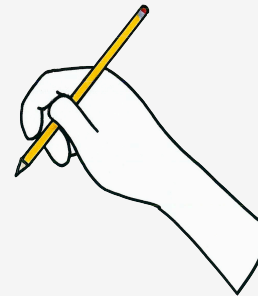


Common Craft® Know-How

Explanation Planning Template

Plan an explanation by considering your audience's needs and thinking through the big ideas that will help them. It includes points on:

- Plan an explanation
- Focus on the audience
- A-to-Z explanation scale
- Formulate big ideas
- Explanation Stepping Stones



Version: 1.2

The Title/Central Theme

What do you plan to explain? Let's give it a name that makes our intentions clear.

Write the title of your explanation below:

Example: "Photosynthesis Explained" or "Compound Interest Made Simple"

The Audience

Who will benefit from this explanation? What are their needs?

Write a few words about your audience and their needs:

Examples: "Early adopters who may want to buy my product" or "My 5th grade class who needs to pass the test"

The Audience A-to-Z

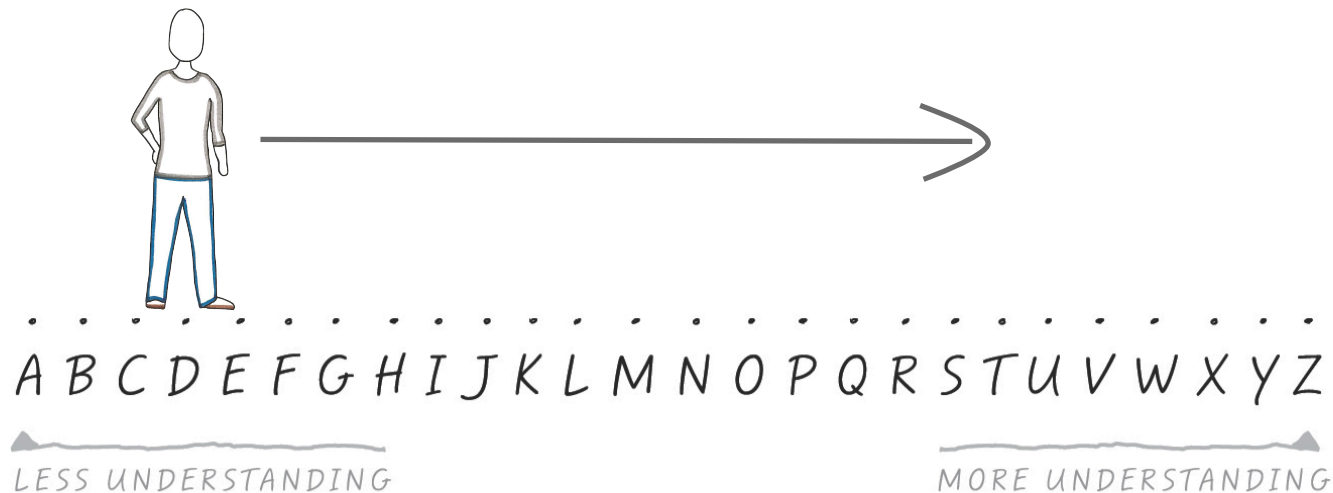
What is your audience's level of understanding of the central theme?
Here's a guide to the Explanation Scale below.



The Audience A-to-Z

Our goal is to plot the audience on the scale by estimating their current level of understanding. Then, our explanation should move them toward “Z” – to more understanding.

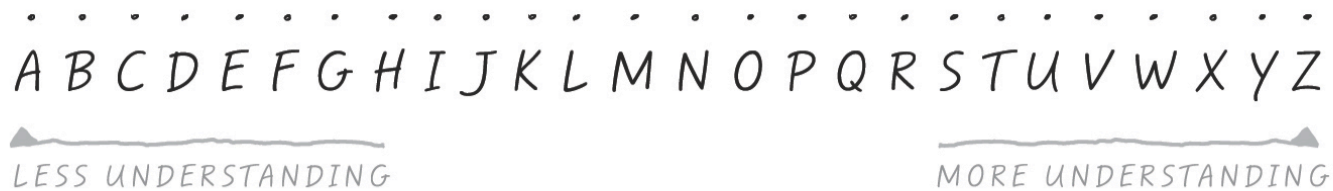
“My audience is at about ‘D’ on the scale and my explanation should move them to ‘T’.”



The Audience A-to-Z

Place your audience on the Explanation Scale.

Draw a line and arrow to where you would like them to be.



Summary

We now have a basic outline for our explanation. We've defined a theme (and title) and estimated our audience's needs and current understanding.

Answer the questions below to bring it all together.

The title of my explanation is:

It is for:

Because they need:

I believe they are at ____ on the scale and I want to help them get to ____.

Big Ideas

Now we'll focus on your explanation. Focus and resist the urge to say too much.

Thinking about your audience, jot down 2-3 big ideas they should remember. Most explanations will answer two big questions – Why? and How?

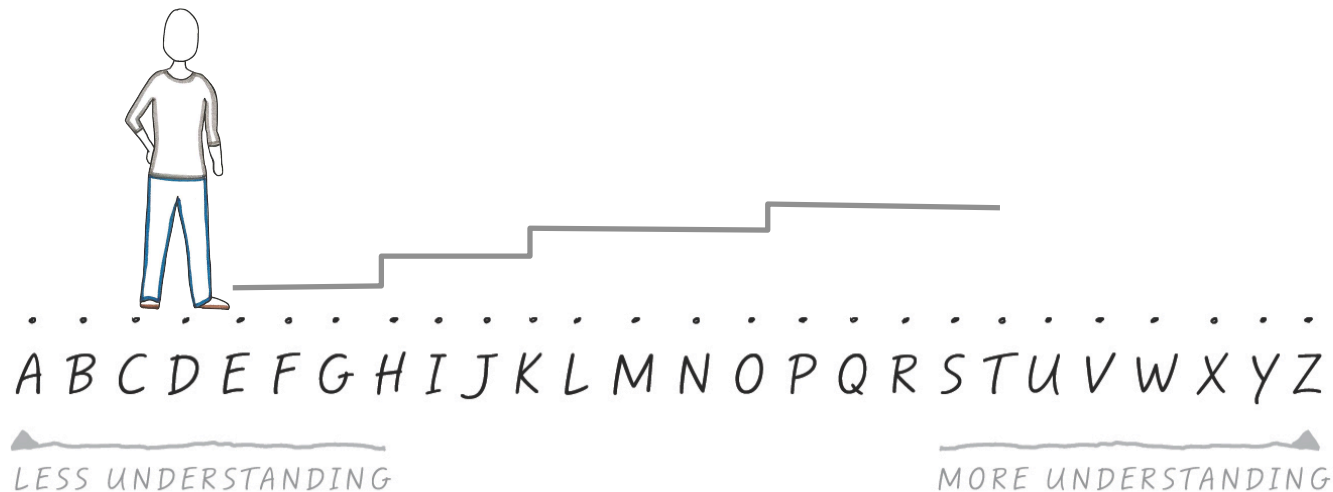
1)

2)

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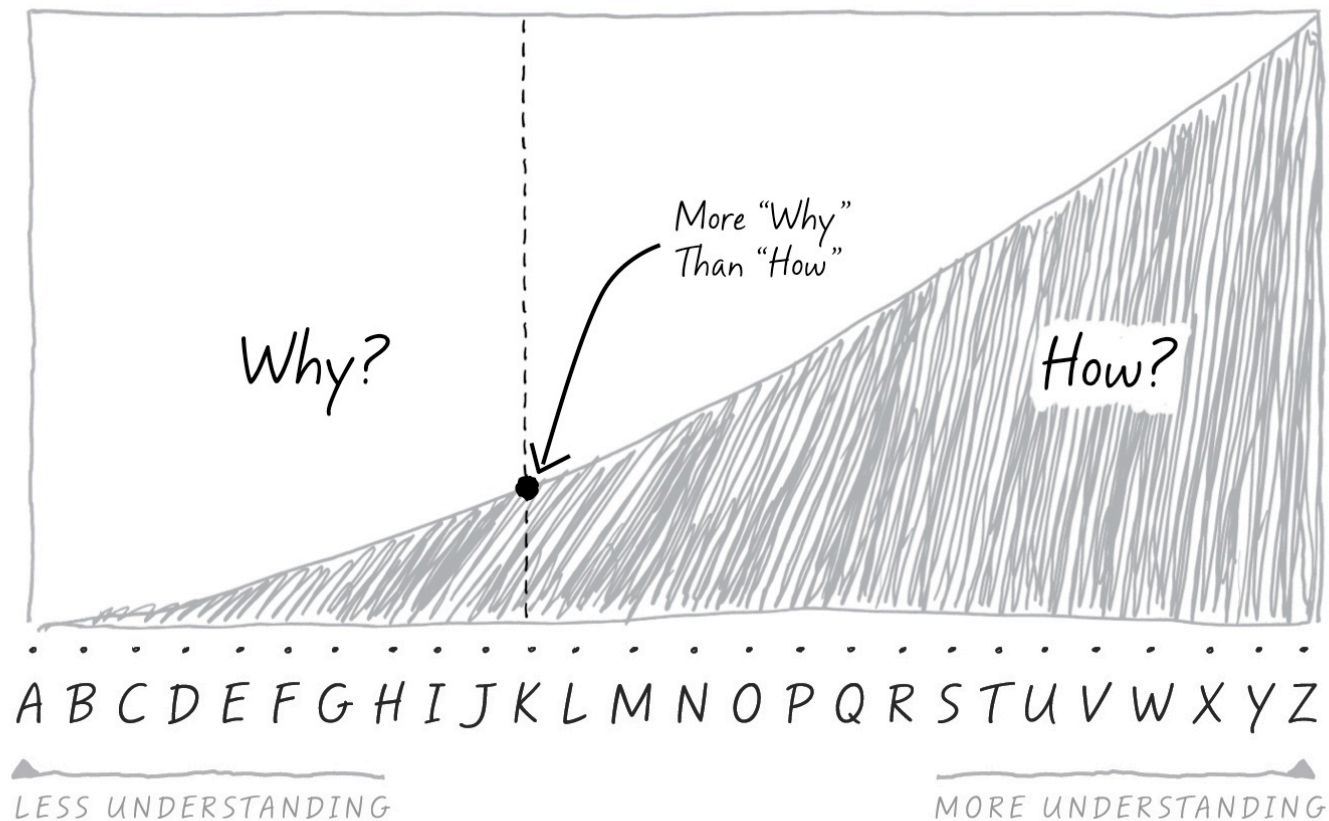
Flow and Confidence

Let's look at the flow of an explanation. To move the audience down the scale, we'll need to offer them a series of steps. If the steps are too big or out of order, they may lose confidence and tune out.



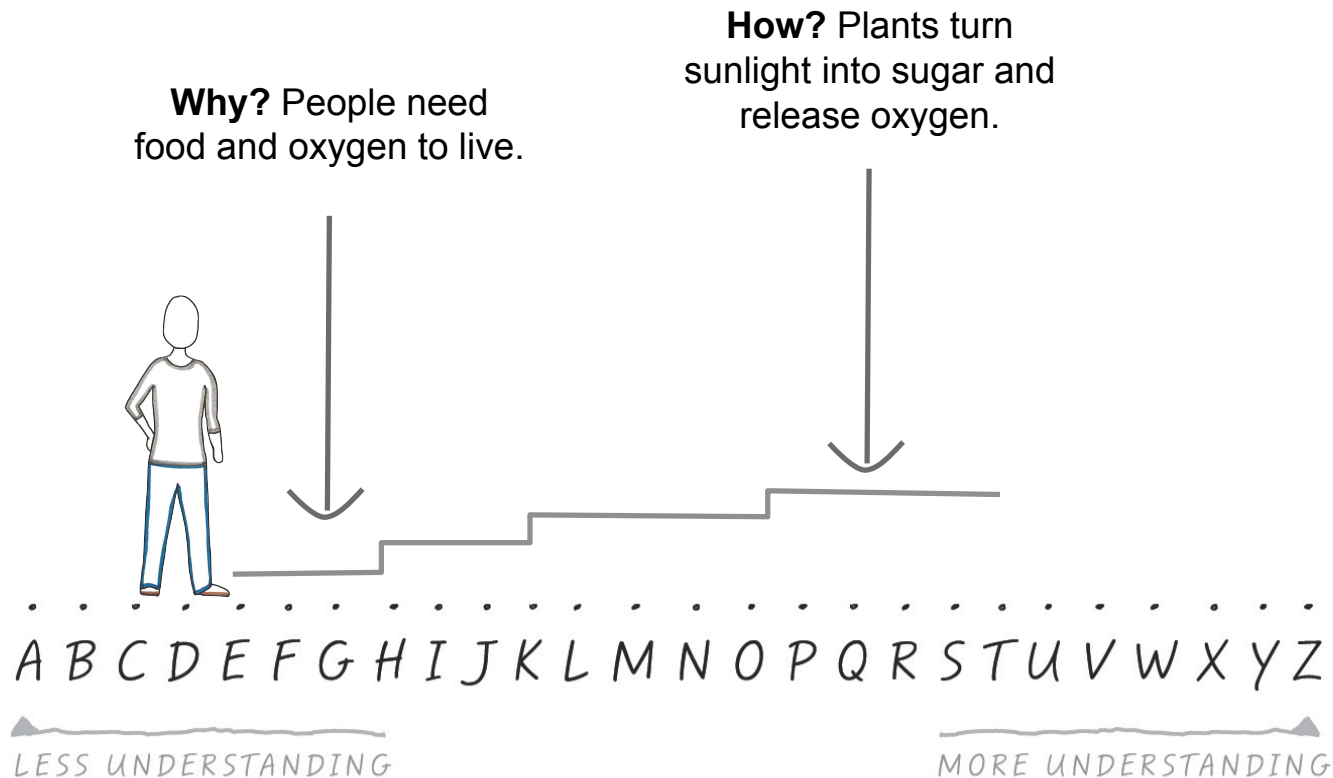
Why and How

Most explanations focus on answering a combination of two questions: “Why?” And “How?” As a general rule, explanations work well when they start with “Why” and transition to “How” on the scale.



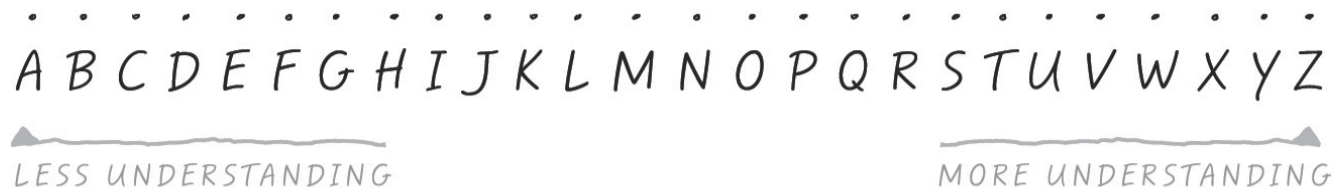
Why and How

For example, an explanation of photosynthesis makes the most sense by starting with “Why” and then discussing “How?”



Big Ideas Summary

Using the scale below and thinking about your audience, place the big ideas you listed previously on the scale in the order that seems to flow best.



Stepping Stones

You've done the homework, now it's time to dive into the explanation. You can think of the following points as stepping stones that will lead your audience to the destination with confidence.

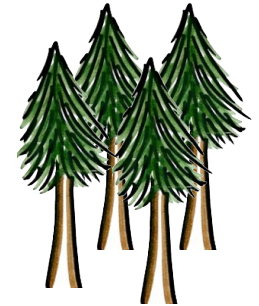


Stepping Stones - Context

To start, we will show your audience the big picture and build context. Context is the world in which your ideas live and invites people to care. Talk about the forest first, then the trees.

At a high level, what's this explanation about?

Example: The role photosynthesis plays in supporting human life.



Why should someone care about understanding this?

Example: Plants provide food and oxygen and are essential to our societies.



Stepping Stones - Story

Many explanations can benefit from a story or narrative that outlines the basic ideas. Often the story follows a person who learns something new and uses it to solve a problem. We want your audience to say “I know that feeling!”

Review the examples below:



Think of a person with a problem who looks for a solution.

Example: Jane loves spinach, but she never thought about what makes it grow.

This person is curious about some specific ideas. What are they?

Example: She knows spinach grows in the garden, but she wonders why it's green and needs to be in the sun.

This person finds answers and now feels relieved. How does she feel?

Example: Now that Jane understands photosynthesis, she can't wait to plant a garden next year.



Stepping Stones - Story

Many explanations can benefit from a story or narrative that outlines the basic ideas. Often the story follows a person who learns something new and uses it to solve a problem. We want people to say “I know that feeling!”

Let's start building your story:

Describe a person with a problem who looks for a solution.



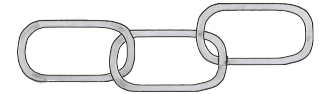
This person is curious about some specific ideas. What are they?

This person finds answers and now feels relieved. How does he/she feel?

Stepping Stones - Connections

Explanations can also connect ideas. If something is difficult to understand, it helps to show that it's like something the audience already understands. This means using analogies – this “is like” that.

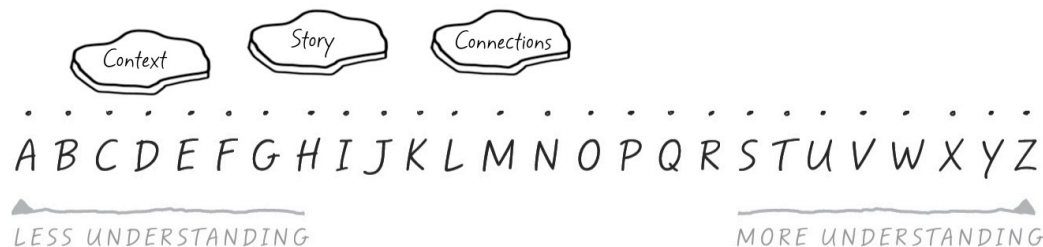
List a few things that are analogous to your theme or big ideas. What is your central theme like?



Example: You probably know solar panels can power a house. This is kind of like photosynthesis because...

Are there multiple points you can make using that connection?

Example: Plant leaves are like solar panels, the stems are like water pipes and hot water is like chlorophyll.



Stepping Stones - Descriptions

As we move down the scale, we can focus more on questions of “How?” Often, these are descriptions of a process or system – they help the audience move from concept to details.

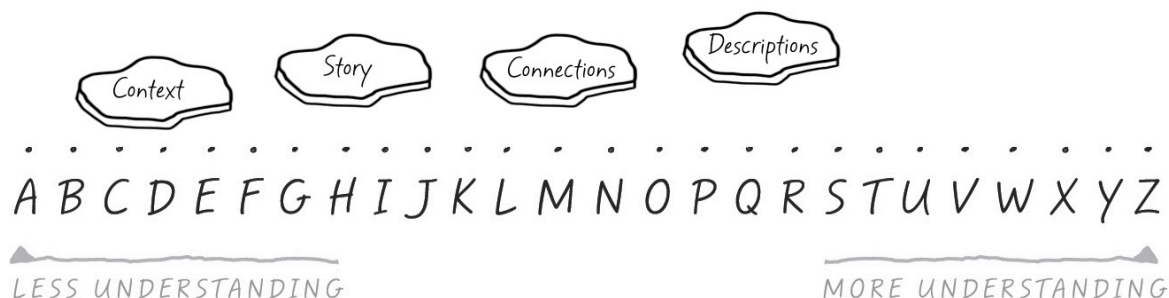
List any descriptions that will need to appear in the explanation.

Example: Photosynthesis is a chemical reaction that involves multiple factors. Here's how it works.



Can you continue your analogy in the description?

Example: In order for solar panels to work, they need special solar cells that work like this... Something similar happens in photosynthesis.



Planning Summary

We've now walked through the basic elements of an explanation. Remember, you don't need to include every stepping stone. Choose the ones that best convey your theme.

You're ready for the Script Writing Template!