

# Multi-level Summaries: Making non-fiction books easier to understand, remember and act on - Summary

## The Problem

### Problems non-fiction readers face

- Finding it hard to get started
- Losing interest in the middle of a book
- Drowning in detail
- Feeling confused when returning to a book after a break
- Forgetting what a book is about
- Not knowing how to implement a book's ideas
- Getting to grips with a previously-read book

### Two ways of approaching a book

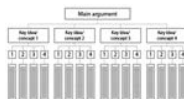
#### Sequential structure

Seeing book as a series of pages broken into chapters



#### Meaning structure

Understanding how a book's argument is structured



### Key issue for readers

The key issue for readers is moving from a book's sequential structure to its meaning structure.

Readers need to understand a book's meaning structure to get the most out of it.

### Implicit meaning structures

Most non-fiction books have more of an implicit meaning structure. This:

- 1) increases cognitive load - the cognitive energy taken up by decoding reduces the energy available for understanding, assessing and reflecting
- 2) makes retrieval practice more difficult so readers don't remember much of what they read.

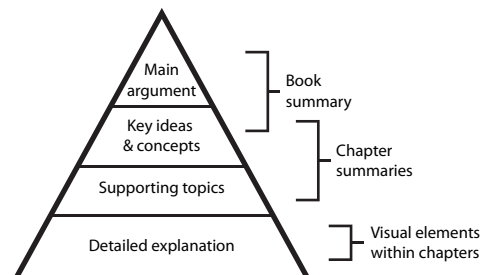
## The Solution

### Multi-level summaries

The solution is to use multi-level summaries (MLS) to provide explicit meaning structures.

A multi-level summary consists of:

- a **whole book summary**, showing how the book is structured and giving details of its key ideas and concepts
- **chapter summaries**, showing the chapter structure and its key ideas/concepts & supporting topics
- **visual elements** in chapters.



### Analogy of Google Maps



A good analogy for multi-level summaries is Google Maps.

Both provide the opportunity to view information at different levels of detail.

Users can zoom in for the detail or zoom out for the big picture.

### Benefits of multi-level summaries

1. **Finding it hard to get started** - MLS's provide an easy entry point into a book.
2. **Losing interest in the middle of a book** - MLS's make it easier to find the parts of a book that are of most interest to the reader.
3. **Drowning in detail** - MLS's allow readers to switch quickly between the detail and the big picture.
4. **Feeling confused when returning to a book after a break** - MLS's allow readers to refresh their memory easily.
5. **Forgetting what a book is about** - MLS's make retrieval practice much easier.
6. **Not knowing how to implement a book's ideas** - summaries should outline the recommended behaviour and strategies.
7. **Getting to grips with a previously-read book** - MLS's provide an outline that can be read in 15-20 minutes.

### Examples

