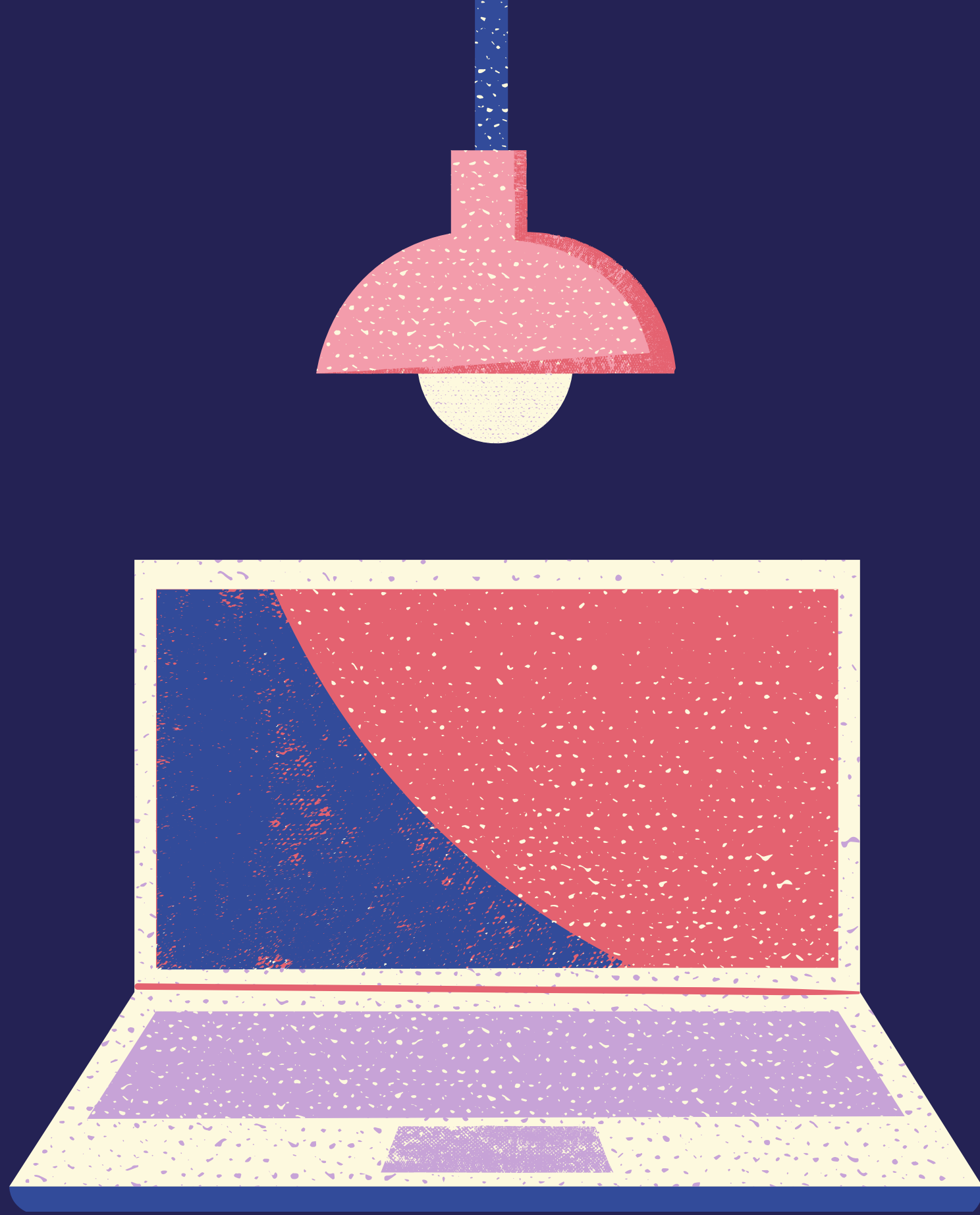


how to write a (good) data description

Developing Best Practice



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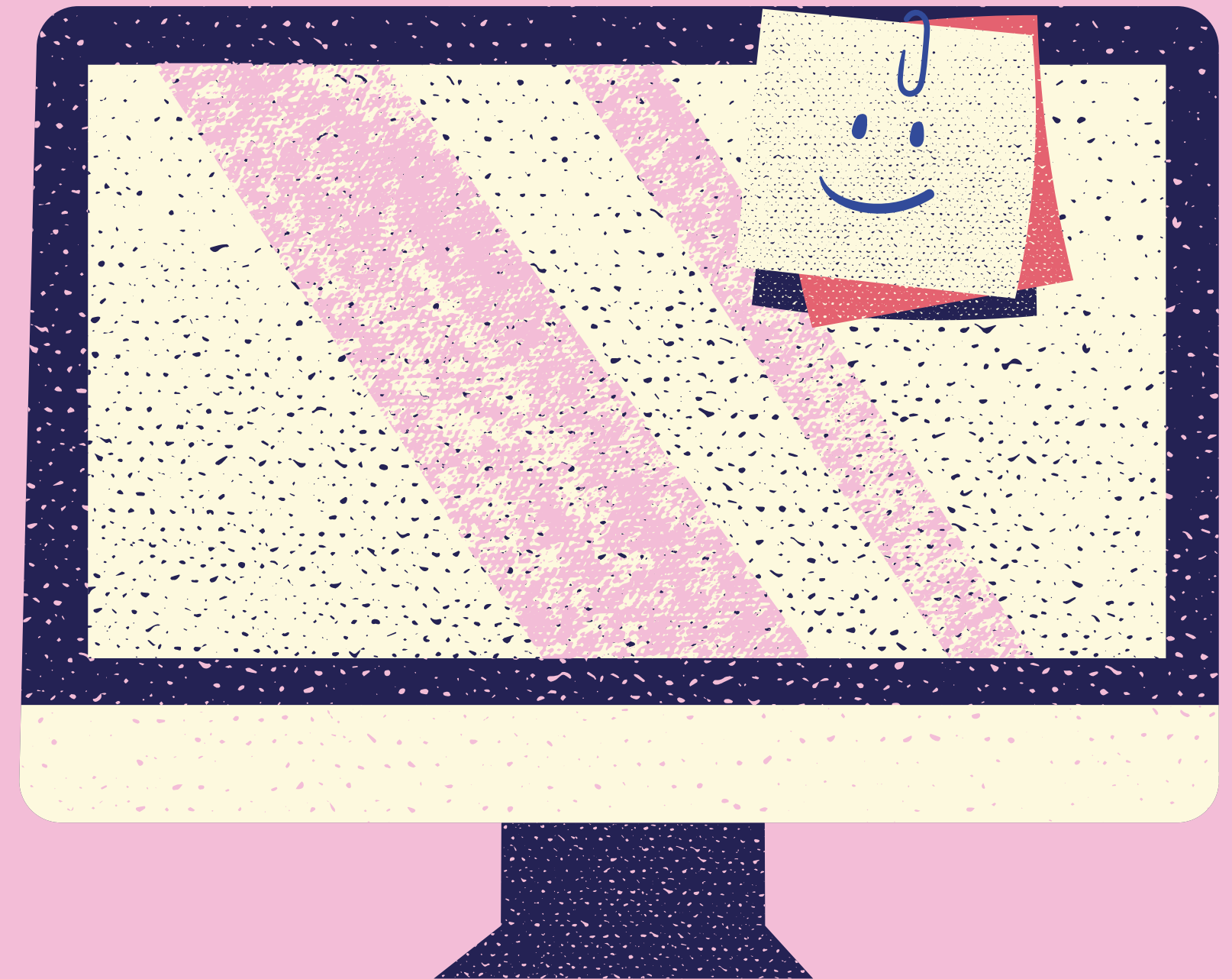
describe your dataset with attention to the searcher

When presented with the description, a searcher should be able to quickly identify whether a resource is useful to them (content) and whether the resource can be used by the searcher (technical ability).

begin with language appropriate to all potential audiences

For both expert and less-experienced users, terminology is not always understood outside of a specific discipline or the context of an in-depth analysis. It is generally understood that a summary should be written such that a layperson can understand it.

Where this is not adequate, start with a broad description and hone in on the details. An interested user will take the time to read it if it seems relevant.



describe the dataset as an independent research output

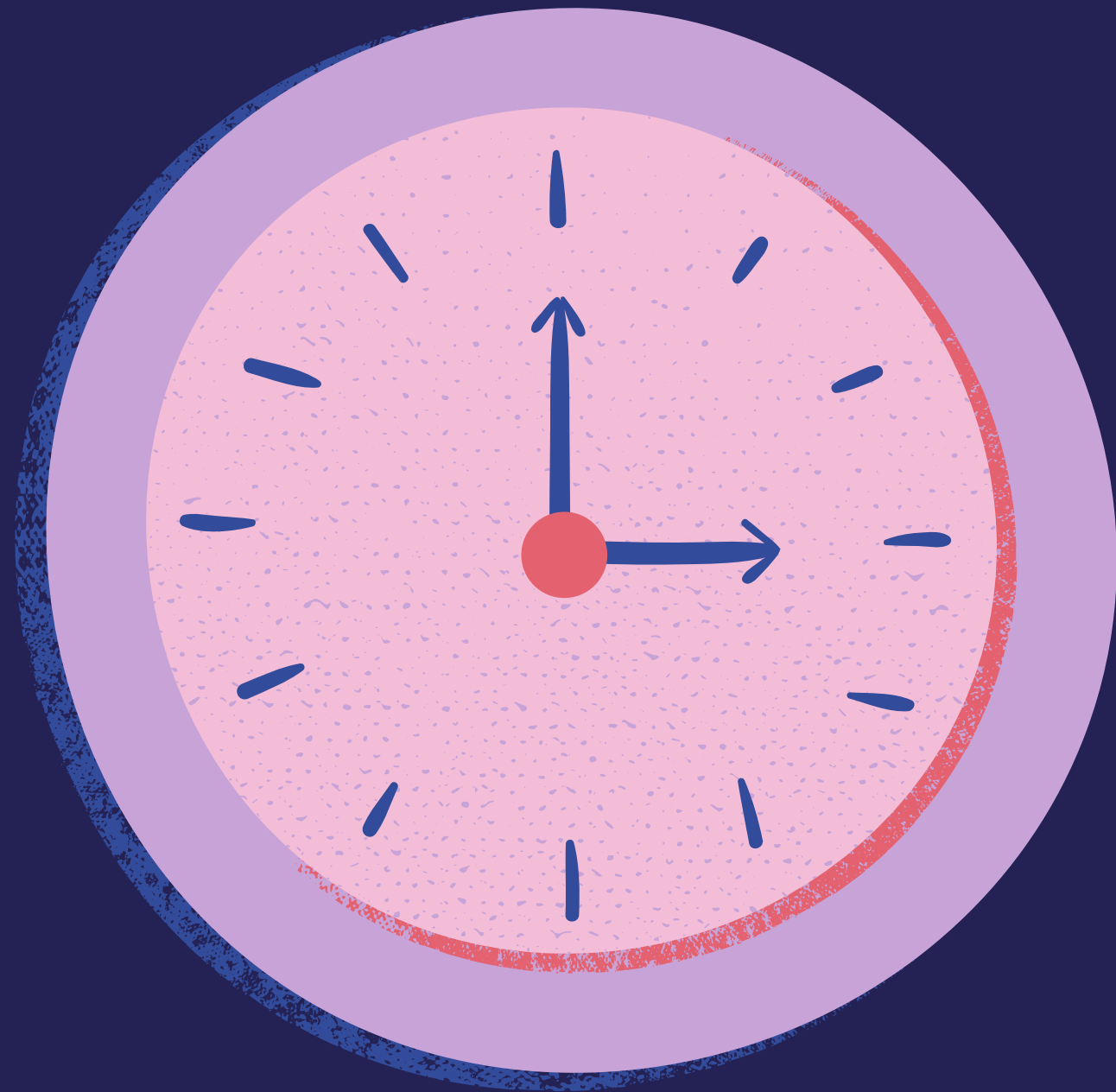
Describing the dataset as an independent research output reinforces the idea that a dataset can be (and should be) considered a standalone object.





describe the context in which data were created

While datasets can be considered an independent research outputs, data are not created without an intended purpose. Understanding the original context for their creation is necessary for evaluating provenance, the completeness of data, and the degree to which they have been processed.



structure the summary

Structured abstracts with consistent headings are considered more readable and help to provide consistency across publications. These are common in fast-moving disciplines such as medicine.