



5 rules for explaining things simply...

At simpleshow we believe in the power of simplicity. In an age where we find ourselves being bombarded with all kinds of information from all different directions, never has the need for simple explanations been so pressing.

We now live in an always on and always connected world. This has not only changed the way we see and hear things, but also the way we learn.

As a result, the units in which we now deliver explanations have to be far shorter and much more to the point. But getting this right and finding the balance between an explanation that is simple yet also engaging is not always easy.

So to help you get started, we've put together the following ground rules for creating a succinct and compelling explanation, no matter what the subject matter or who the target audience.

1 Change your perspective

Regardless of the context of your explanation, you should **always put your audience first**. Ask yourself the question "Why should my audience be so interested in what I am trying to say?" This is easier said than done of course, particularly if you are so heavily invested in the subject you are trying to explain. But it's important to remember that you might be an expert in your field, chances are your audience will not be. This is an essential first step towards building the perfect, simple explanation.

When we work with clients at simpleshow, our Concept Writers ask people to really think about what **prior knowledge**, or framework for **understanding** the topic, the audience might already have. With that in mind, it's important to consider that what is obvious to you (the explainer) might not be so obvious to your audience. Always try to consider what can be left out from the explanation and what is essential to be kept in. Then focus on how the audience might try to contextualise the basic understanding they already have and start building a framework from there.





2 Cut out the clutter



This might sound like a straight-forward task, but it's almost always not, especially for an expert! This is because people with expert knowledge tend to err on the side of thinking that everything is really important. But by packing more information into an explanation, all you'll be doing is overwhelming the audience and watering down the core message.

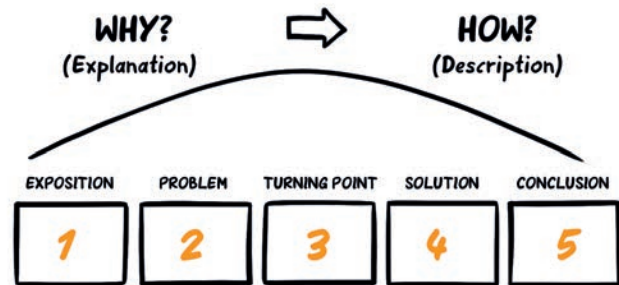
To avoid this, **it's important to focus on the 'why' as opposed to just the 'what' or the 'how'**. This way you will be able to build a causal framework for the explanation before needing to go into any great detail. You can do this by using simple, approachable language to begin with and by concentrating on what the audience already knows about the subject or situation. Then you can start to build your explanation (in small steps) using cause and effect. This will allow you to transition from the "why" to the "what" and then finally the "how" in a seamless, engaging manner.

So be brave. Cut out the clutter from the word go. You can always put it back in later once you've got the audience on-side!

3 Tell a story...

Stories are powerful. They enchant, they enthrall and they engage. But perhaps most importantly, stories educate. Whether it's reading a bedtime story to our children, telling friends about a holiday we've just been on or when interviewing for a new job. Harnessing the power of a well-told story is one of the best ways to hook your audience and really get them listening. **But constructing great stories is no straight-forward task. So consider the following:**

Nearly all stories have **characters**, so pick one. And ensure that character is relevant to your target audience. You might even consider having more than one character, so a dialogue can emerge throughout. Also ensure that there is a clear **structure** to the story. We usually go with 5 steps:



This way, you can easily progress from the "why" to the "how" or the "what", without having to introduce needless facts, figures or statements and run the risk of alienating or boring the listener. Lastly, consider the **length** of your story, especially when we think about the 'always on and always connected' way we now live our lives. **Keep it short and to the point, nobody likes waffle.**

4 Paint a picture



Something else which is paramount to consider when constructing the perfect explanation, is the need to paint a vivid picture for your audience and really **captivate their imagination**. One way to do this is by using images.

When referring to images in any form of explanation, be it as a video, a presentation or even an email, what we are really referring to is the **use of metaphors**. A metaphoric image allows you to contextualise your point and really make it stick - building complexity not confusion! And you don't have to be the most talented and intricate of artists to construct a powerful image. **It is often the most basic of images which can create the most powerful triggers** of a thought or memory in the consumer's mind.

Take the telephone for example. Most smartphones no longer look anything like the old fashioned dial-up telephones we once used. But the image of a telephone - usually accompanied by a contact telephone number - is recognisable the world over. So it's important to remember that **using imagery to underpin your explanation is about triggering something in your audience's mind**. It's not about how life-like or spectacular you can make something appear!

5 Build confidence

Finally, it's important that you leave your audience feeling confident in their own understanding of the subject in question. **The audience should under no circumstances be left thinking how? what? or most importantly why?**

The good news though is that if you've managed to follow the first 4 rules of building a simple explanation, then the 5th and final rule will take care of itself. If you've successfully shifted your perspective, simplified your message and told a story using images, then chances are you've done a pretty good job!

By following these ground rules, going back to basics and taking things slowly, your audience will never be made to feel uncomfortable or intimidated by your explanation. **Break things down, take small steps and arrive at the perfect, simple explanation!**





About simpleshow

We are experts in simplifying messages. We produce short, engaging papermation videos to ensure important information is understood and also remembered! Our unique style of explainer videos are very much focused on taking long, dry or complex topics and making them easier to understand.

Since being founded in 2008, we have **worked with some of the world's leading organisations** including the likes of

BP, M&S, Adobe and The Royal Mail Group. Explaining all manner of topics from HR systems, compliance procedures and even new products and services. The videos we produce can make any topic simple!

We have a talented team of designers and a **high quality production process** which makes producing an explainer video with simpleshow **easy, efficient and fun.**

Drop us a line to find out more!

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