

HATS - A Design Procedure for Routine Business



Presentation by H. Allen Brizee;
Adapted from Baker (2001)
Brought to you in cooperation with the Purdue Online Writing Lab



HATS: Introduction

Use HATS to create documents that are easy to access, easy to navigate, easy to remember:

- **H**eadings – to promote easy navigation
- **A**ccess – to promote the finding and understanding of information
- **T**ypography – to promote ease of reading and clear levels of information hierarchy
- **S**pace – to promote effective document design



Readers need information quickly, so documents should ensure easy access to important information:

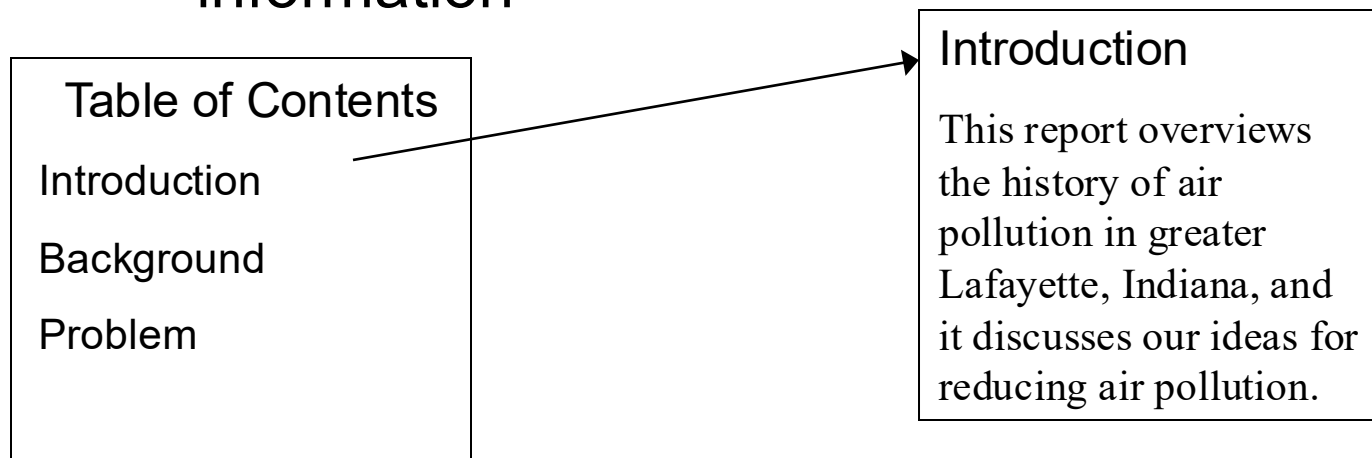
- Writing should be clear and concise. But before audiences read words, they must access the document
- Documents that are easy to access and understand are more persuasive and user-centered

Use **HATS**: **H**eadings, **A**ccess, **T**ypography, **S**pace



Headings

- Headings are navigation signposts in table of contents
- Headings help guide readers through documents
- Headings announce forthcoming information





HATS: Headings (cont.)

- **Adequacy** – Documents should have an ample number of headings to serve as navigation signposts
- **Hierarchy** – Use typeface, size, style, and alignment to show different levels of importance and detail:

Background

This section outlines the history of air pollution in greater Lafayette...

The Early Years

During the industrial growth of the early twentieth century...



Access

- Readers should be able to find and understand important information easily
- To ensure easy access of important information:

Use bullets or dashes, or for steps, use numbers.

Note the architecture in this presentation

Use graphics such as tables, graphs, process charts, and photographs



HATS: Access (cont.)

Graphics – Think of yourself as an information designer not just a wordsmith. Here are some suggestions:

Information Type	Effective Presentation
Numeric	Tables, charts
People, objects	Pictures, line drawings
Processes	Flow charts
Geographic Data	Maps
Nonchronological lists	Bulleted lists
Chronological or prioritized lists	Numbered lists



HATS: Typography

Typography

- Typeface has persuasive impact and can be changed to improve design

 - Avoid using more than two types of font in one document

 - Make sure you can read all the text against the background

 - Unless instructed otherwise, left-justify your body text



HATS: Typography (cont.)

Typography Continued: Fonts

- Use Times New Roman for body text
- Use Arial or other sans serif fonts such as Franklin Gothic Book for headings.
- Avoid unusual fonts such as Hobo Std for professional documents
- Use 10 or 12 point font for body text.
- For headings, bold the text or use a different font; bolding *and* underlining is overkill



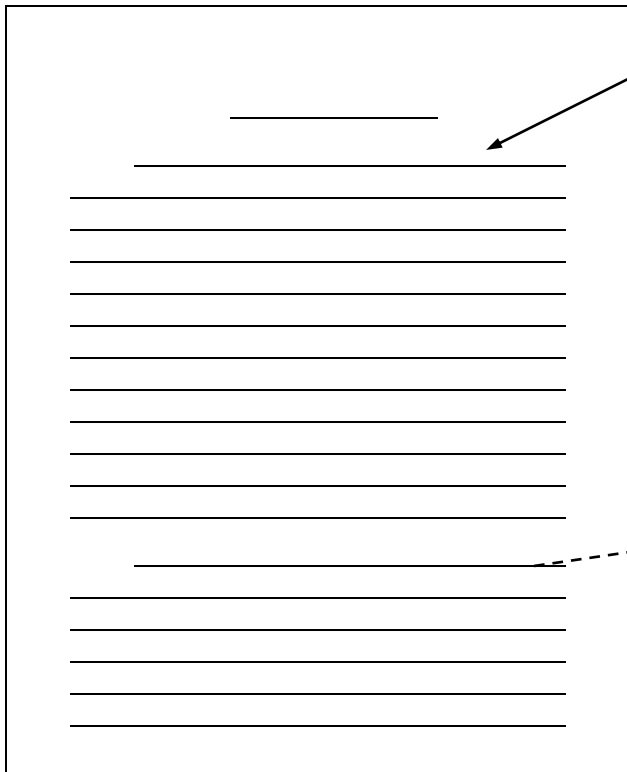
Space

- Use plenty of space so you don't overwhelm readers
 - Ensure that appropriate top, bottom, left, and right space margins frame the elements on a page (1 inch margin is good)
 - Allow for space around visuals rather than using frames, unless an edge of your visual bleeds into the white space of the page
 - Do not crowd your words. Trust your eyes when you step back to view your page at a distance
 - Use this presentation to guide you. Your documents should be visually effective, *and* they should contain good content



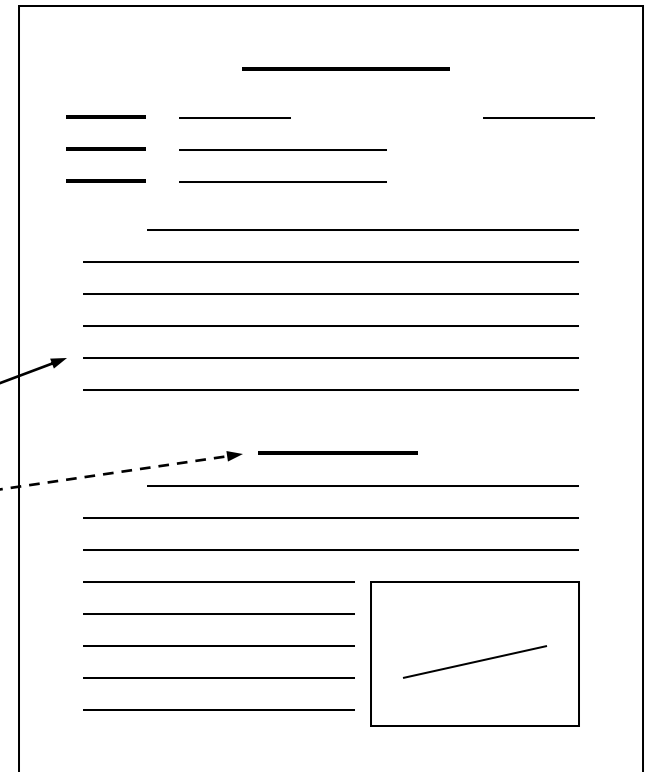
HATS: Space (cont.)

Here is an overview of how pages look from a distance:



Traditional essay:
large blocks of text,
information difficult
and time consuming
to retrieve

Report format
with small, well-
balanced blocks
of concise
information,
easy to access;
essay topic
sentence
becomes heading





HATS: Space (con't.)

• **Design** – The first thing readers see is the design of your document. If your document does not *look* professional and effective, your ethos will suffer.

Use the elements of design outlined in this presentation:

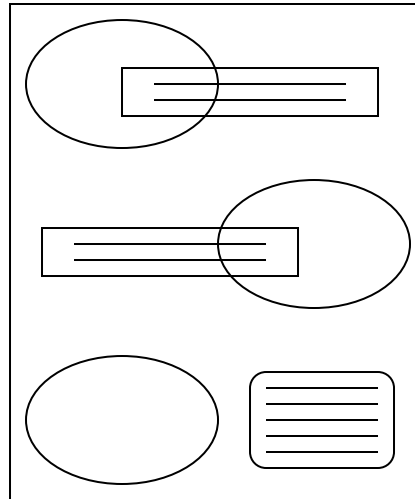
Colors – Make sure colors work well *together*

- Avoid combinations such as yellow-orange, black-purple
- Consider cultural expectations and color blind readers
- Colors on monitors and colors on paper look different
- Consider that you may not have access to a color printer, so design documents that look good in black and white



HATS: Space (cont.)

- Shapes – Avoid awkward shapes or shapes that do not work well together
 - Spheres, see below, can work well in documents
 - Always look at your document from a distance; turn it upside down, tilt it. Do the shapes conflict?



Placement – Cultures reading from left to right move in the Z pattern as they read down a page

- Place visuals and text accordingly, with the most important information in upper left and bottom right areas

Contrast – Allow for contrast on your page

- Do not place a line of circles on the same plane on a page; place visuals and text using the Z pattern so that you create an effective contrast

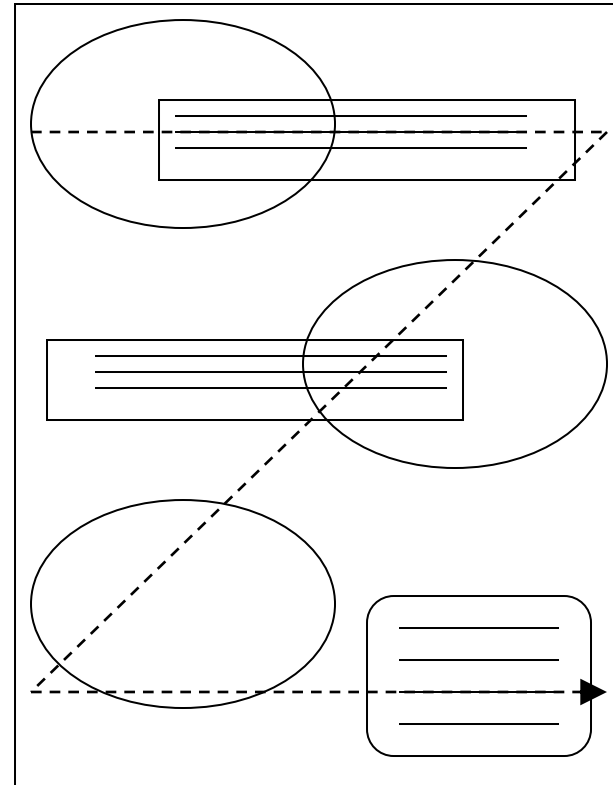
Balance – Balance your pages and make sure that your eye is not drawn to any area of the page unintentionally

- How is your page going to be viewed? By itself, opposite another page?
- Do the two pages work well *together*?



HATS: Space (cont.)

- Z pattern →
- Contrast: circles aren't on same plane
- Balance: page is balanced





HATS: Recap

To Recap – Ask these questions when using HATS:

1. **Headings** – Are there enough headings? Do they reflect a clear hierarchy?
2. **Access** – Is important information easy to find? Is the information easy to digest? Does the method of presentation enhance readability and clarity?
3. **Typography** – Does the document use the most appropriate typefaces, size, styles, and alignment for both body text and headings?
4. **Space** – Does the document have appropriate white space to make it inviting and easy to read?



The End

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