



# The top 10

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- Be prepared
- Be systematic
- Be simple
- Be clear
- Be concise
- Be fluent
- Be accurate
- Be visually aware
- Be correct
- Be consistent



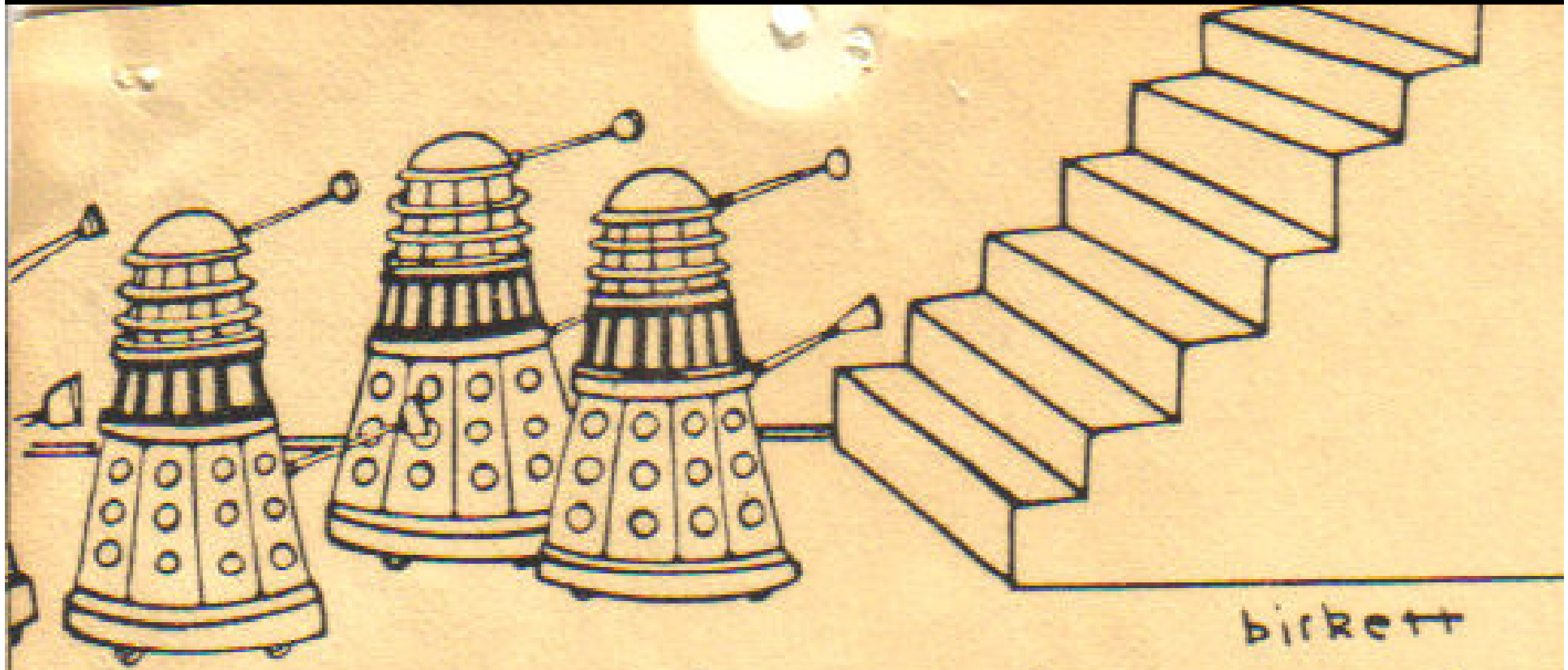
# Be prepared

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“Success depends upon previous preparation, and without such preparation there is sure to be failure”

Confucius





birrett

*"Well, this certainly buggers our plans to conquer the Universe."*



# Be prepared – the ‘big picture’

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- Purpose
- People
- Product
- Process

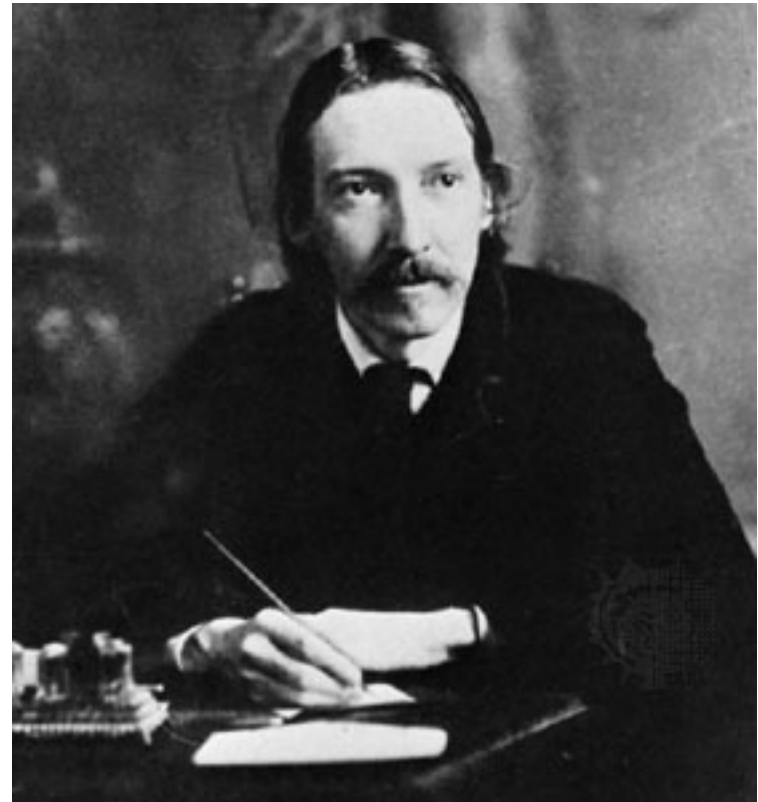


# Be systematic

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“If a man  
can group his ideas,  
then he is a writer”

Robert Louis Stevenson





# Reading strategies

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- Preselecting papers
- Skimming headings
- Skimming hotspots
- Whole thing (rarely)
- Grouping refs by category
- Extracting/recording



# Useful tools

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## **Thinking**

- Six key questions
- Brainstorming
- Talking it through
- Incubation

## **Organizing**

- Mind-mapping
- Post-it notes
- Outlining
- Heaps of paper



# Six key questions

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- Meaning?
- Why?
- Why not?
- Like what?
- Based on what evidence?
- So what?



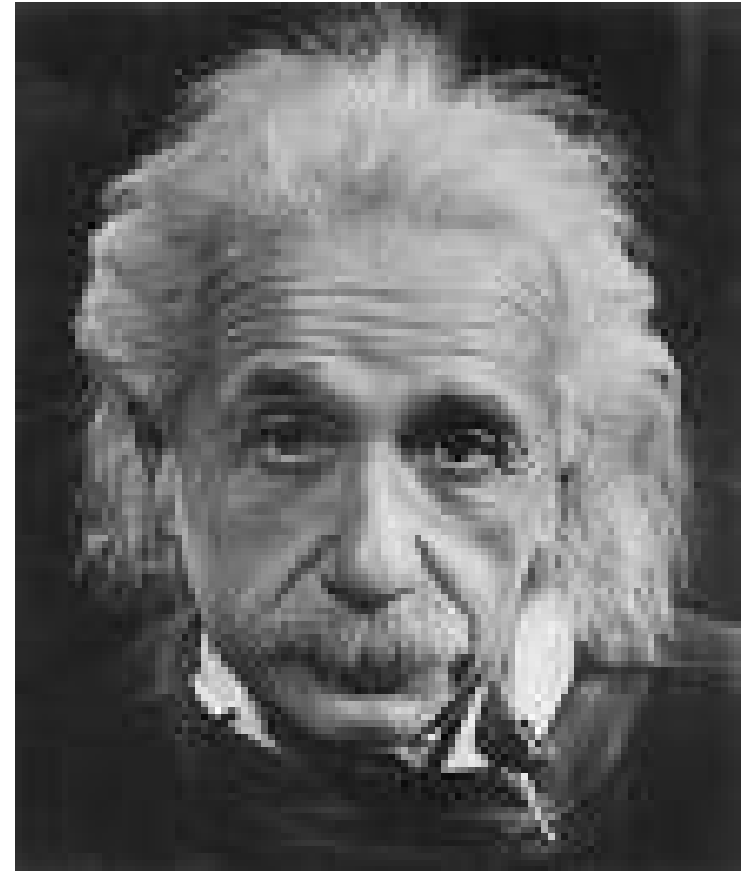


# Be simple

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“If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough”

Albert Einstein



# Writing Skills for Medical Communications



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Top 10 tips



# Be simple

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- Have a good structure
- Make structure clear to reader
- Manage structure and length of:
  - sentences
  - paragraphs
  - lists
- Choose appropriate words



# Concept/length

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Since behavioral factors, such as poor compliance with treatment, frequently contribute to exacerbations of heart failure, a prospective, randomized trial of the effect of a nurse-directed, multidisciplinary intervention on rates of readmission within 90 days of hospital discharge, quality of life, and costs of care for high-risk patients 70 years of age or older who were hospitalized with congestive heart failure was conducted by Deng et al.



## Be clear

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“Good prose is like a  
window pane”

George Orwell





## Sentence order

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Every step of the procedure, including the criteria for selecting patients, the surgical approach, the intraoperative technique, and the postoperative nursing care, was evaluated.



## Don't be unclear

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- “Women dream about food ten times more often than men.”
- “Weight loss is an independent prognostic marker for poor survival in complicated heart failure, and therapies directed at improving weight loss may improve outcomes.”

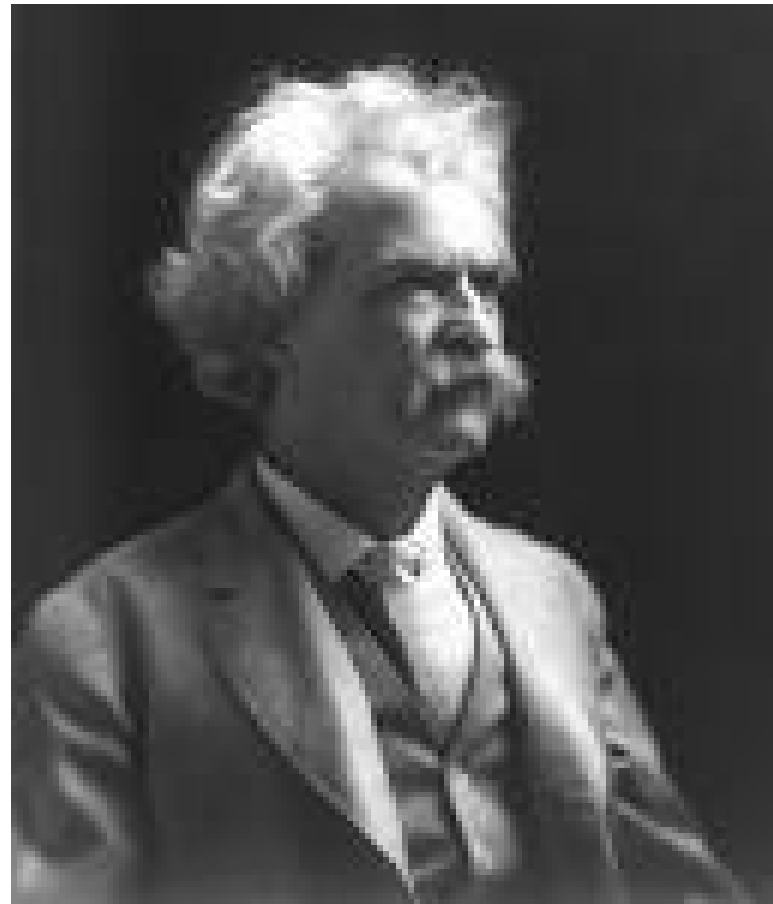


# Be concise

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“...plain, simple language, short words and brief sentences. That is the way to write English - it is the modern way and the best way”

Mark Twain







# Five principles for conciseness

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- Delete words that mean little or nothing
- Delete words that repeat meaning of other words
- Delete words implied by other words
- Replace a phrase by a word
- Change negatives to positives



# Words that can often be deleted

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- Actually
- Really
- Rather
- Basically
- Generally
- Somewhat



# Redundancies

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- Basic fundamentals
- Various different
- Consensus of opinion
- Future events
- Period of time
- Red in colour
- At a rapid speed



# Words implied by other words

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- The last point to make is...
- Have been determined to have...
- This section introduces...



# Phrases into words

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- Despite the fact that...
- In a situation in which...
- Concerning the matter of...
- A greater number of...
- Performed an investigation into...



# Negatives into positives

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- Not allow...
- Not include...
- Not stop...



"I'm of the opinion that this manuscript of yours may well benefit from a modicum of judicious editing."



# Be fluent

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“Writing stopped being fun when I discovered the difference between good writing and bad”

Truman Capote







# Organization for fluency

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Traditional clinical review articles differ from systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Traditional reviews are often highly selective in the literature they discuss and may reflect the author's personal opinion. Non-quantitative systematic reviews comprehensively examine the medical literature, seeking to identify and synthesize all relevant information to formulate the best approach to diagnosis or treatment. Meta-analyses (quantitative systematic reviews) seek to answer a focused clinical question, using rigorous statistical analysis of pooled research studies.



# Repetition for fluency

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In a coherent paragraph, each sentence relates clearly to the topic sentence or controlling idea. However, there is more to coherence than sentence meaning. If a paragraph is coherent, each sentence flows clearly to the next without obvious shifts or jumps. A coherent paragraph also creates ties between old and new information to make the structure of ideas or arguments clear to the reader.



# Adding fluency

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Type 2 diabetes is an increasingly common condition. There exist over a million diagnosed cases in the UK. A further million cases are believed to be undiagnosed. This illness has devastating complications. Examples include coronary heart disease, nephropathy, stroke, retinopathy and heart failure. Three-quarters of patients with this condition die of cardiovascular causes.

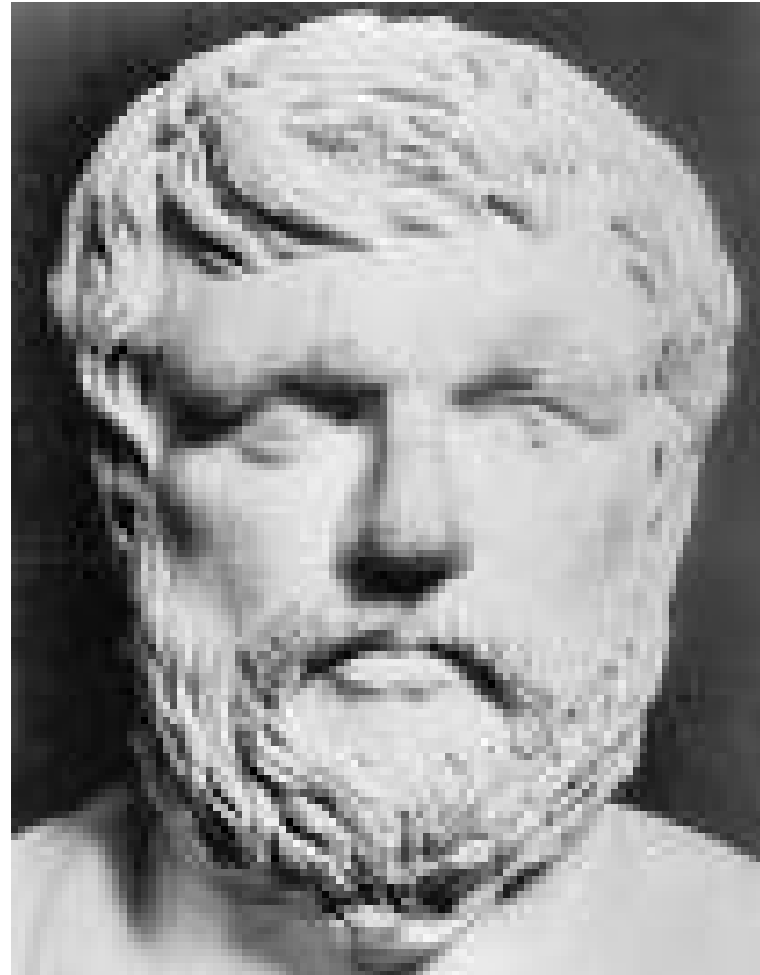


# Be accurate

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“Fast is fine, but  
accuracy is  
everything”

Xenophon





# Missing out a couple of words could alter meaning

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## **Incorrect**

- ...and  $\geq 2$  unscheduled medical visits during the past year were required for enrollment

## **Correct**

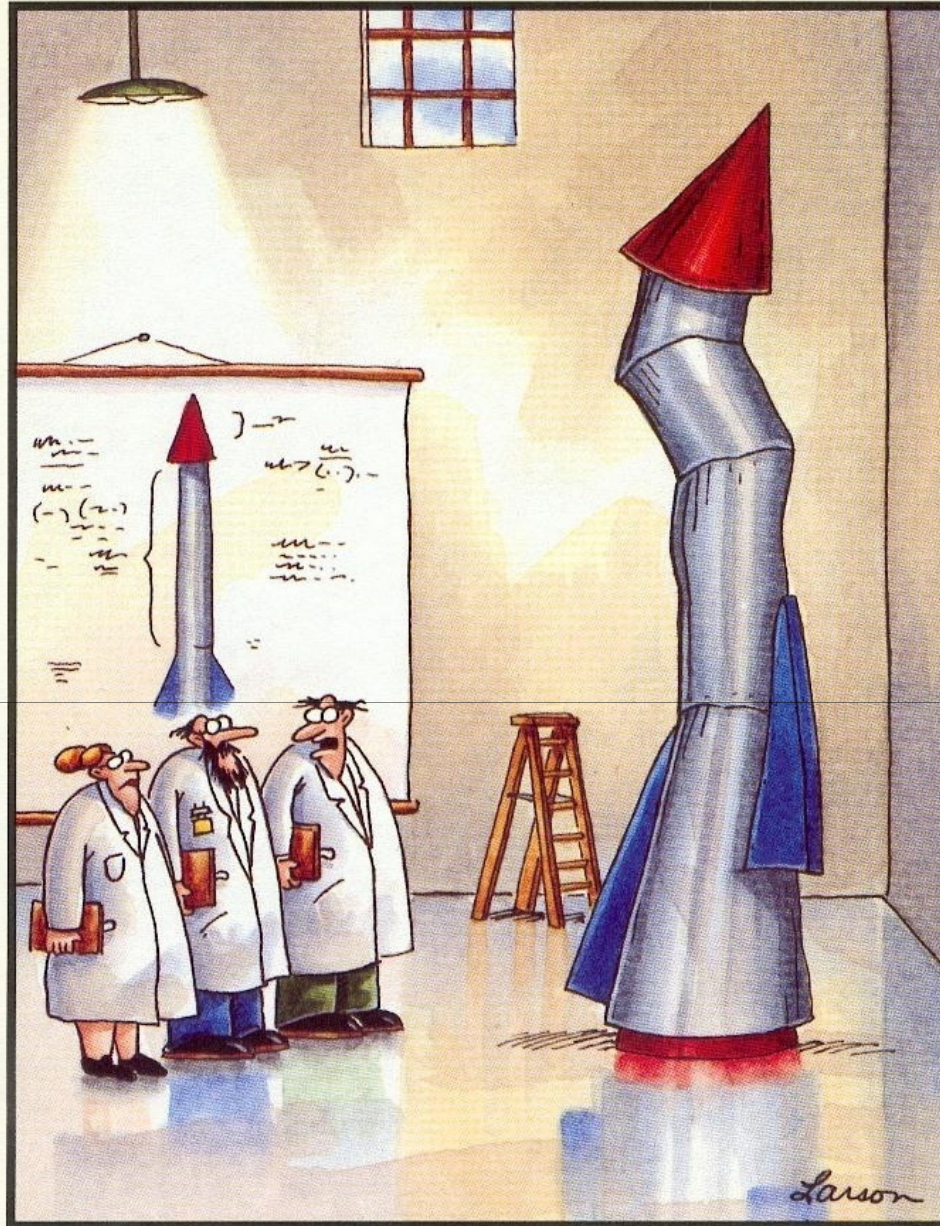
- ...and  $\geq 2$  unscheduled medical visits **for asthma** during the past year were required for enrollment



## Is this an accurate statement?

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In the first 10 years after erythropoiesis-stimulating agents were introduced, only four cases of pure red cell aplasia occurred.



"It's time we face reality, my friends. ...  
We're not exactly rocket scientists."

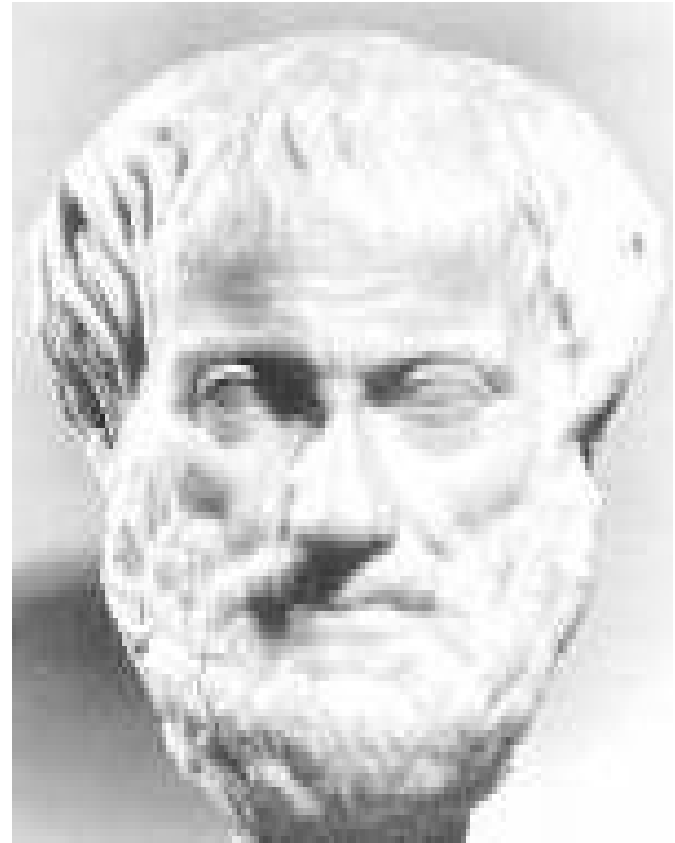


# Be visually aware

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“The soul cannot think  
without a picture”

Aristotle







## Favourite hot drinks among postdoctoral researchers at three UK universities (based on a questionnaire study)

<b>Favourite drink</b>	<b>Oxford (n=92)</b>	<b>Cambridge (n=150)</b>	<b>Manchester (n=88)</b>
Coffee	45	77	25
Tea	24	54	25
Chocolate*	15	13	34
Other†	8	6	4

\*including cocoa

†including Horlicks, Ovaltine, milk (from any animal) and hot water

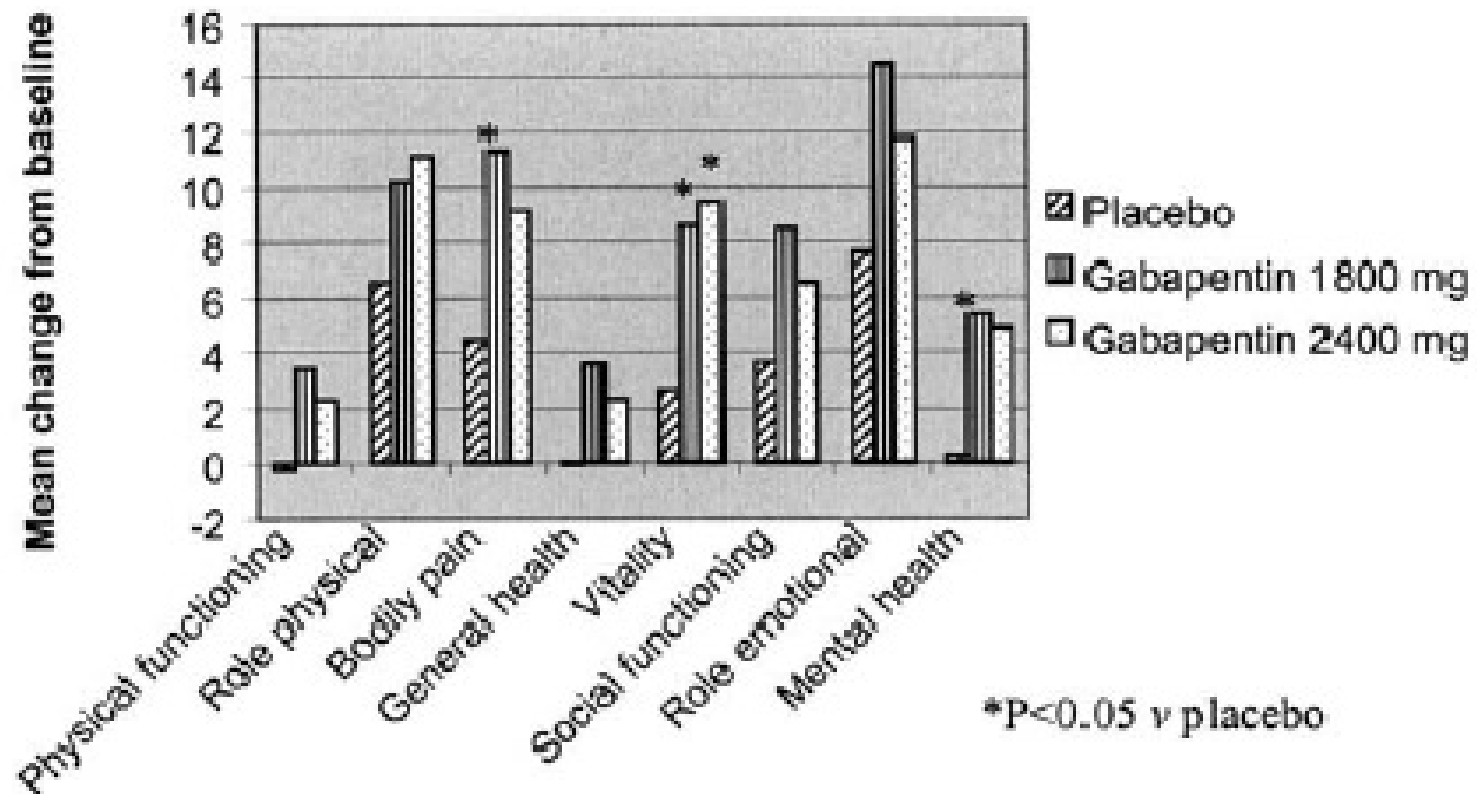


Fig. 3. Summary of changes in domains of the Short Form-36 Quality of Life Questionnaire. Scores represent mean change from baseline to final calculable score adjusted for specified covariates (baseline score and cluster/study centre). A positive change indicates improvement.

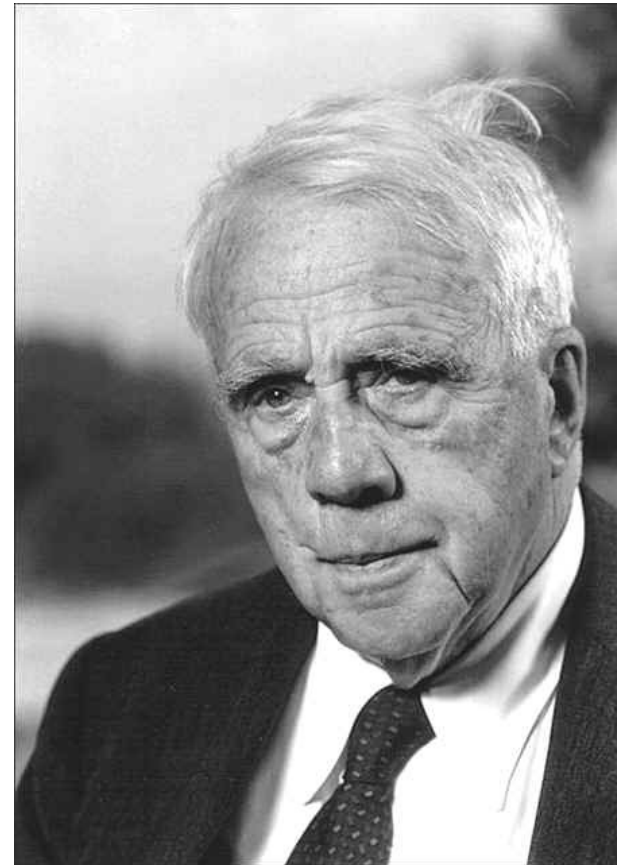


# Be correct

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“Life is tons of discipline. Your first discipline is your vocabulary, then your grammar and your punctuation.”

Robert Frost





## Commonly misused words

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Varying/various

Accuracy/precision

Effect/affect

Infer/imply

Adopt/adapt

Assure/ensure

Definite/definitive

Dose/dosage

**Steve & Tricia Gough**

Complimentary Therapists

## **The Massage Centre**

Pamper days & Treatments

66a Lord Street

Liverpool

opp B.H.S

Phone:0151 709 9701

E-mail:[massagecentre@hotmail.com](mailto:massagecentre@hotmail.com)

Website:[www.themassagecentre.co.uk](http://www.themassagecentre.co.uk)



# A painful procedure?

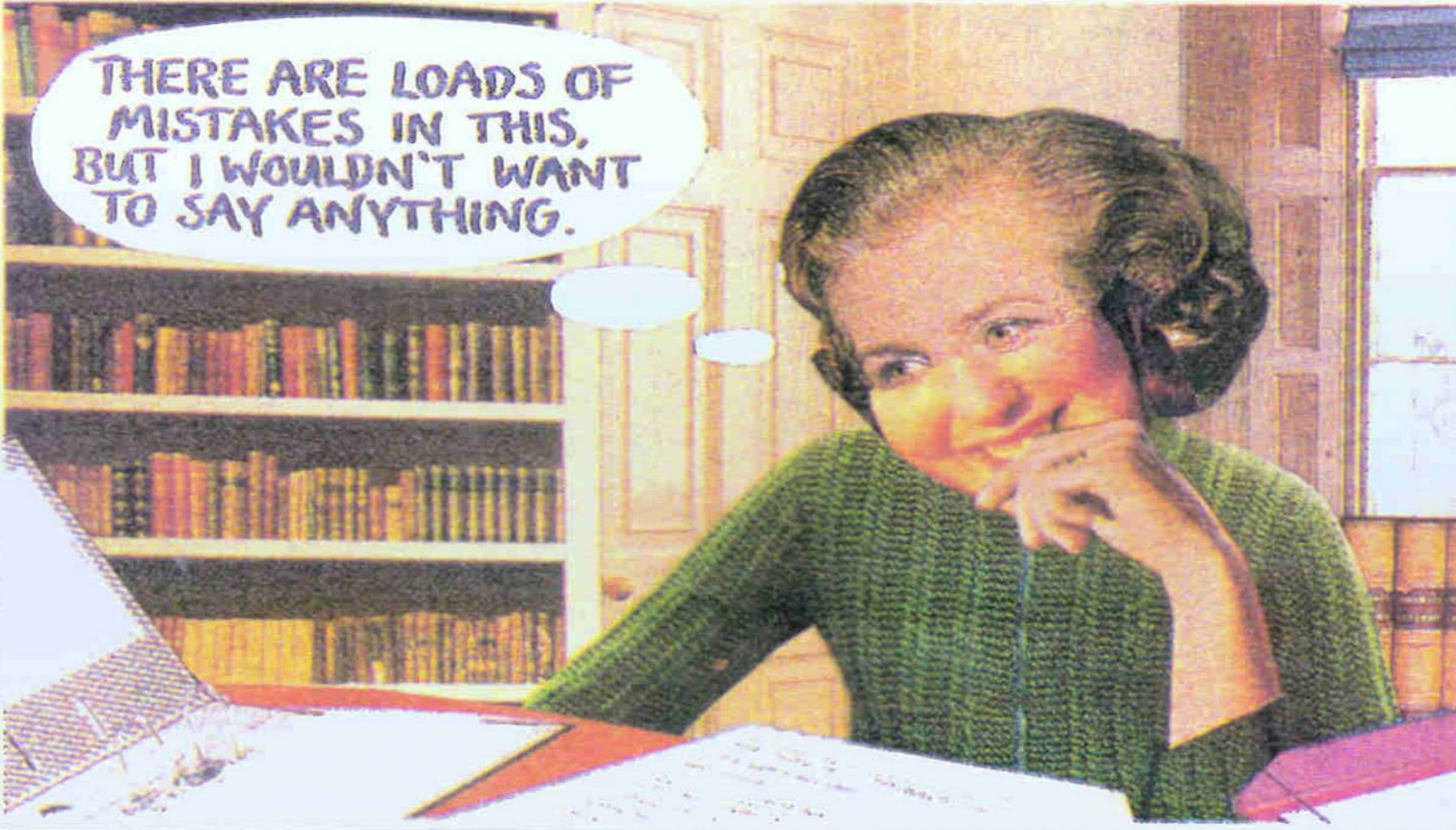
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...when documented weight loss is used as a criterion to dichotomise patients with chronic heart failure...



Graham  
Rawle's

# LOST CONSONANTS



THERE ARE LOADS OF  
MISTAKES IN THIS,  
BUT I WOULDN'T WANT  
TO SAY ANYTHING.

© Graham Rawle 1998

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Jean worked at a publishers as a coy editor



# Be consistent

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“Consistency is the last  
refuge of the  
unimaginative”

Oscar Wilde







# A few consistency issues...

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- Technical terms
- Spelling
- Abbreviations
- Lists
- Capitalization
- Heading style
- Symbols in graphs
- Special characters
- Dashes, hyphens, etc
- Digits vs words for numbers
- Units
- Brackets and parentheses



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# The last word

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“What is written  
without effort is in  
general read without  
pleasure”

Samuel Johnson

