BIZCOMMUNITY

Breaking Beautiful - the science of simple

By Sarah Heuer

5 Apr 2016

In order to cook up a storm, you need your language lab to have a solid foundation. Here's how to do a really good job of getting back to basics.

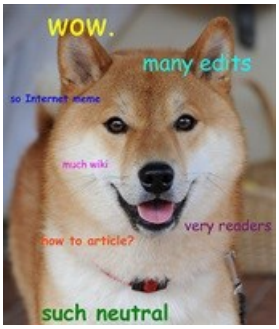

Image source

Unfortunately, when it comes to creating easy-to-absorb content, there is no magic formula or miracle drug. This is especially true when you are faced with a very technical piece that needs to be written down.

The fact is that, unless you are sure of an appropriately qualified reader, it's always best to break things down into the most basic elements you can manage. While still making sense and making the point, of course.

So… where should you start?

1. Main points. Remember when you were in high school English class, and you had to create a summary, or a précis? Rule number one is to find the topic sentence in each paragraph. Of course, this means cutting out all lists or examples, statistics, and so on. Pretend you're writing a cheat sheet. For an exam that's tomorrow.
2. Short phrases. Unfortunately, you cannot bargain on any decent length of attention span these days. In fact, I'm worried right now that my full sentences might be tiring some of you out. Keep short. Verbs only. Think back to the 'doge' memes. Aim there. Sometimes hard. Still try.
3. Chunking good. As with pumpkin, smaller content pieces are easier to digest. So separate your water of knowledge into the simplest of elements – hydrogen, hydrogen, oxygen is far less scary than dihydrogen monoxide.
4. Eye candy. Personally, 'infographics' would've been my 2015 word of the year, and they're here to stay. Somehow, somewhere, add something that isn't pure text, and that complements or illustrates or mirrors your content. Even if it's very basic, one or two visuals will be likely to double your success.

5. Make curious. Adding humour or something unexpected will shock your readers back to wide awake, and they'll remember you and your information far better and for longer. And they'll come back for more. Always keep them coming back for more!

Continuing the allusion to a certain fictional Science teacher, have a look at the rather drastic example below. (I can't take all the credit – as a matter of fact, this is more or less how a 14-year-old explained the concept to me, many years ago. And it stuck! He did it under a minute, too. Needless to say, I was pretty impressed with his ability to 'reduce', in the culinary sense of the word.) And the infographic that follows is possibly my all-time favourite example of how to explain tricky stuff to a truculent crowd. Enjoy!

Quantum Mechanics for Arts Majors

Before: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Introduction_to_quantum_mechanics

Quantum mechanics is the science of the very small: the body of scientific principles that explains the behaviour of matter and its interactions with energy on the scale of atoms and subatomic particles. Classical physics explains matter and energy on a scale familiar to human experience, including the behaviour of astronomical bodies. It remains the key to measurement for much of modern science and technology. However, towards the end of the 19th century, scientists discovered phenomena in both the large (macro) and the small (micro) worlds that classical physics could not explain. As Thomas Kuhn explains in his analysis of the philosophy of science, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, coming to terms with these limitations led to two major revolutions in physics which created a shift in the original scientific paradigm: the theory of relativity and the development of quantum mechanics. This article describes how physicists discovered the limitations of classical physics and developed the main concepts of the quantum theory that replaced it in the early decades of the 20th century. These concepts are described in roughly the order in which they were first discovered. In this sense, the word quantum means the minimum amount of any physical entity involved in an interaction. Certain characteristics of matter can take only discrete values. Light behaves in some respects like particles and in other respects like waves. Matter—particles such as electrons and atoms—exhibits wavelike behaviour too. Some light sources, including neon lights, give off only certain discrete frequencies of light. Quantum mechanics shows that light, along with all other forms of electromagnetic radiation, comes in discrete units, called photons, and predicts its energies, colours, and spectral intensities. Some aspects of quantum mechanics can seem counterintuitive or even paradoxical, because they describe behaviour quite different from that seen at larger length scales. In the words of Richard Feynman, quantum mechanics deals with "nature as She is – absurd". For example, the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics means that the more closely one pins down one measurement (such as the position of a particle), the less precise another measurement pertaining to the same particle (such as its momentum) must become.

After: Much simple. Very chunked. Pretty learn.

Do you think that Quantum ANYTHING is too much for you?
Well…
It doesn't have to be.
It's about very small, simple things, after all.

Things like atoms (really small bits of stuff) and photons (really small bits of light).

It's about how they behave, and the effects they have.

But why should you care?
Because Quantum Mechanics is everywhere, all the time! Even in your USB.

AND,
it's interesting and your friends will be impressed. And you're no small, simple molecule, so prove it. Behave differently.

QM (for short) is the study of particles. And it answers some very 'stoner' questions:
Where are they?
Where are they going?
What is their true destiny, man?

… And what do they get up to when they think NO ONE'S WATCHING???

Because trust us… They might be small, but that makes them sneaky.

Very, very sneaky.

Full infographic

ABOUT SARAH HEUER

Has been in the language and communication business for 15 years. She holds Cum Laude Honours degrees in English Literature and Publishing. She has lectured Journalism, taught English, and written and edited in a variety of sectors, including law, the culinary world, secondary and tertiary education, psychology, the arts, finance and economics, and marketing. In her spare time, she toys with the idea of writing a best-seller. She is currently head editor and copywriter at inSite Innovative Education Solutions.

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