

# The Two-Pager: Unreasonably Effective at Communicating Ideas

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## Thesis: Two pages is long enough to be substantial, short enough to socialize

Constraints are critical for creativity. While two pages may seem arbitrary, consider the 30 minute meeting: there is a reason the number has evolved into convention. As very serious professionals, we have first-hand experience showing us that the two-pager is increasing in its importance for sharing technical ideas. **A two-pager a document that clearly conveys a vision, a basic plan of execution, and the authenticity of the team as an efficient way to iterate towards a full proposal.**<sup>1</sup> Two pages is enough for readers to react with interest, point out potential deal-killers, and suggest improvements to the overall message.

## Background: The Deck was king before Google Docs proliferated

Y-Combinator tells you to make a 10-page slide deck to sell your idea. Admittedly, they've had a few successes. But decks are best conceptualized as entertainment scaffolds: enough to get a targeted audience engaged with you and your ideas, but **while a deck alone can get you to "No," it cannot alone get you to "Yes."** In contrast, two-pagers both sell an idea and solicit input in a more scalable way than decks can. The most important function of a two-pager is to encourage feedback, request early-stage meetings and probe the viability of the next logical step of an idea. Early buy-in provide a great way to engage future partners.



**Overview Figure** | At least one diagram is helpful both aesthetically and conceptually, to break up the wall of text and incept a simple idea that has memetic weight.

## Give the core of substance:

A good two-pager should be a standalone document that clearly articulates a few key things:

1. **Introduction to the core thesis.** Get the reader interested in your big idea in its best rhetoric. You must pair a high-level goal (eg, [TAM](#) in the billions) with an original perspective (best is first-hand experience): it must be both materially interesting to high-leverage readers while also conveying your unique take that avoids cliches.
2. **Background.** This can be short, but it's worth being sure that the reader understands the foundation upon which your novel proposal builds.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that formatting goes a long way for a busy audience: Get out of default google doc font, and bold your most important ideas.

3. **Give the core of substance:** “Specificity is credibility” is a rule in journalism that applies here<sup>2</sup>. You need to be highly specific in stating what you want to do. An ordered list is one useful solution, as it creates linearity in the reader's mind. Links are effective at [nesting information](#) for curious readers while also demonstrating your experience.
4. **Authenticity of the author:** If a reader is compelled by the ideas, the natural next step is to question whether the person actually has the capability to execute.
5. **Next Steps:** What do the immediate next steps look like? Tell the future you want, and either explicitly or implicitly make the ask. Explicitly might be “We seek \$5M in venture,” or implicitly would be “Targeting a fundraiser start in Q3.”
6. **Land on a vision:** What is the exciting future you leave the reader with?

### **Authenticity of the author: He's written a few pitches**

[Daniel Goodwin](#) doesn't always refer to himself in third person, but when he does, it's to demonstrate that it's appropriate here. He has written at least a dozen two-page proposals and read multiples more during his years in Silicon Valley, Stanford, MIT and the co-founding of [Homeworld Collective](#) with his friend Paul Reginato. For many years, Dan has delighted in quasi-serious technical banter using squarespace and google docs. Since 2021, he has been studying the impacts of two-pagers in the granting process.

### **Next steps: Convincing the reader to write their own two-Pager**

Everyone must have their own two-pager. While [7-minute abs might have been](#) the optimal workout in the 1990s, the two-pager is the optimal unit of idea creation in 2023. Jeff Bezos at Amazon.com is famous for pushing [his memo-centric work culture](#), which appears to have yielded above-average results. Prototyping ideas for socialization, critique and conversion into action is a missing skill in professional development, especially in academia.

This document will be socialized throughout the Homeworld Team, and possibly fed into GPT4 for writing improvements and profanity removal (where applicable). Immediate needs to make it successful are copious google doc feedback comments and friendly agreements to retweet aggressively upon publication.

### **Landing on a vision: Growing the Innovation Ecosystem**

The people who most frequently use two-pagers today are the people in the most privileged positions. Those already in social relationships with high-leverage individuals constantly use two-pagers to accelerate the evolution of their ideas. We can grow the marketplace of ideas by helping all talented people, irrespective of initial network or location, workshop their efforts toward the logical endpoint. There is a good reason that [Fast Grants](#) and [Breakthrough Energy Fellows](#) require just a two-pager in their grant application.

The big picture is that two-pagers will only increase in importance, and coaching this subtle art is a service to the innovation ecosystem. **Please feel free to comment copiously on this document and reach out to the author for direct feedback and partnership.**

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<sup>2</sup> This quote was given to me by [Niko McCarty](#), a trained journalist, and it's an excellent motto for writing documents that engage and inform.