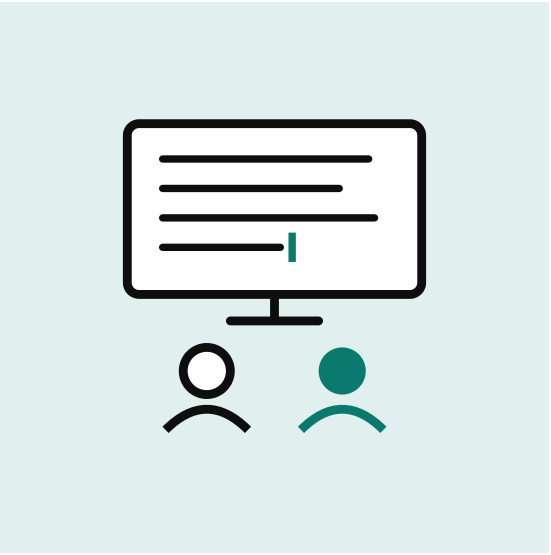
Method

Pair writing

A method in which a subject matter expert and a content designer write together, on the same screen or document, starting from the needs of the people who will read it.



In Spanish

Escritura en pareja

Origin

GOV.UK's content design team at the UK Government Digital Service; described by Davis (2016)

Output

A clear and accurate first draft, written together and ready for review

What it's for

It helps when a text keeps going back and forth between the person who knows the subject and the person who writes: alone, one leaves the jargon in and the other may get the facts wrong.

Key elements

Start with the needs

Before writing, agree on the questions readers will have and what the text must say for legal reasons.

Two roles

The expert brings the knowledge; the designer asks what each term means and whether there's a simpler way to say it.

Take turns at the keyboard

One person types and the other asks questions, and they swap every so often; short sessions, an hour or less.

Facts first

The session settles the content; formatting and polish come later.

How it's done

1 

You agree on the needs and the structure, in the order the questions will come up.

2 

You write together, cutting jargon and checking every fact.

3 

You polish the draft and the subject expert checks that it's still accurate.

Applications in design

When to use it

For technical, legal, or public policy content, where accuracy and clarity matter at the same time.

Avoid

Adding more people to the session: it works with two, and a third joins only when the text needs translating.

Don't fall for it

Set a deadline for final feedback: otherwise the draft goes round in circles between reviewers again.

Connections

Used by

- Content design
- UX writing

Related to

- Co-design

Authors and works

2016	**Sue Davis**	Described how the UK Government Digital Service pair writes, in four steps, from agreeing on the needs to gathering feedback.
2021	**Welsh Government**	Adopted it in its guidance, with turns of about 15 minutes and sessions of an hour at most, and added "trio writing" with a translator.
2024	**Sarah Winters and Rachel Edwards**	Devoted a chapter to pair writing in the second edition of Content Design.

Sources

Original sources

- Davis, S. (2016, September 21). It takes 2: How we use pair writing. Government Digital Service Blog. View source (https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/21/it-takes-2-how-we-use-pair-writing/)

Secondary sources

- Gobierno de Gales (2021, 22 de septiembre; actualizado en 2025). Pair and trio writing: GOV.WALES. GOV.WALES. View source (https://www.gov.wales/pair-and-trio-writing-govwales)
- Winters, S., & Edwards, R. (2024). Content design (2nd ed.). Content Design London. View source (https://contentdesign.london/store/the-content-design-book)

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