

How to write a good lay summary

1. Start with the problem – the context

Describe the problem that your research aims to solve in no more than 25 words. Use this as your first sentence.

Sentence 2 – say how this research fits into the bigger picture.

Sentence 3 – give us a reason to care about what you do. How will this research help people, even if it isn't in our lifetime?

That's the first paragraph written.

2. Map the remaining content into three paragraphs:

Paragraph 2 - what does the trial do?

- What will be compared/tested?
- What is the treatment that will be given?

Paragraph 3 – more information

- Who can be involved?
- How will people be selected?
- Is there a centre near me?
- Quantify the treatment – number of treatments/visits
- Side effects
- How long will the trial run for?

Paragraph 4 – impact and outcomes

- What can I gain from enrolling?
- What will happen next?

Golden rules

Word level

- Active, not passive
- No jargon
- Avoid technical language
- Only use acronyms after the full term has been used once
- Analogies are good

Sentence level

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- Short sentences – max 15/20 words
- Avoid long complex sentences
- Phrase positively
- Use connectives to develop links between ideas e.g. although, however

Text level

- Use headings
- Four paragraphs only
 - ✓ Context
 - ✓ What the trial does
 - ✓ Added detail
 - ✓ Impact and outcome
- White space between paragraphs

AND THE GOLDEN RULE?

Do not copy and paste anything from your proposal. You are cursed with too much knowledge. This is the downward slope . . . just answer the questions above.

Simplify and reduce

Don't say	Say
Participate in	Take part
Prior to	Before
Discontinue	Stop
In the event of	If
Duration	Time
Inform	Tell
Scheduled to undergo	Due to have
Accordingly, consequently	So
With reference to, with regard to	About
If this is the case	If so
In the event of	If

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For the purpose of	To
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Helen Bulbeck 2013
helen@brainstrust.org.uk