

# Writing about Medicine in Plain English

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David Daly, Gertrude Daly, Oscar Linares, MD



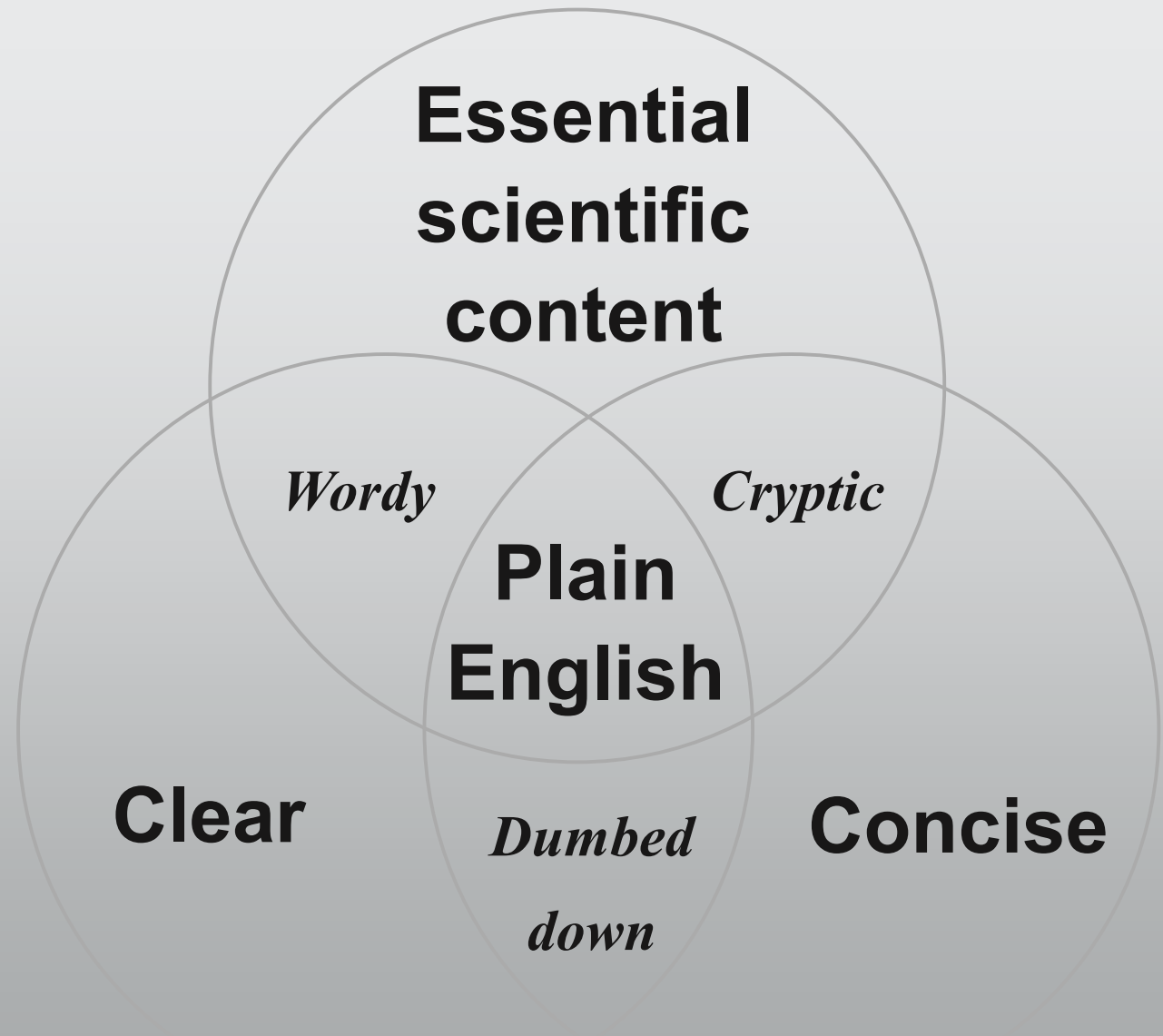
## Medical Journals

- ✓ **Audience** — doctors and scientists
- ✓ **Subject matter** — medical science and practice
- ✓ **How to access** — various

# Why Plain English?

- ✓ English - the international language of science
- ✓ Understanding is vital
- ✓ Doctors are busy people
- ✓ Educated people prefer Plain English

Decide what  
you need to  
say, then say  
it clearly and  
concisely





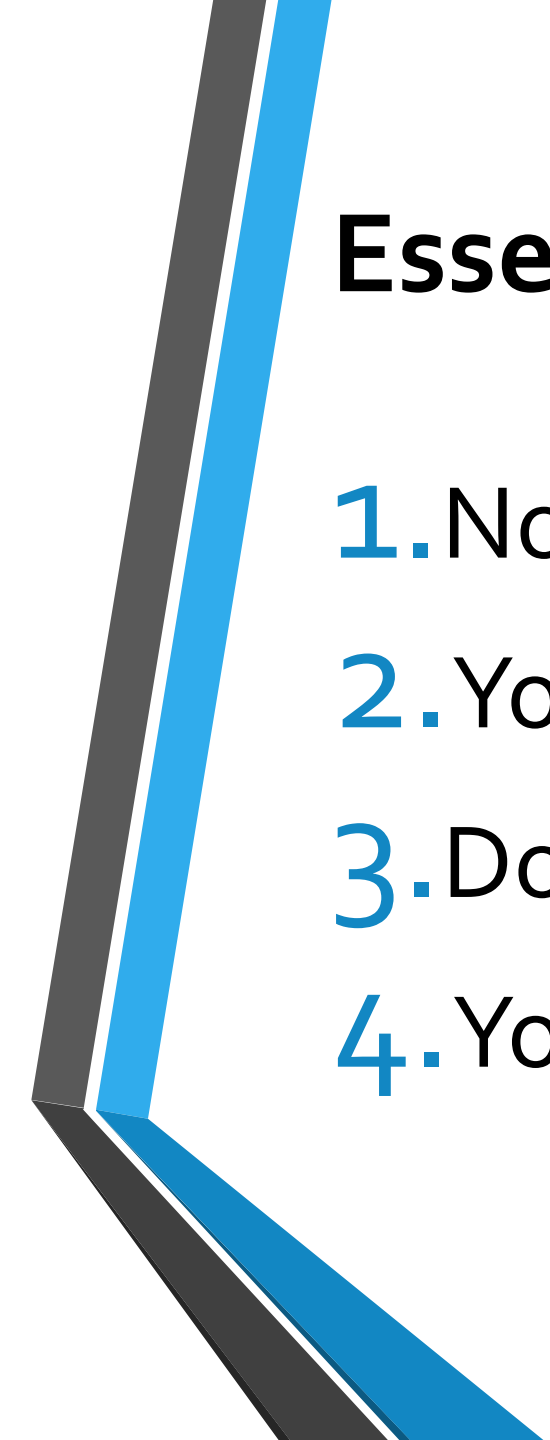
## Three concepts

1. Take charge of your reading ease score
2. Use vivid language
3. Present logical reasoning clearly



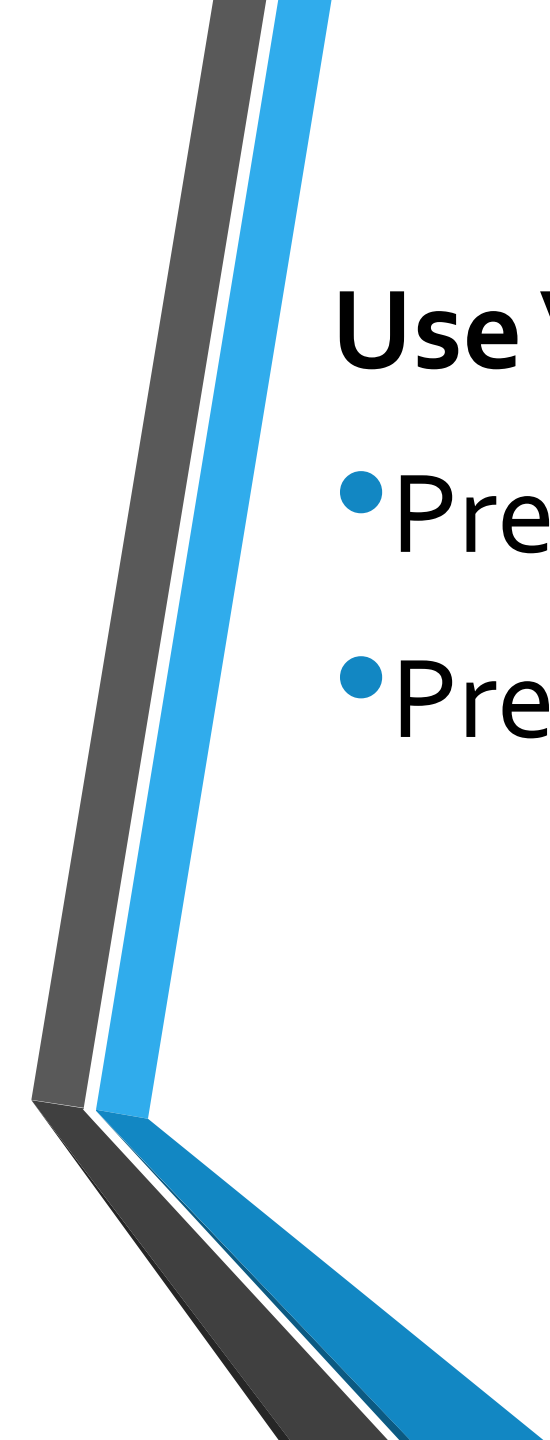
# Improving reading ease

- Use normal sentence length
- Prefer the short word



# Essential Scientific Term

1. No plain English equivalent,
2. You can't paraphrase in a few short words,
3. Doctors use it consistently, and
4. You can look it up in a standard reference.



## Use Vivid Language

- Prefer Active Voice
- Prefer Concrete Language

## Example from *JAMA*

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During the past several decades, mean maternal age at delivery of first infant has increased steadily to 25.2 years in the United States and 30 years in Germany and Britain in 2009.

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(WSEG=33/33.0/22.0/18.3)

# Revised

How old is a woman when she has her first baby? In 2009, the mean age was 25.2 years in the USA and 30 in Germany and Britain. The mean age has increased steadily in the past several decades.

(wseg=38/12.6/64.8/7.3)



# Comparing original and revised

## Original

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## Revised

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## *Cancer Investigation Example*

The factors that can affect patient outcome include complete macro- and microscopic tumor resection (RO resection), the depth of tumor infiltration (T-Category), the presence of lymph node metastasis (N-Category), and the presence or absence of lymphatic vessel invasions (L VI).

*(WSEG = 39/39.0/6.7/22.0)*

# Nominalization

- Abstract noun formed from a verb or adjective.
  - Examples: *resection* => *resect*, *infiltration* => *infiltrate*.
- Usually not an *essential scientific term*
- You can often paraphrase using a shorter word.



## *Cancer Investigation Example*

The factors that can affect patient **outcome** include complete macro- and microscopic tumor **resection** (RO **resection**), the **depth** of tumor **infiltration** (T-Category), the **presence** of lymph node **metastasis** (N-Category), and the **presence** or **absence** of lymphatic vessel **invasions** (L VI).

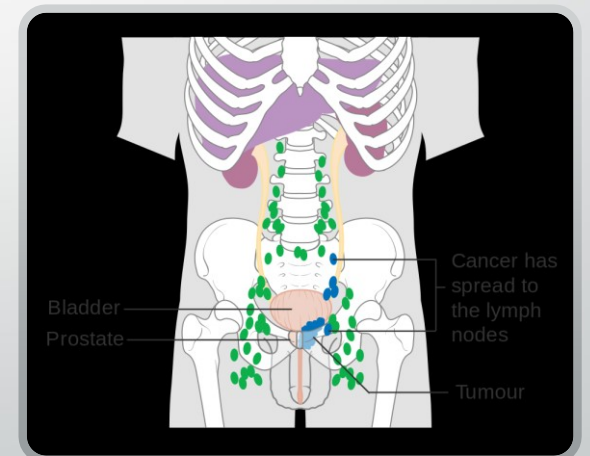
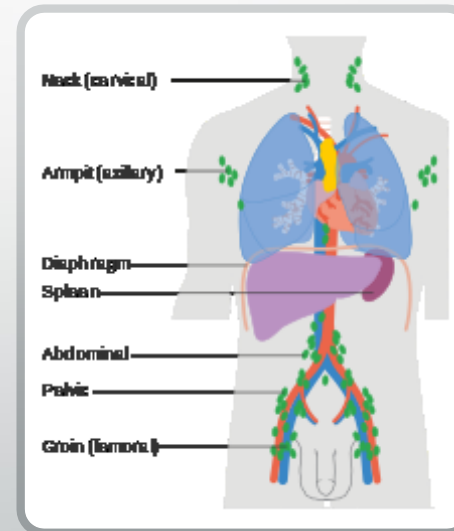
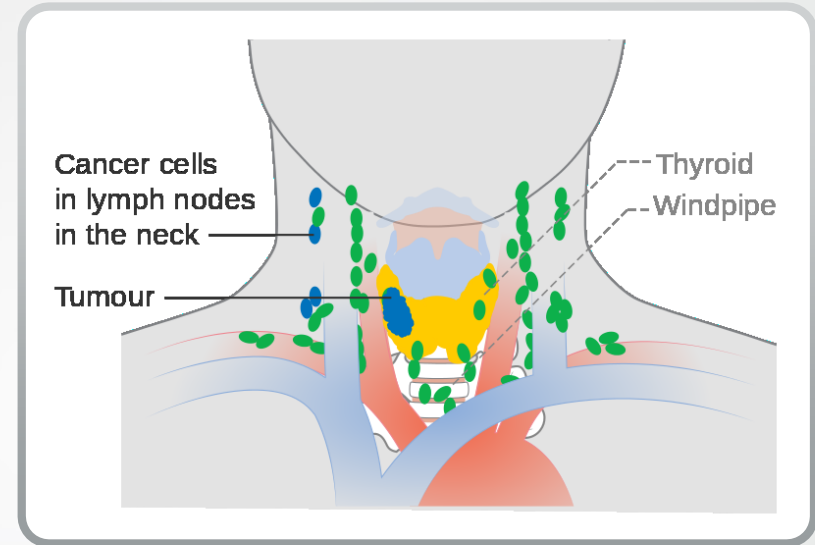
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# Revised

Many factors affect patient outcome, including:

1. How much of the tumor gets removed (RO-resection),
2. How deep the tumor infiltrates (T-category),
3. Whether the cancer metastasizes to the lymph nodes (N-category), and
4. Whether it gets into the lymph vessels (L VI).

(WSEG = 39/39.0/94.3/2.3)



# *Comparing original and revised*

## Original

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# Our Books

- DavidDaly(at)pe4d.com
- @PE4Doctors
  - (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)

