

How to build a pigpen

An AO fable



Pierre E. Neis

How to build a pigpen

a tale of Agile Organization

Pierre E. Neis

This book is available at <https://leanpub.com/how-to-build-a-pigpen>

This version was published on 2026-01-30



This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

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author: Pierre E. Neis contributor: Pages Publishing macOS v1.0	
date: 2026-01-29 identifier: 0C0D391B-6F0B-4DFA-B32D-	
C3737A241C77 language: en title: How to build a pigpen	15
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Getting Started

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Writing in Markua

Writing in Markua is easy! You can learn most of what you need to know with just a few examples.

To make *italic text* you surround it with single asterisks. To make **bold text** you surround it with double asterisks.

Section One

You can start new sections by starting a line with two # signs and a space, and then typing your section title.

Sub-Section One

You can start new sub-sections by starting a line with three # signs and a space, and then typing your sub-section title.

Including a Chapter in the Sample Book

At the top of this file, you will also see a line at the top:

```
1 {sample: true}
```

Leanpub has the ability to make a sample book, which interested readers can download or read online. If you add this line above a chapter heading, then when you publish your book, this chapter will be included in a separate sample book for these interested readers.

Links

You can add web links easily.

Here's a link to the [Leanpub homepage](#).

Images

You can add an image to your book in a similar way.

First, add the image to the “Resources” folder for your book. You will find the “Resources” folder under the “Manuscript” menu to the left.

If you look in your book’s “Resources” folder right now, you will see that there is an example image there with the file name “palm-trees.jpg”. Here’s how you can add this image to your book:



If you want to add a figure title, you put it in quotes:



Figure 1. Palm Trees

If you want to add descriptive alt text, which is good for accessibility, you put it between the square brackets:



Figure 2. Palm Trees

You can also set the alt text and/or the figure title in an attribute list:



Figure 3. Palm Trees

Finally, if no title is provided, and the `alt-title` document setting is the default of `all`, the alt text will be used as the figure title instead of as alt text.



Figure 4. Palm Trees

You can set the important document settings at Settings > Generation Settings.

Lists

Numbered Lists

You make a numbered list like this:

1. kale
2. carrot
3. ginger

Bulleted Lists

You make a bulleted list like this:

- kale

- carrot
- ginger

Definition Lists

You can even have definition lists!

term 1

definition 1a

definition 1b

term 2

definition 2

Page Breaks

We don't recommend that you manually break pages, since that is brittle and can lead to unexpected formatting if you edit text earlier in your chapter and forget about the manual page breaks. But if you really want to add a page break, you use the `{pagebreak}` directive on a line by itself, with blank lines above it and below it.

Code Samples

You can add code samples really easily. Code can be in separate files (a “local” resource) or in the manuscript itself (an “inline” resource).

Local Code Samples

Here’s a local code resource:

Figure 5. Hello World in Ruby

```
1 require 'time'
2
3 # This is just some pointless code so you can see the syntax highlighting...
4 def display_info
5   pi = Math::PI.round(10)
6   time_last_year = (Time.now - 365 * 24 * 60 * 60).getlocal("-08:00")
7   formatted_time = time_last_year.strftime("%Y-%m-%d %H:%M:%S")
8   puts "Pi to 10 decimal places: #{pi}"
9   puts "The time 1 year ago in Pacific Time: #{formatted_time}"
10 end
```

Inline Code Samples

Inline code samples can either be spans or figures.

A span looks like `puts "hello world"` this.

A figure looks like this:

```
1 require 'time'
2
3 # This is just some pointless code so you can see the syntax highlighting...
4 def display_info
5   pi = Math::PI.round(10)
6   time_last_year = (Time.now - 365 * 24 * 60 * 60).getlocal("-08:00")
7   formatted_time = time_last_year.strftime("%Y-%m-%d %H:%M:%S")
8   puts "Pi to 10 decimal places: #{pi}"
9   puts "The time 1 year ago in Pacific Time: #{formatted_time}"
10 end
```

You can also add a figure title using the title attribute:

Figure 6. Hello World in Ruby

```
1 require 'time'
2
3 # This is just some pointless code so you can see the syntax highlighting...
4 def display_info
5   pi = Math::PI.round(10)
6   time_last_year = (Time.now - 365 * 24 * 60 * 60).getlocal("-08:00")
7   formatted_time = time_last_year.strftime("%Y-%m-%d %H:%M:%S")
8   puts "Pi to 10 decimal places: #{pi}"
9   puts "The time 1 year ago in Pacific Time: #{formatted_time}"
10 end
```

Tables

You can insert tables easily inline, using the GitHub Flavored Markdown (GFM) table syntax:

Header 1	Header 2
Content 1	Content 2
Content 3	Content 4 Can be Different Length

Tables work best for numeric tabular data involving a small number of columns containing small numbers:

Central Bank	Rate
JPY	-0.10%
EUR	0.00%
USD	0.00%
CAD	0.25%

Definition lists are preferred to tables for most use cases, since reading a large table with many columns is terrible on phones and since typing text in a table quickly gets annoying.

Math

You can easily insert math equations inline using either spans or figures.

Here's one of the kinematic equations $d = v_i t + \frac{1}{2} a t^2$ inserted as a span inside a sentence.

Here's some math inserted as a figure.

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^n a_i b_i \right| \leq \left(\sum_{i=1}^n a_i^2 \right)^{1/2} \left(\sum_{i=1}^n b_i^2 \right)^{1/2}$$

Figure 7. Something Involving Sums

Headings

Markua supports both of Markdown's heading styles.

The preferred style, called atx headers, has the following meaning in Markua:

```

1 {class: part}
2 # Part
3
4 This is a paragraph.
5
6 # Chapter
7
8 This is a paragraph.
9
10 ## Section
11
12 This is a paragraph.
13
14 ### Sub-section
15
16 This is a paragraph.
17
18 #### Sub-sub-section
19
20 This is a paragraph.
21
22 ##### Sub-sub-sub-section
23
```

```

24 This is a paragraph.
25
26 ##### Sub-sub-sub-sub-section
27
28 This is a paragraph.

```

Note the use of three backticks in the above example, to treat the Markua like inline code (instead of actually like headers).

The other style of headers, called Setext headers, has the following headings:

```

1 {class: part}
2 Part
3 ====
4
5 This is a paragraph.
6
7 Chapter
8 =====
9
10 This is a paragraph.
11
12 Section
13 -----
14
15 This is a paragraph.

```

Setext headers look nice, but only if you're only using chapters and sections. If you want to add sub-sections (or lower), you'll be using atx headers for at least some of your headers. My advice is to just use atx headers all the time. (The `{class: part}` attribute list on a chapter header to make a part header does actually work with Setext headers, but it's really ugly.)

Note that while it is confusing and ugly to mix and match using atx and Setext headers for chapters and sections in the same document, you can do it. However, please don't.

Block quotes, Asides and Blurbs

Block quotes are really easy too.

—Peter Armstrong, *Markua Spec*

Asides are useful for longer text.
But typing them like this isn't fun.

Asides can be written this way, since adding a bunch of A> stuff at the beginning of each line can get annoying with longer asides.

Blurbs are useful

Blurbs are useful

There are many types of blurbs, which will be familiar to you if you've ever read a computer programming book.



This is a discussion.

You can also specify them this way:



This is a discussion



This is an error.



This is information.



This is a question. (Not a question in a Markua course; those are done differently!)



This is a tip.



This is a warning.



This is an exercise. (Not an exercise in a Markua course; those are done differently!)

Good luck, have fun!

If you've read this far, you're definitely the right type of person to be here!

Our last piece of advice is simple: once you have a couple chapters completed, publish your book in-progress!

This approach is called Lean Publishing. It's why Leanpub is called Leanpub.

If you want to learn more about Lean Publishing, read [this](#) or watch [this](#).

* * *

author: Pierre E. Neis contributor: Pages Publishing

macOS v1.0 date: 2026-01-29 identifier:

0C0D391B-6F0B-4DFA-B32D-C3737A241C77

language: en title: How to build a pigpen



[#{#titlePageContent.xhtml}]

How to build a pigpen

Pierre E. Neis

Prologue

Chapter 1

“After the Storm”

Stepping Off the Farm

Chapter 2

“Whose Problem Is It?”

Chapter 3

“Enter the Sparrow”

Chapter 4

“Drawing in the Mud”

Chapter 5

“Small Experiments, Big Discoveries”

Chapter 6

“The Muddled Midpoint”

Chapter 7

“Listening to the Fence”

Chapter 8

“A New Way to Build”

Chapter 9

“The Strongest Pen Isn’t the Sturdiest”

Chapter 10

“The Sparrow Flies On”

Epilogue

“The Farmer’s Surprise”

Optional Addendum

“From Pen to Practice: AO Method on Your ’Farm”

1. The Pigpen as Your Organizational Design
 2. AO Step One–Sensing: See the Storm and the System
 3. AO Step Two–Patterning: Draw in the Mud Before You Draw in Power-Point
 4. AO Step Three–Adapting: Safe-to-Fail Experiments (Mini-Pens)
 5. AO Step Four–Reflecting: Hold the Muddled Middle
 6. AO Step Five–Coherent Structures: The Pen that Bends
 7. AO Step Six–Institutionalizing Adaptivity: When the Sparrow Leaves
 8. Using the “Agile Animal Farm Game” Style in Real Workshops
 9. A Short AO Checklist for Your Next “Pigpen.”
- About the Author

© Pierre E. Neis

[Blending the AO Method (Adaptive Organization) with the allegorical, story-driven tone of John Kotter’s][, this book uses the fable of building a pigpen as a metaphor for organizational design, team learning, and adaptive transformation.][.c1}

[In the evolution of the AO Method, the Agile Animal Farm game came first as a simulation to test assumptions about what makes an organization truly agile. Through repeated runs of the game, patterns emerged: to become

adaptive and responsive, behaviour always reflects its context--the conditions and constraints in which people interact. What I call "behaviour" here is the quality and nature of interactions between people inside a system, whether we label it team, organization, or structure.][.c1}

[About a decade ago, while facilitating the game in Vietnam, some Canadian colleagues invited me to speak at a conference in Montreal. When they asked for a talk title, I jokingly proposed "How to Build a Pigpen." The joke stuck, and from developing that talk, the earliest version of what would become the AO Method began to take shape--yet the phrase "how to build a pigpen" kept echoing in my mind long after the conference ended.][.c1}

[This book was made possible with AI as my ghostwriter, weaving together years of research and practice into a format that aims to be accessible to a broad audience. While the Agile Animal Farm game initially focused on individual behaviours expressed through different animal roles, this story shifts the spotlight to problem-solving through collective intelligence--how a whole "farm" learns, experiments, and adapts together.][.c1}

I hope you enjoy the journey. At the end of the story, in the Optional Addendum, you will find a concise guide that translates the fable back into AO Method practices you can apply in your own organization.

Pierre E. Neis

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<https://menschgeist.com/>

[



Figure 8. Rectangle Rectangle

]{style="display:inline-block;vertical-align:baseline;width:21.600em;margin-left:0;margin-top:3.704%;margin-right:0;margin-bottom:3.704%;text-indent:0;max-width:100.0%;"}

To the animal in me

[]{#chapter-1.xhtml}

`[[]{#chapter-1.xhtml#chapter-1}Prologue {.p12 style=" "`

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[[]{#chapter-7.xhtml#chapter-7-370}][

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[[]{#chapter-9.xhtml#chapter-9-495}][?]

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[[]]{#chapter-10.xhtml#chapter-10}Chapter 9 {.p12 style=" "}

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[[]{#chapter-13.xhtml#chapter-13}Optional Addendum {.p12 style=" "}

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[[]{#chapter-14.xhtml#chapter-14-876}[]]

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