I Write Good

AKA
From Well Written to Well Read

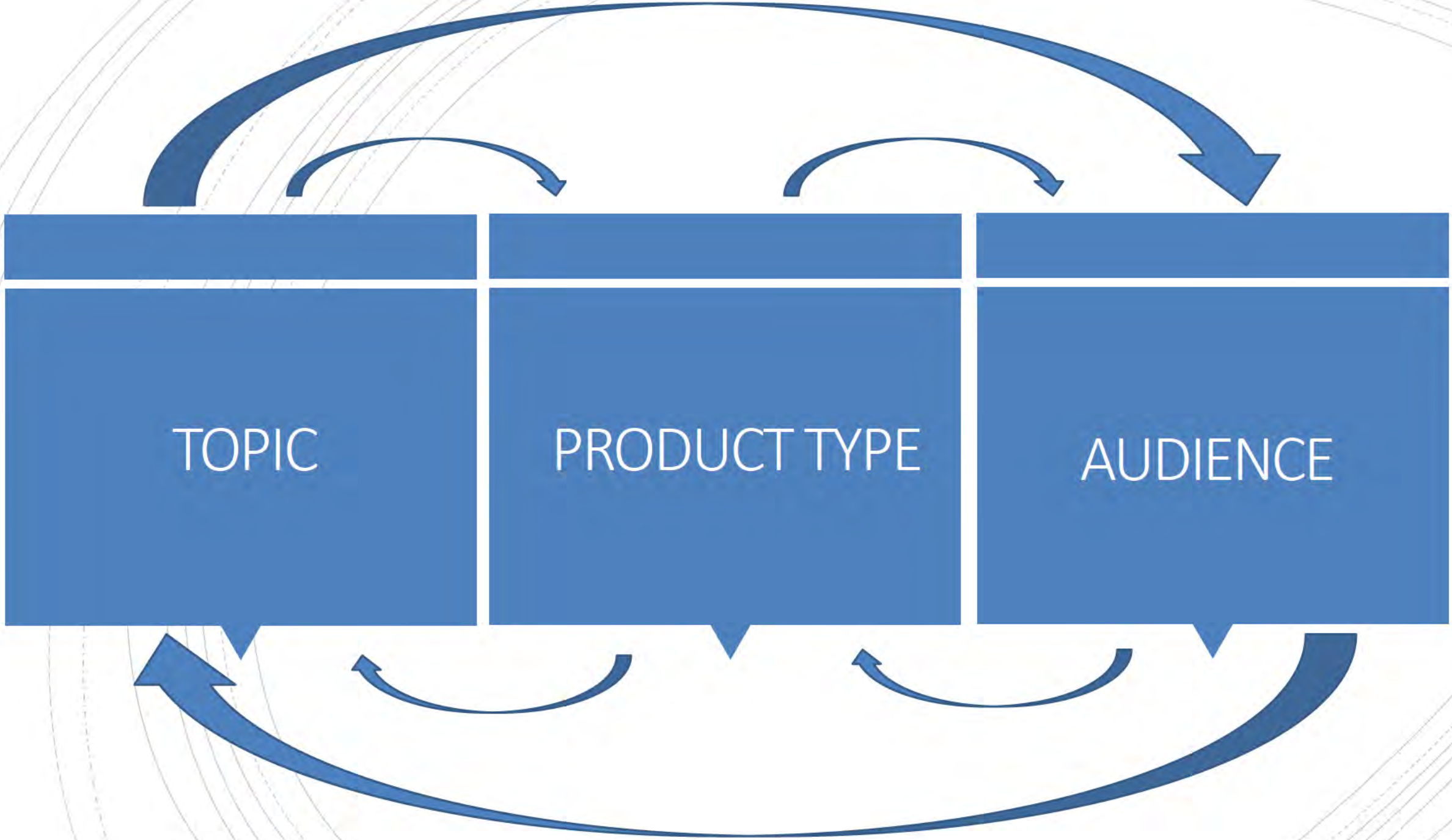
Improving Your Written Intelligence Products

About Me

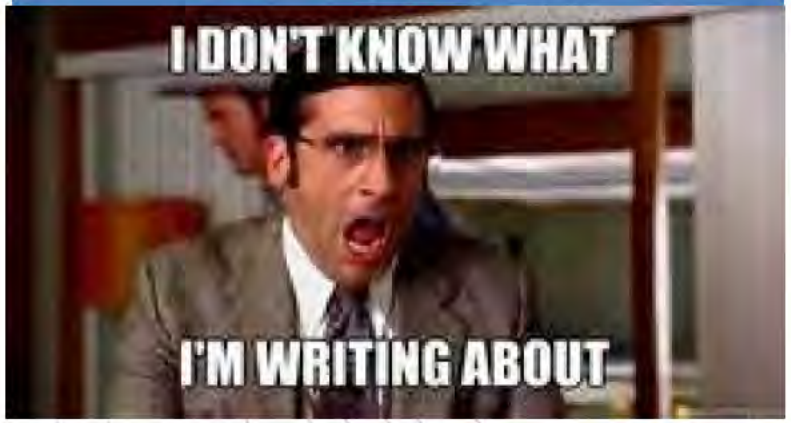
Written Intelligence Process

- Product Development
- Organization
- Finishing Touches
- Writing Pitfalls

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT


TOPIC
PRODUCT TYPE
AUDIENCE

TOPIC



SELF-INITIATED

- Driven by YOU
- Requires regularly reviewing internal reporting: field reports, arrests, seizures, traffic stops
- Maintaining situational awareness of outside reporting (other agencies, news media, social media)

ASSIGNED

- Driven by request from supervisor, chief, mayor, governor, media, etc.
- Often topical and may be spurred by legislation change/proposal or a recent significant event

GOT MY TOPIC NOW WHAT?

Collection

- Identify sources
- Gathering data
- Information Needs

Collation

- Organize information
- Cleaning data
- Geocode

Analysis

- Identify intelligence gaps
- Assumptions

PRODUCT TYPE

- Determined by the topic and audience
- Utilize templates
- Proper structural design helps you organize your information

PRODUCT TYPE

Immediate

- Significant events
- Wanted / BOLOs
- Attempt to Locate / Missing
- Officer Safety
- Basic Information
- Tactical

* Typically one-page

Short-Term

- Repeat incidents/series
- Trending topics
- Criminal tradecraft
- Operational

Long-Term

- Compound problems
- Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly
- Evaluative assessments
- Estimative reports
- Strategic

AUDIENCE

- Determining your audience is one of the most important processes to writing a product
- Audience can determine information sensitivity level, length, detail, and focus
- What do you want your audience to take-way from your product?

Operational

- Line-level officers and first – line supervisors
- Detectives/agents

Management

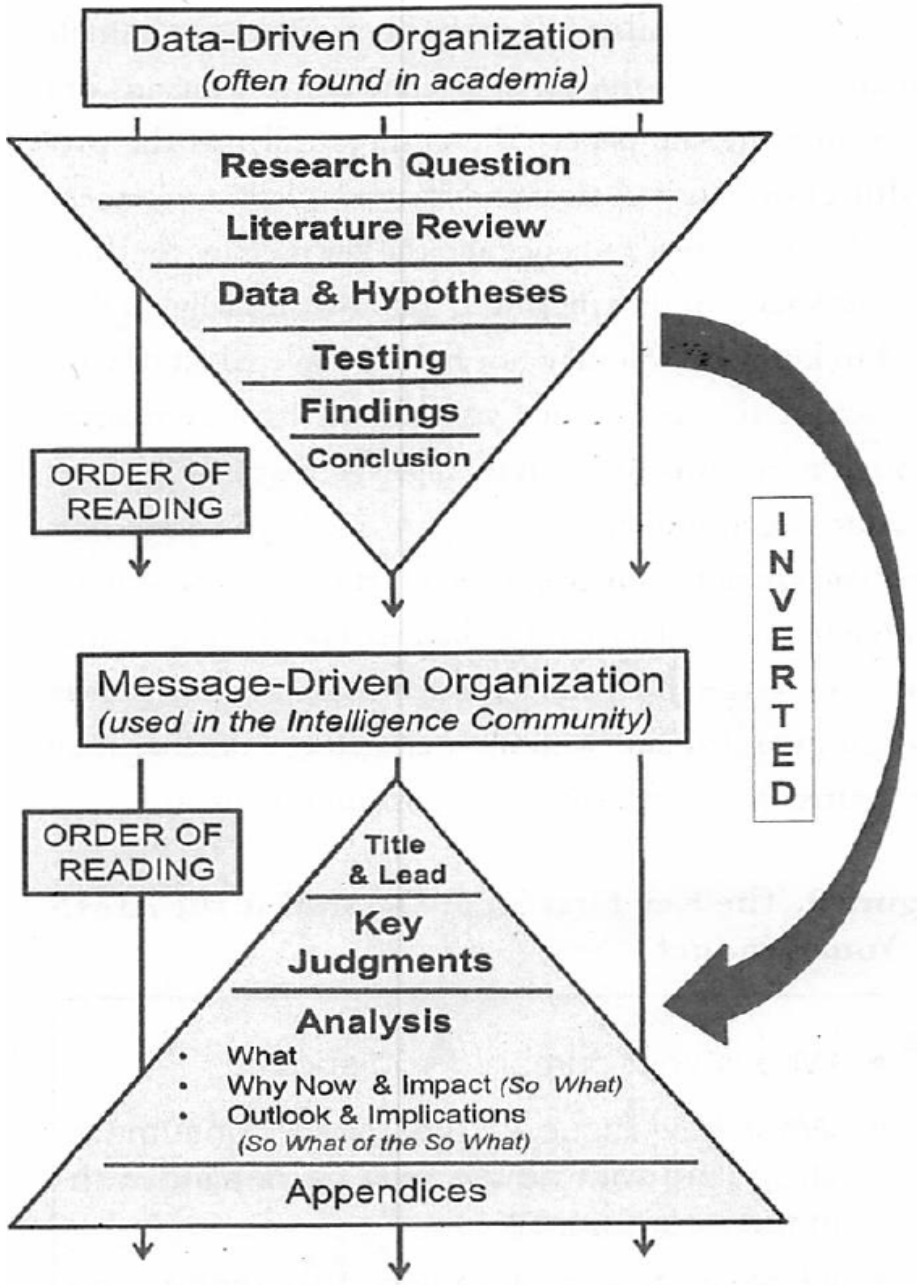
- Mid-level managers
- Lieutenants and/or captains

Command

- Organization leadership (chief, sheriff, assistant deputy chiefs, majors)

ORGANIZE YOUR PRODUCT

Data-Driven vs. Message-Driven



Analytic Writing Guide – Louis M. Kaiser and Randolph H. Pherson

SCOPE

- Include a note about the scope of the product:
  - One or two paragraphs
  - Focus of product
  - Gives context of the “big picture”
  - Why the product is being written now
  - Quality of sources
  - Key assumptions
  - Intel gaps & confidence levels
  - Collaboration with other agencies

SCOPE

-Why the product is being written now
-Quality of sources

-Focus of product
-Gives context of the "big picture"

Example:

- *This report will be distributed on an as-needed basis and will provide information on trends and indicators of human trafficking. This brief will also provide information on emergent technologies that could potentially be exploited by human traffickers to further their criminal enterprise.*
- *The authoring agency bases its analysis in this brief on information gathered from open source reporting which includes internet and social media postings with varying degrees of reliability. This information is intended to support state, federal and local government agencies and authorities, and other entities in developing and prioritizing protective and support measures relating to human trafficking.*

BLUF

- **B**ottom **L**ine **U**p **F**ront
- Don't bury your conclusions
- State the main point in the title and first paragraph
- Follow with substantiation
- Why BLUF?
  - Facilitates rapid decision making
  - Reduces likelihood readers will miss important points
  - Respects reader's time and intelligence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- One or two paragraphs
- Utilize the BLUF method
- High level summation of major points throughout product
- Avoid summarizing too much

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Example:

Transnational criminal organizations (TCO) use non-financial professionals, such as lawyers, accountants, and real estate agents, to bridge the gap between their illicit world, and the licit financial and business spheres. Third-party money lenders, also called facilitators and Designated Non-Financial and Business Professionals (DNFBP), are valuable actors in a criminal organization's structure. As sophisticated professionals who also operate in the official sphere and offer legitimate services, they provide legitimacy and access for TCOs' illicit funds.

KEY FINDINGS

- Series of bullet statements
- Indicate significant information or judgements
- Must be supported in narrative
- Consistent with Executive Summary, amplifying main points
- Executive Summary & Key Findings when combined should stand alone
  - Communicate the "So What?" for busy decision makers

SO WHAT?

- Not simply a summary of past incidents
- How does the topic relate to your audience
- What is the impact locally, regionally, and beyond
- Why should your audience care about this issue

OUTLOOK, IMPLICATIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Include key judgements on the future of the topic
- Increase/decrease threat, what would cause the change?
- Explain the impact if outlook occurs
- Identify implications that are nuanced, specific & actionable
- Should be supported by the narrative
- Analysis of Competing Hypotheses technique can improve the accuracy of forecasts
- ACH may also help identify alternate scenarios

Psychology of Intelligence Analysis: Chapter 8 - Analysis of Competing Hypotheses
https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/psychology-of-intelligence-analysis/art11.html

INTELLIGENCE GAPS

- Identify needed info to inform analysis absent from reporting
- In the form of questions, bullet style
- Tell readers what you do not know
- Do not introduce a topic/issue not already included in product
- Minimum of 3 is recommended
- Not a request for information
- Cannot be answered with a yes or no

INTELLIGENCE GAPS

Examples:

- *What amount of virtual currency transactions are sourced in illicit funds?*
- *What is the total volume of illicit online transactions taking place on darknet marketplaces?*
- *To what extent are children traveling to the United States victimized by smugglers to facilitate illicit migration?*

FINISHING TOUCHES

GRAPHICS

- Pictures, graphs, and maps can make your products POP!
- Well placed graphics draw the reader in and can help break up text heavy sections
- Smart graphics illustrate and advance your message

REVIEW PROCESS

REVIEW PROCESS

Beyond Spellcheck

Concise
Address your topic properly
Audience appropriate
Answering the What? and So What?

Peer review

Seek out a trusted coworker to review your product

Submit

Submit to supervision

Feedback

Make changes accordingly
Review process can be painful but it is necessary!

DISSEMINATION

- Dictated by your audience
- Email, upload to shared portal or post to your intranet
- Determine if product can be shared outside of original dissemination (3rd party)
- Send documents in a standardized format such as PDF
- Consider encrypting sensitive documents with a password, send password in a separate email

FEEDBACK

- Products should include an email or survey link to provide feedback or ask questions on your topic
- Feedback helps inform future topics, lets the author know the impact of their product, and can help ensure products continue to evolve

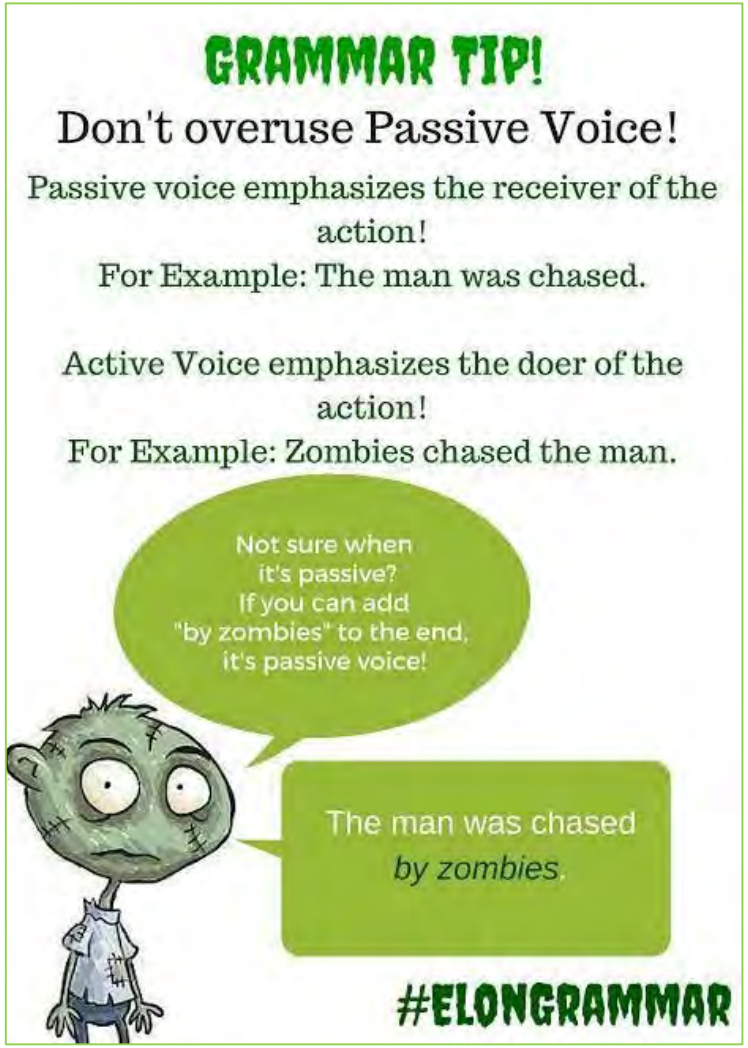
WRITING PITFALLS

WRITING PITFALLS

- Failing to address audience needs
  - Reassess the topic
  - If tasked, ask for further clarity
  - What is the customer's key question(s)?
  - Include insights and judgements to help with decision making
  - Organize logically – avoid confusing the reader & introducing redundancy
  - Consistency in message throughout product

WRITING PITFALLS

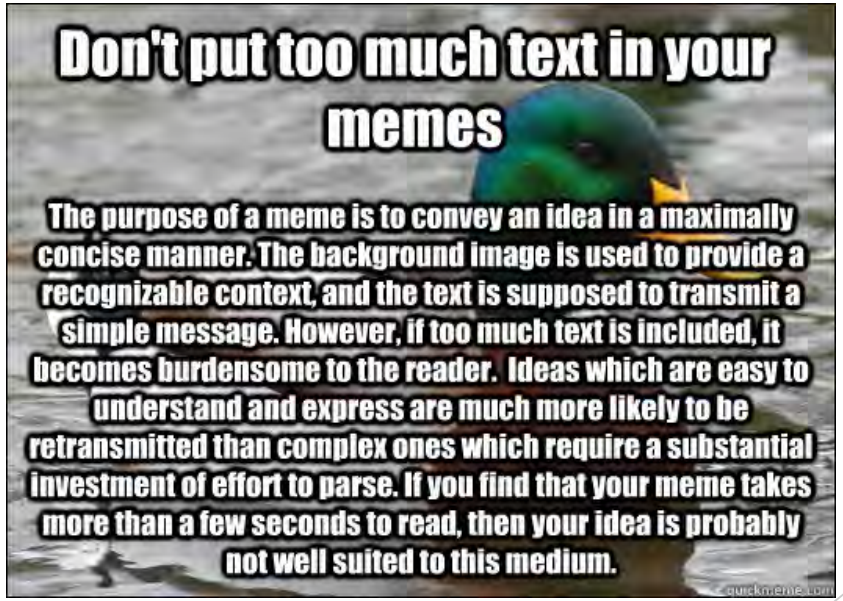
- Avoid passive voice - makes sentences longer than they need to be and redirects from the subject



*If the object is more important than the subject, or if the subject is unknown, the passive voice may be necessary

WRITING PITFALLS

- Assuming more = better
  - Intelligence products are NOT book reports
  - Be concise – explain a lot by writing a little
  - Consider using bullet points, text boxes, appendices and foot notes as alternatives to wordy paragraphs
  - Make each word count
  - Have one principal focus



WRITING PITFALLS

- Utilizing poor sources
  - DO NOT cite Wikipedia as a source
  - Make use of official sources (law enforcement or other government reporting)
- Perform Quality of Information Check
  - Review sources for accuracy
  - Information corroboration
  - Beware of ambiguous information
  - Develop confidence levels for sources
  - Source motivation
  - First, Second, or Third-Hand reporting
  - Ongoing process, perform periodic checks

A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis:
https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/Tradecraft%20Primer-apr09.pdf

RESOURCES

- Analytic Writing Guide – Louis M. Kaiser and Randolph H. Pherson
- Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis – Richards J. Heuer and Randolph H. Pherson
- Analytic Production Guide for Managers of Intelligence and Business Analysts – Walter Voskian
- * Intelligence Guide for First Responders – NCTC, DHS, FBI
  https://www.dni.gov/nctc/jcat/jcat_ctguide/intel_guide.html
- * The Analyst's Style Manual – Bill Welch
  https://www.ncirc.gov/documents/public/analysts_style_manual.pdf

*FREE!

Game Time!

Can Zombies Do That?

Can Zombies Do That?

✓ACTIVE VOICE

- Gang members use graffiti to mark their territory.

SUBJECT VERB OBJECT

PASSIVE VOICE!!!

Can Zombies Do That?

by zombies

- The house was robbed ^ on Monday.

✓ No zombie fix: An unknown subject robbed the house on Monday.

PASSIVE VOICE!!!

by zombies

ISIS Twitter accounts are seen as posting reliable information on security protocols by their supporters.

Can Zombies Do That?

- ✓ No zombie fix: Supporters view the ISIS Twitter accounts as posting reliable information on security protocols.

Can Zombies Do That?

✓ACTIVE VOICE

Terrorist group members and supporters are continually searching for new technologies.

SUBJECT VERB OBJECT

Thank You!

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