The canon of style

2004-05-ENC-101-OL009: English Composition I Assignment 3. 2: Polishing Ideas: The Canon of StyleIn an essay of about 400 words, explain how you would adapt for a general audience a piece of technical or specialized writing (from an academic subject, professional field, or special interest publication). Discuss specifically how you would determine choices of vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence structure in making this adaptation. COMPLICATED TO EASY, HOW I MADE IT READABLEWhen it is time to adapt a piece of technical writing for the general audience, I use four steps.

I define the audience, document vocabulary, write the paper, and then have a coworker review it. My purpose for using these steps is to keep it simple, to the point and timely. The first step is to determine the audience; I do this so that I will know how much to convert the piece for the intended reader. This step requires me to think about the order I will present the information. In addition, I take notes on which information will be defined for the readers of the paper. Will I have to provide a set of terms in the paper or is the information something the average reader would understand.

Taking notes will help later when it is time to write the paper. When trying to decide which terms will be defined, I ask other members of the office or our secretary, who has a basic understanding of what we do, if a term needs to be defined. Second, I take the technical terms and abbreviations for the first steps and write a common language for the reader. I am writing out a simplified definition for these terms. Here also I select what terms I will use in the piece. Third, I write the paper using my notes from one and two.

I like to keep sentence short and to the point. Since the paper is for a general audience, I prefer to keep paragraphs to three to five sentences. I like to open up with what is covered in the paper. Then the second paragraph provide the definitions that used in the paper, before getting to the topic. Next, I provide the information of the topic after which give a closing for the paper. During this step, I may also use the Naval writers guild to make sure that I keep within Navy standards of writing. Conversely, if someone outside the Navy will be reading this I may not follow this required format. I do all my writing on a computer using word.

I set up word so that it will provide me spell check and grammar checking while I type. Once I have done this, I always print and read the paper before I do any revising. Then I revise the paper and reprint it. Once complete, I go to the last step of the process.

Lastly, I give the paper to a coworker to review in printed format. This is so that the paper can be checked for technical accuracy. Having someone else read the paper gives me the feedback to make sure I did not over simply the paper, that the paper is not to boring and that the original paper meaning is not lost. The process for me to make a technical paper readable for the general reader is a four-step process, define the audience, document vocabulary, write the paper, and then have a coworker review the paper.

This keeps the process simple and timely and allows the paper to meet the required level for the reader.