



The A-Z of writing

E-f

From E to f. Next in the series revisiting John Simmons' book [The Invisible Grail](#). Follow it weekly for a workout in writing agility that will influence and improve your words for work. Next week – F to g, published on Friday 15 May.

Eggs over easy. Remembering business trips to the US and staying in hotels where they offered that almost endless list of American ways of having eggs for breakfast. This then extended beyond the egg to varieties of pancake, waffle or bread. It became a litany of luxury, the list itself sending a message that implied 'we have everything', comfort food and a message of comfort for American culture.

Lists can be useful and they need not be boring. In response to the Thursday evening applause for the NHS, I recently wrote the following:

So I applaud the health workers, but also the shop workers, the civil servants, the broadcasters, the bin men, the pharmacists, the farmers, the bakers, the fruit pickers, the deliverers, the booksellers, the scientists, the artists, the volunteers, all those working or not working, the family, my wife, my son and daughter, their partners and families, my grandchildren, my writer friends who are my extended family.

There is a rhythm that builds with a good list, like a flowing river, and it becomes particularly interesting when it develops eddies or tributaries that slightly change the river's flow. Lists interesting? Whoever heard of such a

thing? In writing at work, for organisations, there is probably no technique used as boringly as the list. We've all sat in presentations where the next slide goes up and our hearts sink because it's yet another list, punctuated by bullet points.

In those cases the list is a lazy technique because the presenters are saying *blah blah blah* in their mind in between points, taking their focus off the individual words. It's a way to give the appearance of organised thought but often it is the appearance only. Lists need connections. One word needs to lead to another. One thought needs to follow another. Start, think, stop, write, edit, think again. Listen to the rise and fall of the moving flow you're creating in this growing list, revise it, go back and add in new elements, question, ask yourself, 'Could I change it? What **if?**'

“Lists need connections”

With a new chapter released weekly, look out for the next in the series, F-g, arriving with you on Friday 15 May. Follow us on [Linked In](#) or via our [Insights page](#) to find your weekly dose of writing inspiration.

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