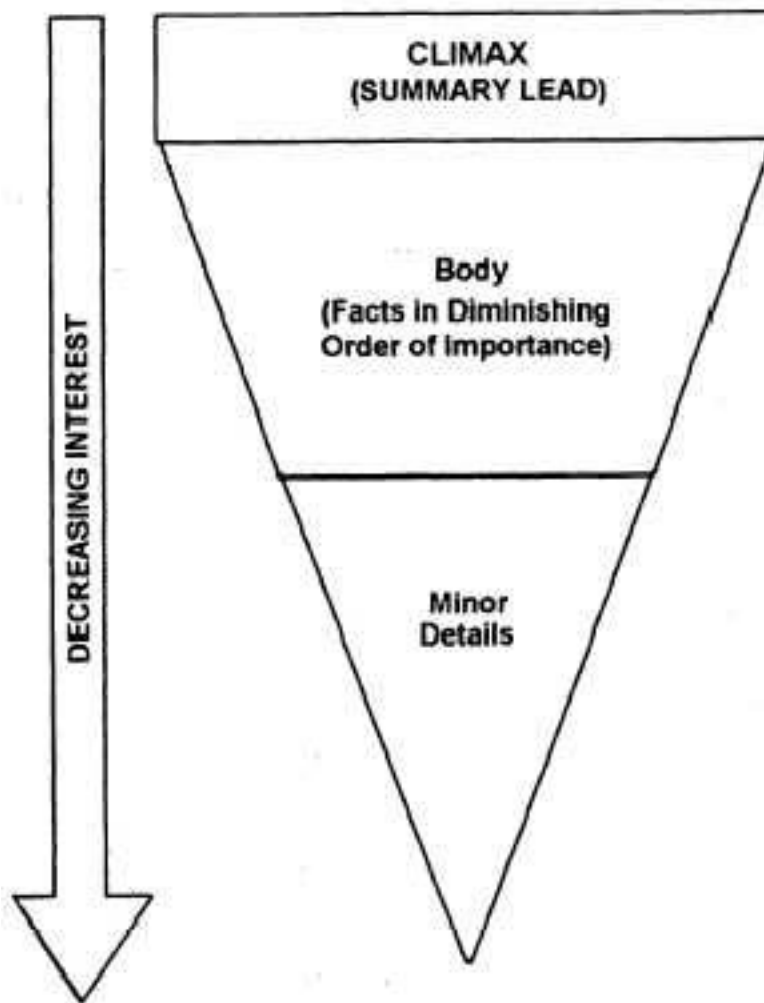
**How do we
break down
walls of words?**

Plain Language +
Readability +
Logical Design
equals
Digital Content That Works

Scannable: Essential Message

- Give people only what they need
- Cut! Cut! Cut! And cut again!
- Start with key point (inverted pyramid)
- Break down wall of words
- Layer information

Scannable: Start with Key Points



Scannable: Headings

- Outline your content with headings
 - Good headings help readers
 - Good headings help writers
- Make heading levels obvious
- Use site visitor's words in headings

Scannable: Lists

- Lists make information easy to grab
- Keep lists short
- Number lists for instructions
- Turn paragraphs into steps
- Keep sentence structure in parallel

Scannable: Tables

- Use tables when you have
 - numbers to compare
 - series of “if, then” sentences
- Keep tables simple
- Do not center text in tables

Scannable: Links

- Make link meaningful out of context
- Make visited and unvisited links obvious
- Use action phrases for action links

Effective Web Content

- Plain Language
- Readable
- Scannable
 - Headings
 - Lists
 - Tables
 - Links

**Perfection is achieved,
not when there is nothing more to add,
but
when there is nothing left to take away.**

- Antoine de Saint-Exupery

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nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/plain-language
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