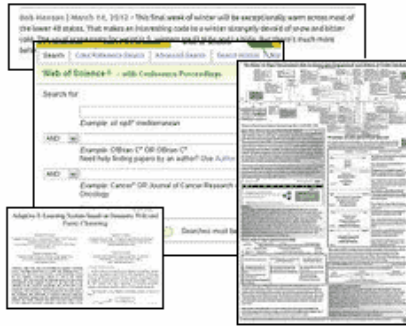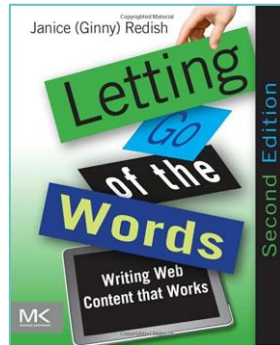# Content design in practice

25th May 2023

Caroline Jarrett
@cjforms

Jane Matthews
@janematthews

This workshop has one inspiration and three sets of source materials

The writing challenges that we encounter, through work or in professional life
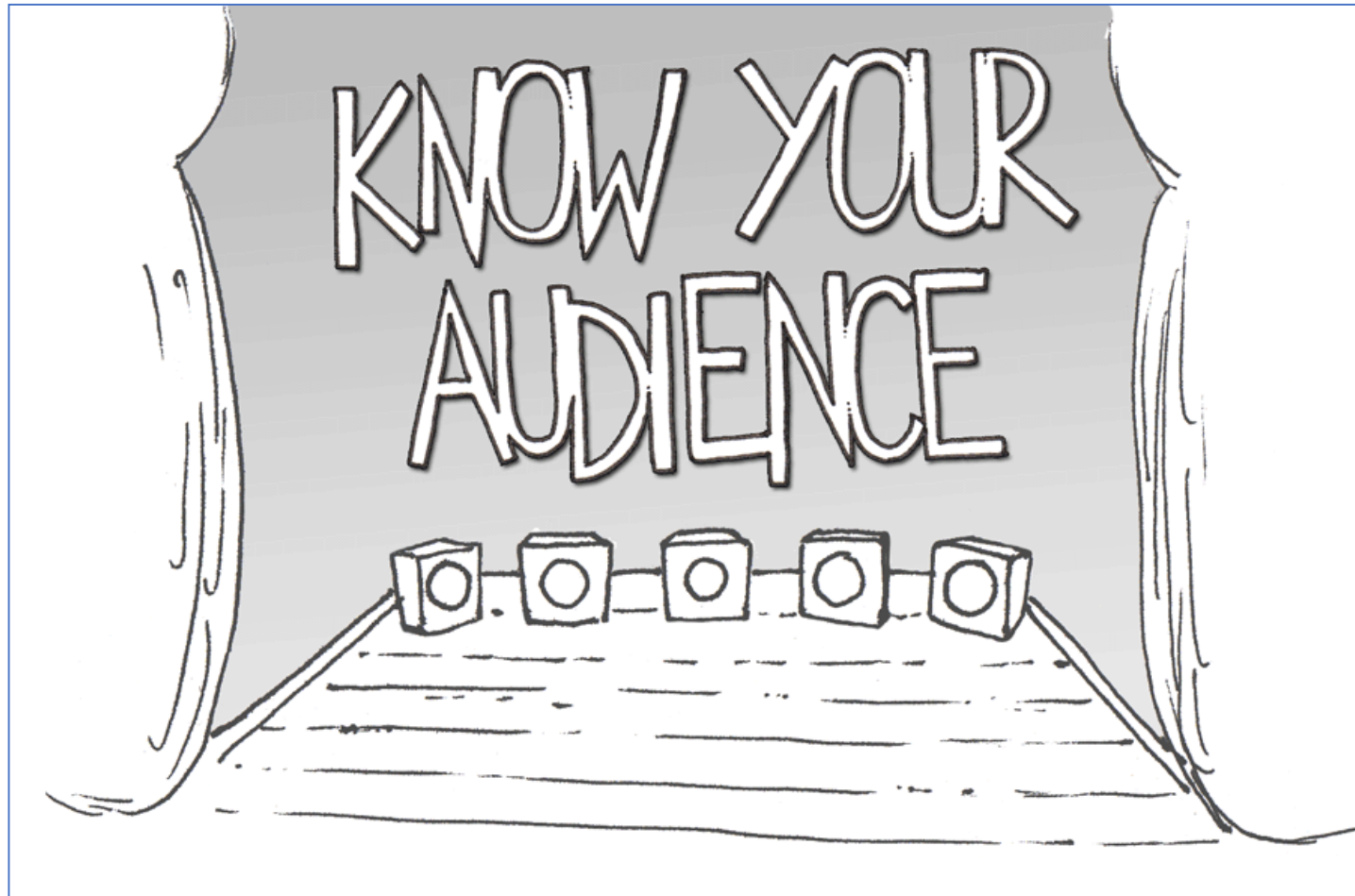
Ginny Redish's book

https://slideshare.net/cjforms

https://editingthatworks.com

Introductions

- Your name and role
- Your aims for today's workshop

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Editing that works has
9 steps to improve your content

1. Decide about who and why

2. Get to know the text

3. Put the best bit first

4. Slash everything else

5. Edit sentences
   - Reveal the actor
   - Kill "should"
   - Use familiar words in familiar ways

6. Put "if" before "then"

7. Demolish walls of words

8. Launch and land on the same name

9. Rest it then test it

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms (CC) BY SA-4.0

Agenda

1. Decide on who and why
9. Rest it then test it

2. Get to know the text
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Caroline Jarrett @cjforms (CC) BY SA-4.0   Illustrations by Francis Rowland

We work with formal documents

" In essence: a formal document is a document which has been **created with care to serve a function** ...

Why has this document been created? ...

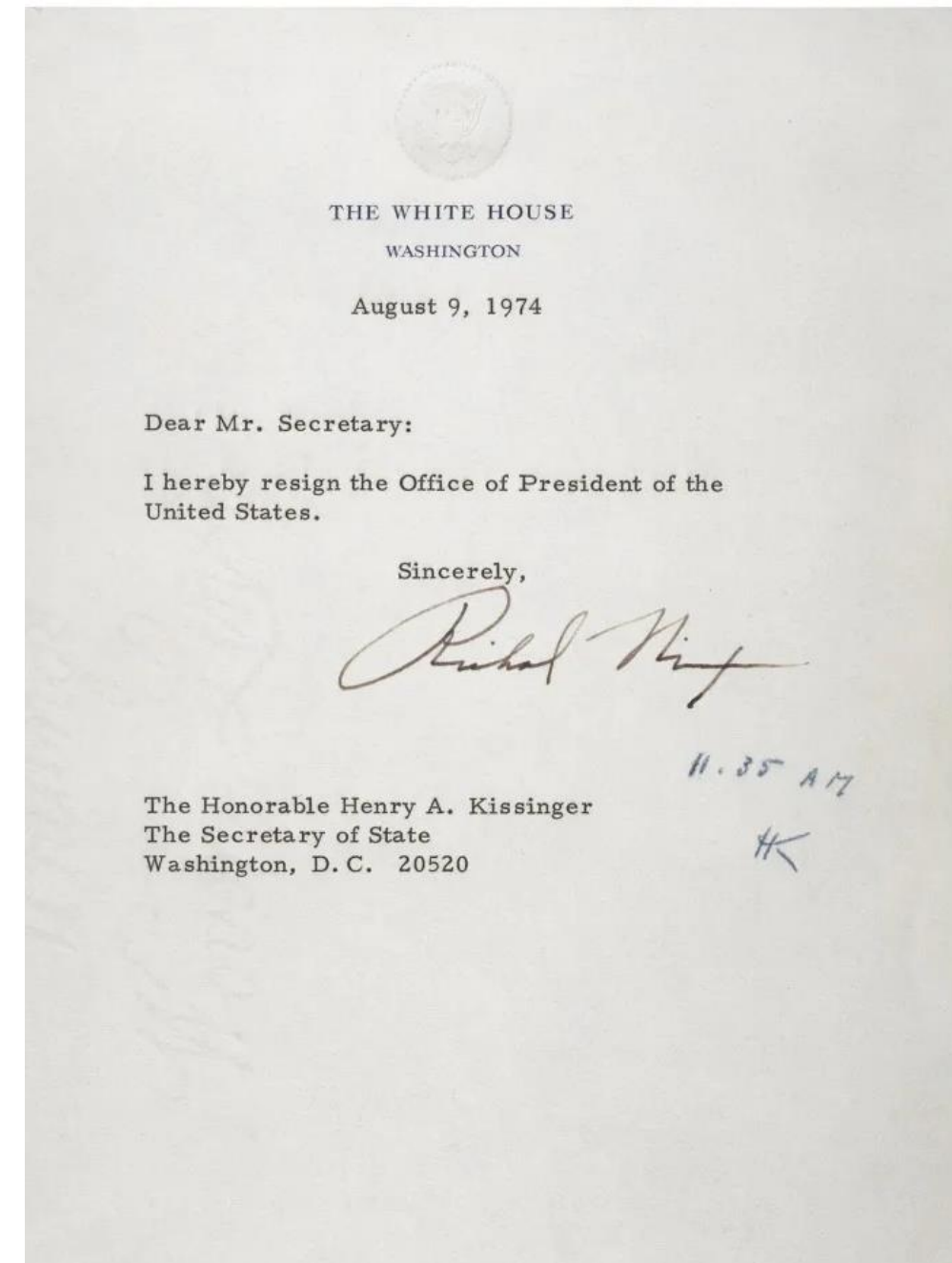A resignation letter is created so as to effect a resignation.

A letter in response to a request needs to be understood in the context of the request ...

[Nixon's] letter fulfils its function. Nothing more needed to be said, and so nothing more was said.

In contrast, [the] the Article 50 notification letter of then Prime Minister Theresa May ...

went on (and on) for six pages "

David Allen Green, solicitor and legal consultant

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 9, 1974

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I hereby resign the Office of President of the United States.

Sincerely,

[signature]

11.35 AM

The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger
The Secretary of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

HK

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms

https://davidallengreen.com/2022/07/how-to-read-a-formal-document/

1. Understand who and why

- Who are you writing for?

- Why will the person use what you create?

- Where, when and how will they use it?

- What do you expect them to do as a result of reading it?

Caroline Jarrett   @cjforms   (CC) BY SA-4.0

Picture credit: Unsplash Nicolai Berntsen

1. Understand who and why

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Agenda

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Rest it

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms

9. Rest it then test it

- Rest: leave it alone for a few hours, then review.
- Test: try it out on someone, preferably a real user.

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Do usability testing on content

Get someone to try using your content for the planned purpose

Extra tip:

Get them to tell you what they are thinking as they work through

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Image credit: Drawn by Tasia Graham, illustration from Caroline Jarrett, "Surveys that work" (2021)

Try some testing

- If you are the user
    - Please use this
    - As you work with it, please identify any problems

- If you're watching
    - Write notes
    - You'll report what you find to the group

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Agenda

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APPLY HEADLINES

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2. Get to know the text

1. Work out what the bits are in this text
   - A bit is a paragraph or sentence with a single message
   - If a paragraph has more than one message, split it up

2. Apply a headline to each bit
   - The headline has the message of the bit
   - Write each headline as a mini-sentence
   - No standalone nouns

3. Rewrite all the headings as headlines, too
   Hint: you'll decide which headlines,
   headings, and bits to keep in the next steps

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Try deleting the first paragraph or sentence

We'll be doing the major slashing soon

You can get started now by deleting the first bit:

- The introduction
- The first paragraph
- The first sentence

Picture credit: John Sankey

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I wanted to create a folder in Google Docs

https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-create-folder-in-google-docs

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Resumes & cover letters ▾   Interviewing   Pay & salary   Career development ▾   News   🔍 Search

Career development ❯ How To Create a Folder in Google Docs (Deskto...

How To Create a Folder in Google Docs (Desktop and Mobile)

Indeed Editorial Team

Updated February 3, 2023

While offices have traditionally relied on physical cabinets to organize files, the prevalence of digital documents requires the use of other storage methods. Professionals who use Google Docs can create folders with Google Drive to organize their documents. Implementing this approach allows you to quickly sort through files and share them with colleagues, thus increasing overall productivity.

Scroll

Resumes & cover letters ▾   Interviewing   Pay & salary   Career development ▾   News

In this article, we explain how to create a folder in Google Docs with multiple methods and discuss the benefits of doing so.

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📍 Leighton Buzzard, CBF

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Remote jobs	>	Urgently hiring jobs	>

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What is a Google Docs folder?

A Google Docs folder is a digital bin that contains files you can create via the online word processor. Users create these folders within Google Docs, but the folders themselves live within Google Drive, a cloud-based

https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-create-folder-in-google-docs

Scroll again

storage and synchronization service linked to other brand services like Docs. You can give each folder a unique name and store multiple files within it.

Related: **11 Benefits of Cloud Computing** ⧉

How to create a folder in Google Docs on a desktop

Follow these steps to create a folder in Google Docs via a desktop computer:

1. Navigate to the Docs home page

The Docs home page is an interface that displays your existing files and from which you can create new documents. The most direct way to navigate to the home page is to enter "docs.google.com" in your browser's search bar. You can also click to Google Docs from the search page by selecting the grid icon in the upper right-hand corner and selecting the Docs link.

https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-create-folder-in-google-docs

And scroll again

2. Log in to your Google account

Your Google Docs files link to your Google account. If you have an account, you can log in from various channels, including the Google search page, Gmail, Drive and the Docs home page. If you don't have an account, navigate to any of the aforementioned channels, select "Create an account" and follow the on-screen instructions.

Related: **How To Create a Google Doc on a Computer and a Mobile Device** ☐

3. Create or open a document

Folder creation via Google Docs occurs within an active document. The Docs home page displays two sections. The top section features options for creating a new document, and the bottom section shows your existing documents. Select an option by clicking once on the icon of your choice. If you create a new document, give it a new title. The file saves automatically.

Bingo!
Step 5 is the bit I need

https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-create-folder-in-google-docs

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms

4. Select the "Move" option

In your web browser, here are two ways to select the "Move" option:

- **Folder icon:** The "Move" folder icon is next to the file name in the top left-hand corner of the document. Click on it once to select.

- **"File" menu:** The "File" menu is in the toolbar, on the far left side. The "Move" option is below "Rename" and "Add shortcut to Drive."

Related: How To Edit Offline in Google Docs (With Benefits) ⧉

5. Select "New folder"

When you select the "Move" option, it activates a window of the existing folders in your Drive. The "New folder" option is In the bottom left-hand corner of the Drive window. It appears as another folder icon, with a plus symbol on it. Click on the icon.

Agenda

✓ Decide about who and why
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✓ Get to know the text

3. Put the best bit first

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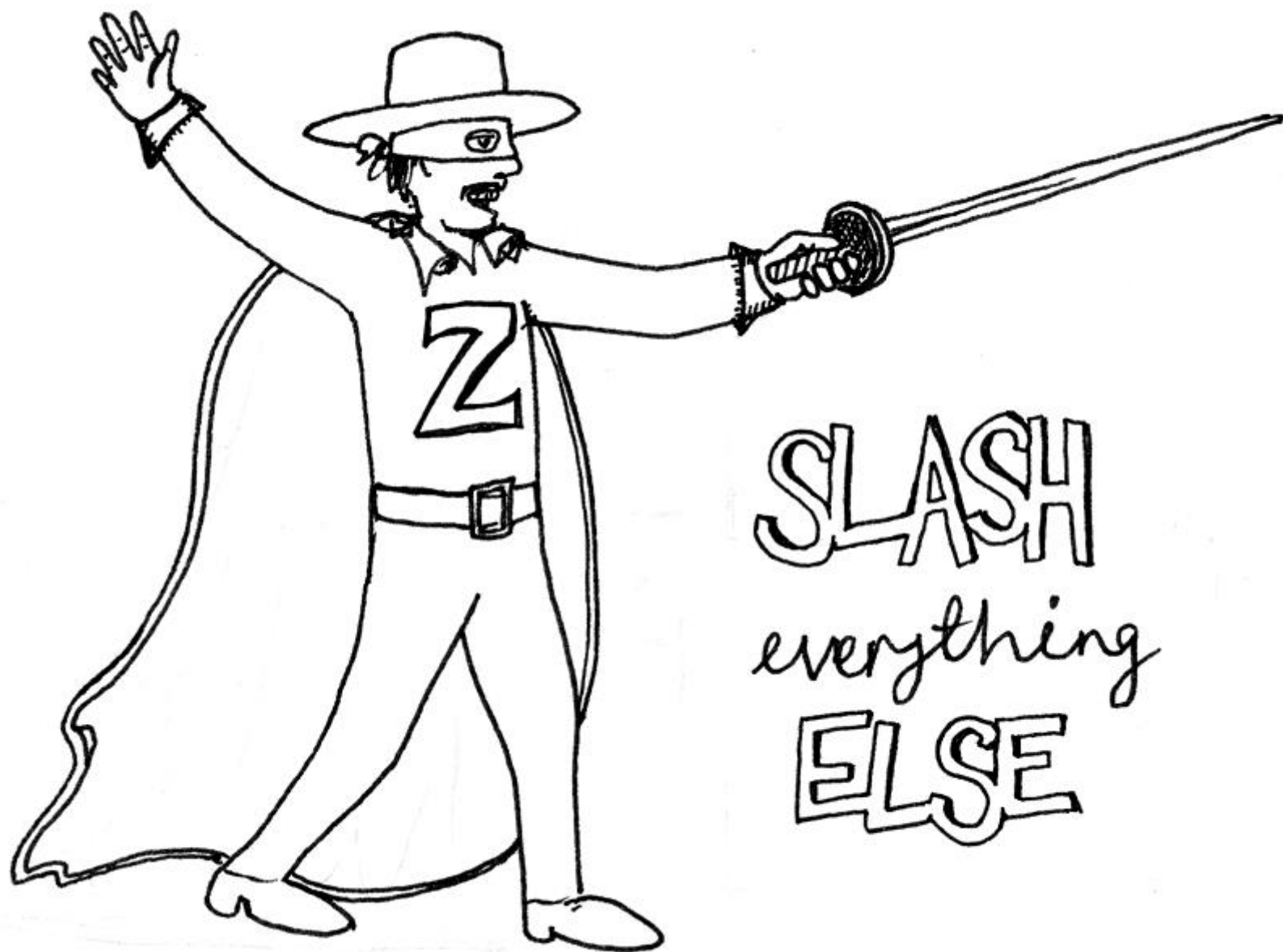inverted pyramid?

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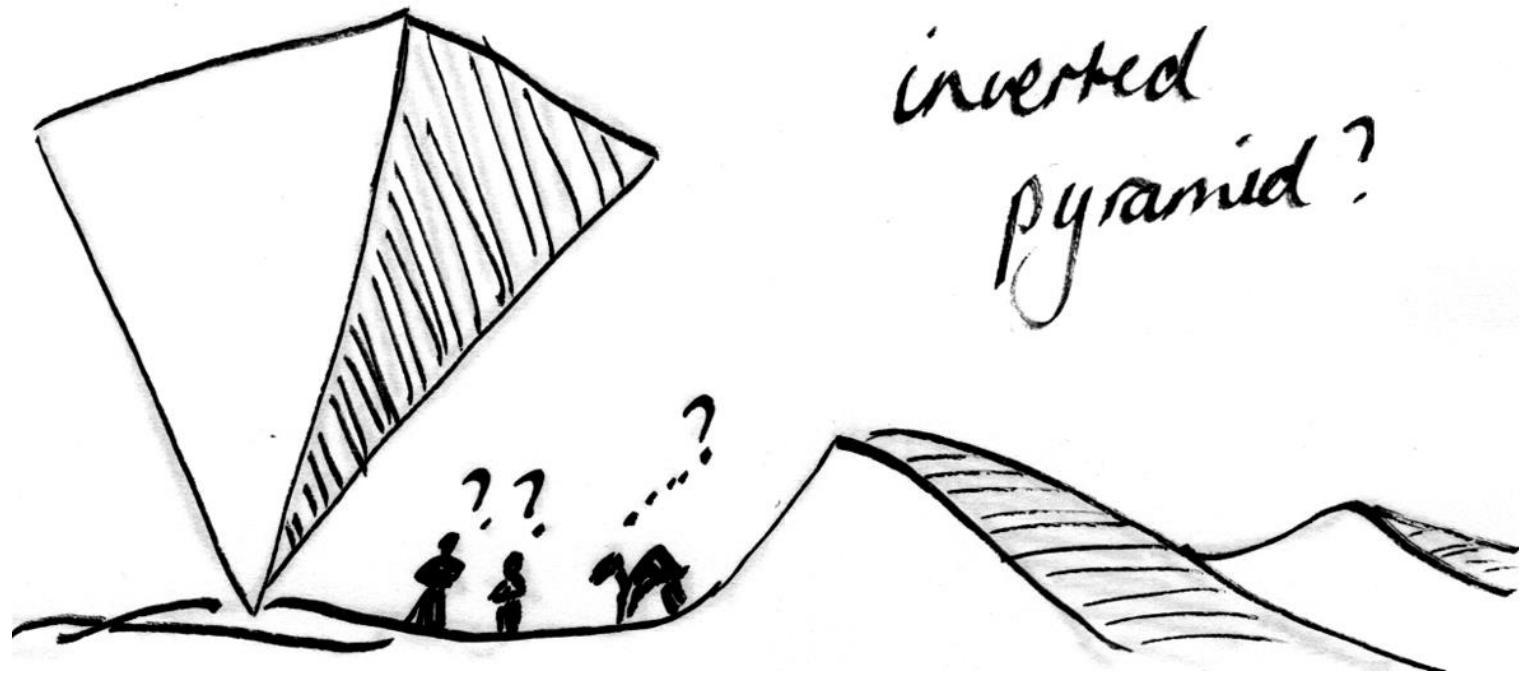
3. Put the best bit first

1. Compare the headlines with the purpose
2. Choose the one that is most useful to go first – the best bit
3. Move the best bit and its headline to the top
4. Check that things on the same topic are collected together

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3. Put the best bit first

- Read this example
- Decide on the best bit

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SLASH everything ELSE

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Science doesn't have to be verbose

Can apparent superluminal neutrino speeds be explained as a quantum weak measurement?

M V Berry[1], N Brunner[1], S Popescu[1] & P Shukla[2]

[1] H H Wills Physics Laboratory, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol BS8 1TL, UK

[2] Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India

Abstract

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Science doesn't have to be verbose

Can apparent superluminal neutrino speeds be explained as a quantum weak measurement?

M V Berry[1], N Brunner[1], S Popescu[1] & P Shukla[2]

[1] H H Wills Physics Laboratory, Tyndall Avenue, Bristol BS8 1TL, UK
[2] Department of Physics, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India

Abstract

Probably not.

4. Slash everything else

- Slash by half
- Slash by half again

Write in your own words a continuous summary of the following passage … [which] contains about 1,500 words …
[the summary] should be about 300 words
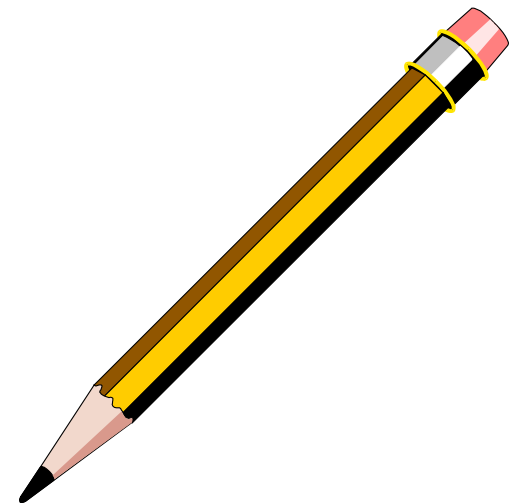
Caroline Jarrett @cjforms (CC) BY SA-4.0
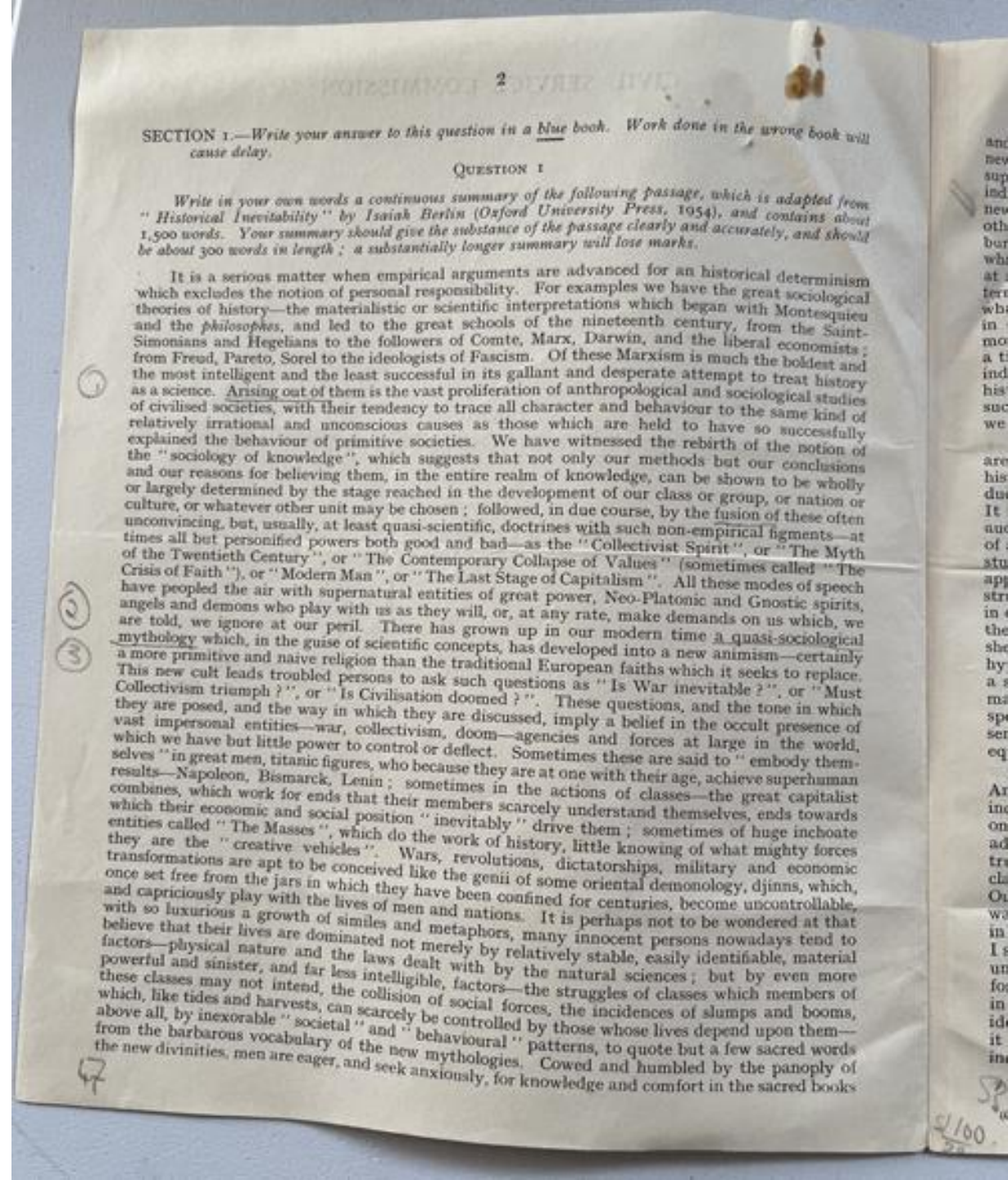
4. Recap and slash

Step 1: Decide about who and why

Step 2: Get to know the text

Step 3: Put the best bit first

Step 4: Slash everything else

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ACTIVE   PASSIVE

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5. Edit sentences

- Reveal the actor
- Kill "should"
- Use familiar words in familiar ways

Francis Rowland told me about this picture. We haven't been able to find its origin. If you know it, please let me know.

Caroline Jarrett   @cjforms   (CC) BY SA-4.0

5a. Edit sentences

Reveal the actor, also known as 'active and passive'

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This site offers several ways to identify yourself. Are these familiar words?

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Text Message or Phone Call
Verification codes are sent by text message or phone call.
Not applicable for DEA EPCS authentication

Add

(***) ***-*341   ✓ Internal Revenue Service
Added May 12, 2023

Push Notification
Approve sign-ins via Push Notifications sent to the **ID.me Authenticator** mobile app.

Set Up

Code Generator
Generate verification codes via code generator apps like **ID.me Authenticator** to sign in.

Set Up

Security Key
Use a physical security key (insert or tap) with your device.

Set Up

NFC-Enabled Mobile Security Key
Enroll a YubiKey security key for secure mobile authentication.
ID.me Authenticator app download required.

Set Up

5b. Edit sentences

Use familiar words in familiar ways

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Break

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Agenda

✓ Decide about who and why
✓ Rest it then test it

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  - Reveal the actor
  - Kill "should"
  - Use familiar words in familiar ways

6. Put "if" before "then"
7. Demolish walls of words
8. Launch and land on the same name

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A short exercise based on Dixon, 1987

- Dixon, P. 1987. "The Processing of Organizational and Component Step Information in Written Directions" Journal of Memory and Language, 26, pp24-35, Academic Press, Inc.

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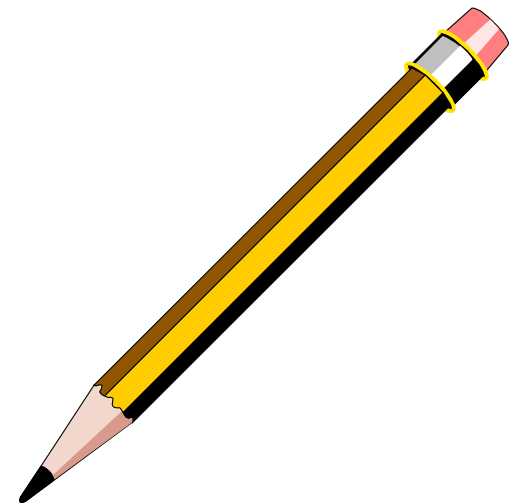
6. Put "if" before "then"

- Keep equivalent items parallel
- First things first, second things second
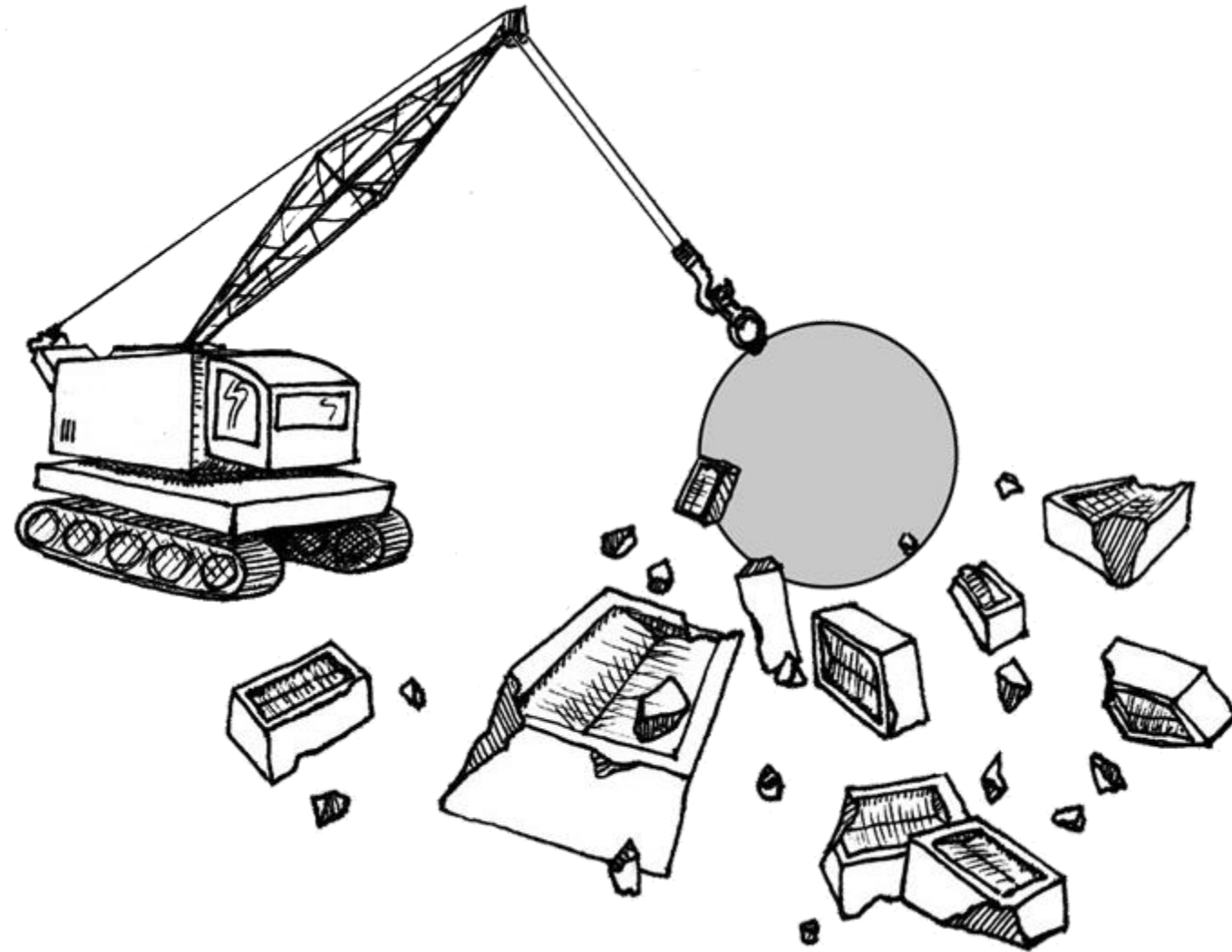- Try writing instructions like a recipe

Picture credit: Flickr _Raúl_

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6. Put "if" before "then" and bonus 5. Edit sentences

This example has:

• "then" before "if"

• "should"

Try sorting it out

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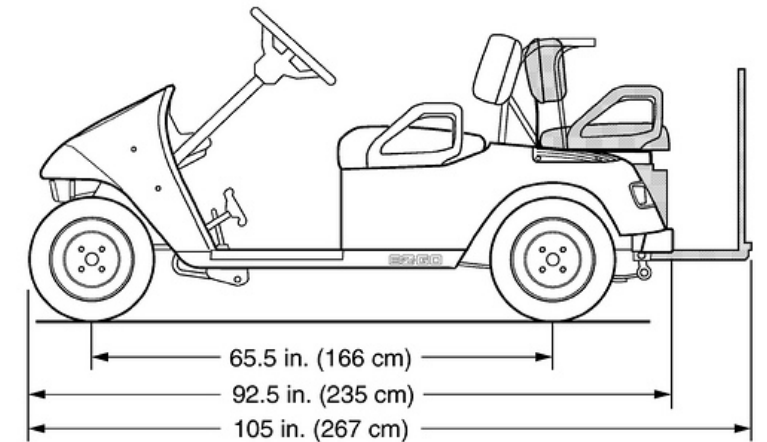
7. Demolish walls of words

- Use bulleted lists for items or choices
- Use numbered lists for instructions
- Use visuals when they help
- Use tables to organise repetitive text or data

65.5 in. (166 cm)
92.5 in. (235 cm)
105 in. (267 cm)

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms (CC) BY SA-4.0

Picture credit: Flickr G A R N E T

Try this example from step 2 to step 7

Step 1: We did this for you
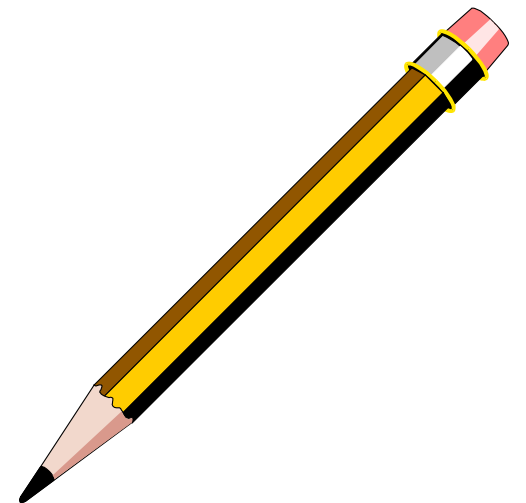
Step 2: Get to know the text

Step 3: Put the best bit first

Step 4: Slash everything else

Step 5: Edit sentences

Step 6: Put "if" before "then"

Step 7: See whether we still have a wall of words!

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Agenda

✓ Decide about who and why
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8. Launch and land on the same name

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms
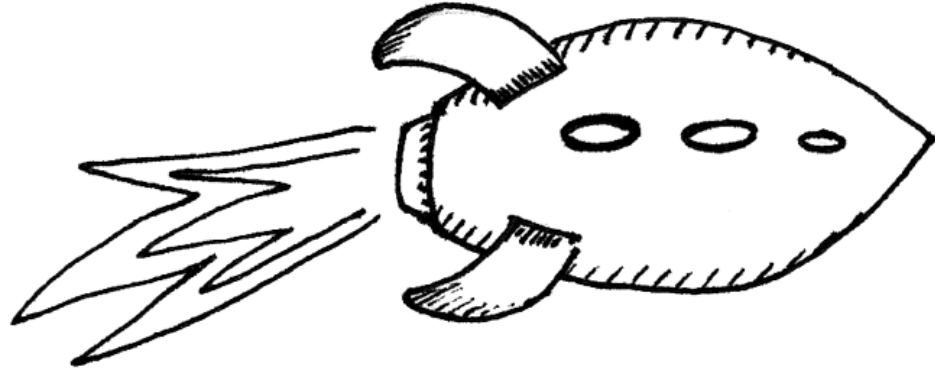
LAUNCH & LAND
on the same name

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8. Launch and land on the same name

- Give a reward for each click

- Write meaningful links:
  - no 'click here'
  - no 'more information'

Picture credit: Flickr jek in the box

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Let's think about links and link names

As always, we start with Step 1.

Then have a look at the links in this document.

Can we think of any improvements?

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Agenda

- ✓ Decide about who and why
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Agenda

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9. Rest it then test it

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Rest it

Do usability testing on content
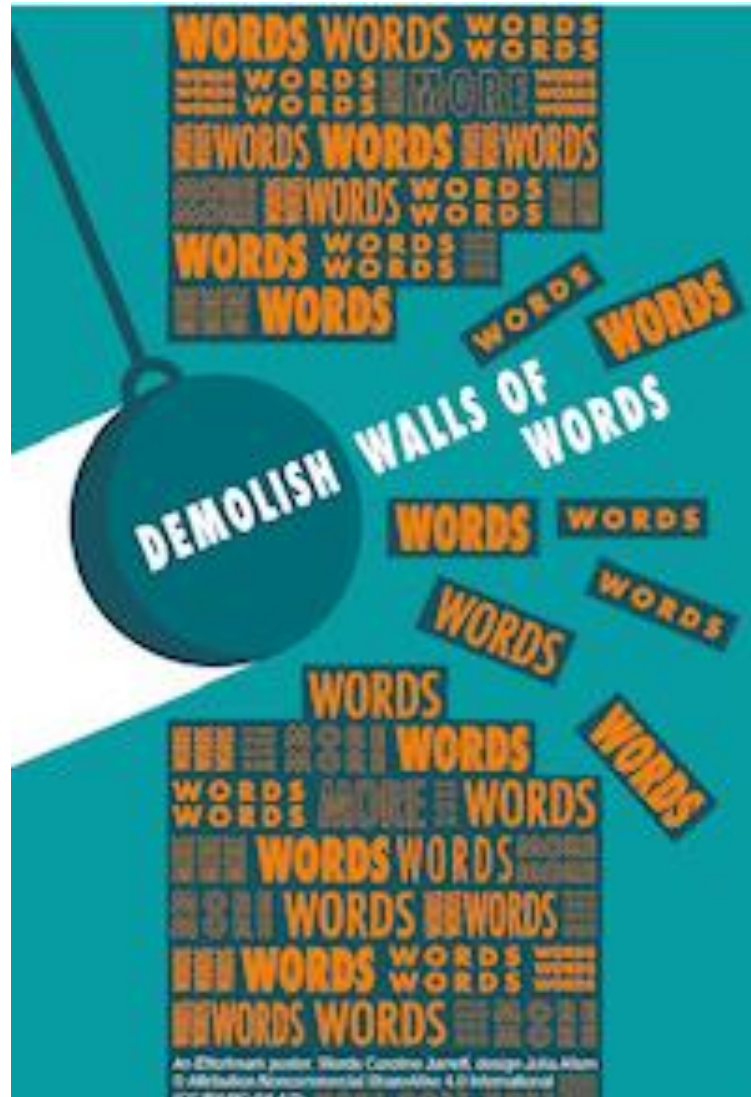
Get someone to try using your content for the planned purpose

Extra tip:

Get them to tell you what they are thinking as they work through

I'M NOT SURE

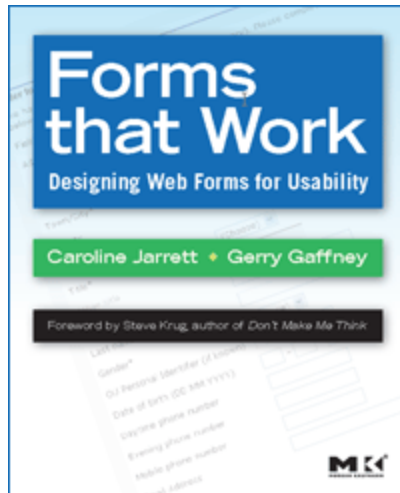Caroline Jarrett @cjforms   (CC) BY SA-4.0   Image credit: Drawn by Tasia Graham, illustration from Caroline Jarrett, "Surveys that work" (2021)"

We have two free posters

Caroline Jarrett @cjforms (CC) BY SA-4.0

Wrap up

- Let's do a retro????

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Caroline Jarrett

Jane Matthews

@cjforms

@janematthews

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carolinej@effortmark.co.uk