

THINK FIRST, WRITE SECOND

These are the steps to follow when writing any document. When we use this process, we make sure we are creating an extremely focused document that will do exactly what it needs to, for whoever it's being used by.

1. Who is this document for? Who's going to USE it?

This is your PRIMARY reader

2. Who else will have opinions on this document?

This is your SECONDARY reader

3. What is my PRIMARY reader going to use it for?

This is what it needs to do. This is what success looks like. If it doesn't do this, it fails. You might call it PURPOSE, but it's not the purpose statement in the document.

Now make a list from these prompts:

4. What questions will my primary reader have?

5. What else do I think they need to know?

6. What questions will my secondary readers have?

7. Is there anything in a previous example of this document type that I should include?

Now separate those into the 3 functions:

At a glance <i>Primary readers only</i>	Tell the story <i>Expand, explain, justify</i>	Prove it <i>Provide detailed evidence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••

THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. These are **FUNCTIONS** of a document, not necessarily sections.

For example:

- **In a 1-pager** the At a glance function is likely to be achieved through nice, descriptive headings
- **In process documentation**, you will need to say what the document is and who it's for, and then the contents achieves the rest of the At a glance function.

2. It's very likely that you will have some content in all 3 columns of the table. For example:

At a glance <i>Primary readers only</i>	Tell the story <i>Expand, explain, justify</i>	Prove it <i>Provide detailed evidence</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All the options • Why we recommend this one 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A detailed option analysis – maybe a table or a spreadsheet

3. Turn each bullet in this table into a statement or a question. These will become your headings and subheadings. They are more engaging and easier (faster) to process than traditional topic headings.

For example:

Topic heading	Statement or question heading
Methodology	How we analysed the data
Background	How we got here
Costings	How much will this cost?
Options	Options we considered

4. Go through the whole process before starting to write. You want absolute clarity, and as soon as you start writing with an incomplete plan, things get muddy.
5. While you're writing, anytime you think about adding anything in that's not on your plan, ask yourself:
 - Does my primary reader **NEED** this for the document to do its job?
 - Is it important enough to be seen at a glance?
 - Do I need to write about this (tell a story) or just make sure it is there as evidence (appendices)?