


Key messages

Think headlines – main points only

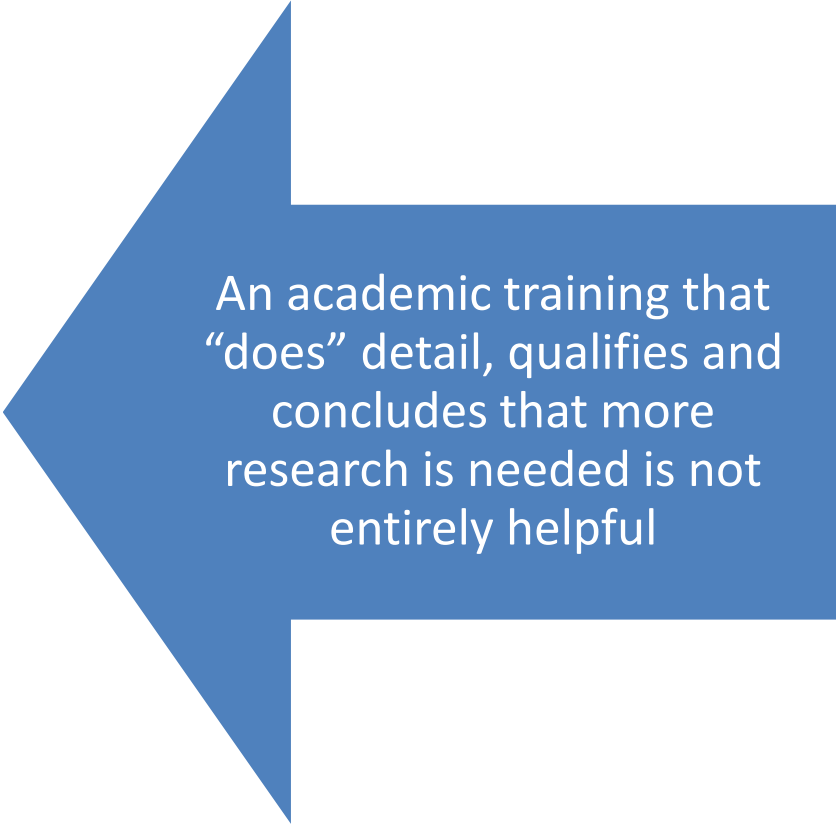
Write short: positive: simple

Be specific and strategic

What makes you good at evidence doesn't always help in communicating it



The notion of a message you can convey as you run down the corridor with the Minister on her way to a parliamentary committee is a good one



An academic training that “does” detail, qualifies and concludes that more research is needed is not entirely helpful

How do you pick your key messages?



~~Good writing is different~~ Key messages depending on ~~the brief's~~ its aims ...

What is the brief intended to achieve ...

- Do you want to advocate a particular position?
- Is objectivity / being seen to be objective important?
- Is this about a single issue or single intervention?
- Do you want to build a long term relationship with the policy maker(s)?



Who will use the evidence and how complex it is matters to **your key messages**

Different audiences

- Politicians
- Technocrats
- Generalist civil servants
- A wider public

- Regional or national
- International

- Health
- Other sectors

Different capacity / preferences

- Familiarity with the issues
- Knowledge of existing evidence
- Understanding of technical terms
- Capacity to handle different types of evidence

- Interest
- Attention span
- Style preferences (comparative / experiential)
- IT literacy

~~1. Create a strong~~ Your key messages relate to your story line

Introduction

Why is the issue important?

Why is the policy response relevant?

What questions will the brief answer?

Evidence

What is the evidence?

How does it link to the policy question?

What relevant experiences or lessons are there?

Policy implications

What works?

What are the implementation challenges?

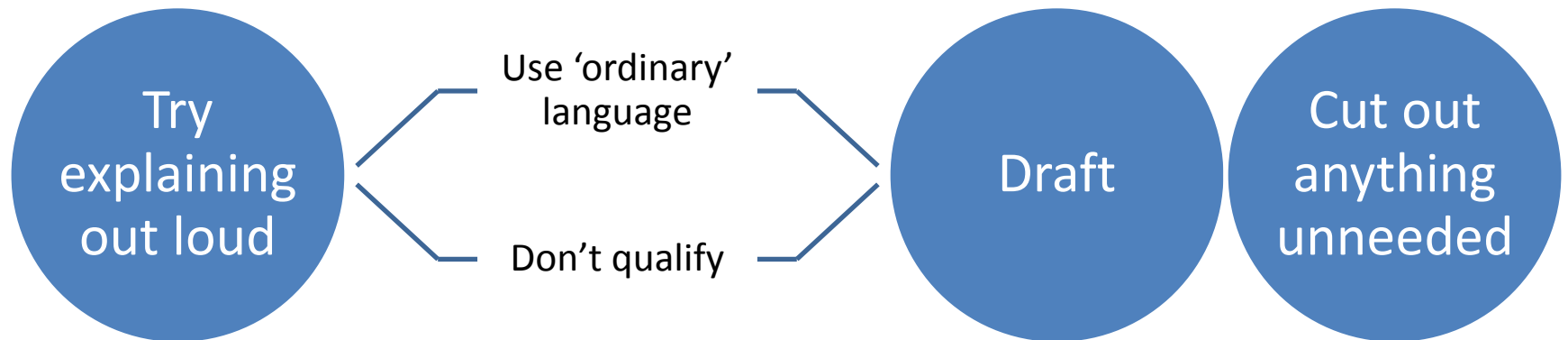
Are there co-benefits or or unintended (negative) consequences?

What is the room for manoeuvre?

How they are written matters ... they need to be

- Few in number (5-8)
- Short (a few lines or a mini-paragraph)
- Policy relevant (they carry the story line)
- Jargon-free
- Qualification-free (no-one will take a decision based on the brief alone)

Not everyone finds it easy to extract key messages



Use key messages to 'check' the brief

- Define the key messages as you draft the terms of reference
- Review the brief in light of the messages
 - Is there a story line running through the brief and captured in the key messages?
 - Is there superfluous material?
- Use the key messages to highlight language in the main brief that is too academic

Recommendations: writing key messages means thinking about the ...

Focus

- What is the policy question? What does the policy maker (really) need to know?

Style

- Is the language simple and clear? Are there any 'academic' tics that undermine the messages?

The brief

- If it is hard to find the key message, is it possible the brief doesn't actually work?