

UML General Guidelines

Introduction

- As with any other graphics languages it is important to set guidelines that will assist us creating good and useful diagrams.
- The following guidelines can be categorized into three groups:
 - **Simplicity Guidelines**
These guidelines assist us keeping our diagram simple and understandable.
 - **Readability Guidelines**
These guidelines come to ensure that our diagram is readable and clear.
 - **Naming Guidelines**
These guidelines come to ensure that the names we set in our diagram contribute to its clarity.

Simplicity Guidelines

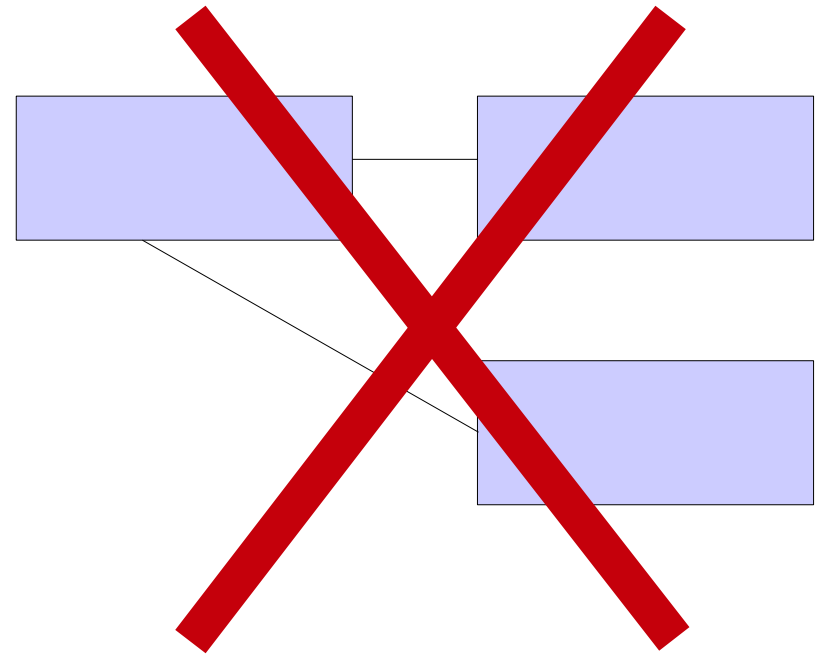
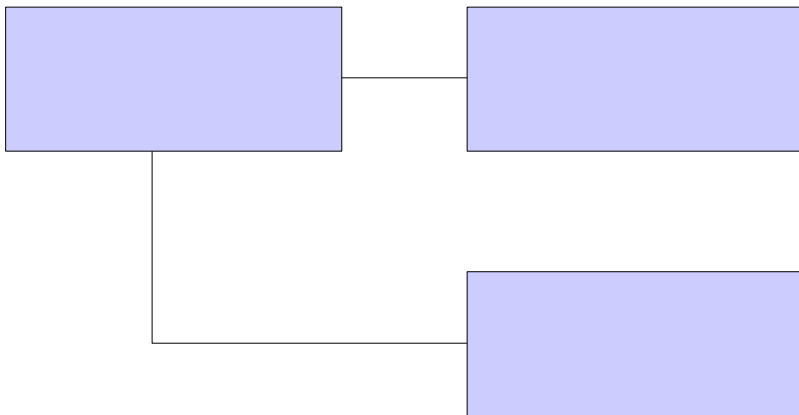
- Avoid showing too many details. Keep your diagram simple and understandable.
- Prefer using a well known notation over esoteric ones that might confuse your diagram users.
- Simplify a large complicated diagram by splitting it into several small ones.
- Single page diagrams are always more understandable than diagrams composed of several pages.

Simplicity Guidelines

- Use clear and easy to read fonts. Avoid texts written in small fonts or very big ones.
- Apply different colors for different texts in accordance with a logic rules you set in advance.

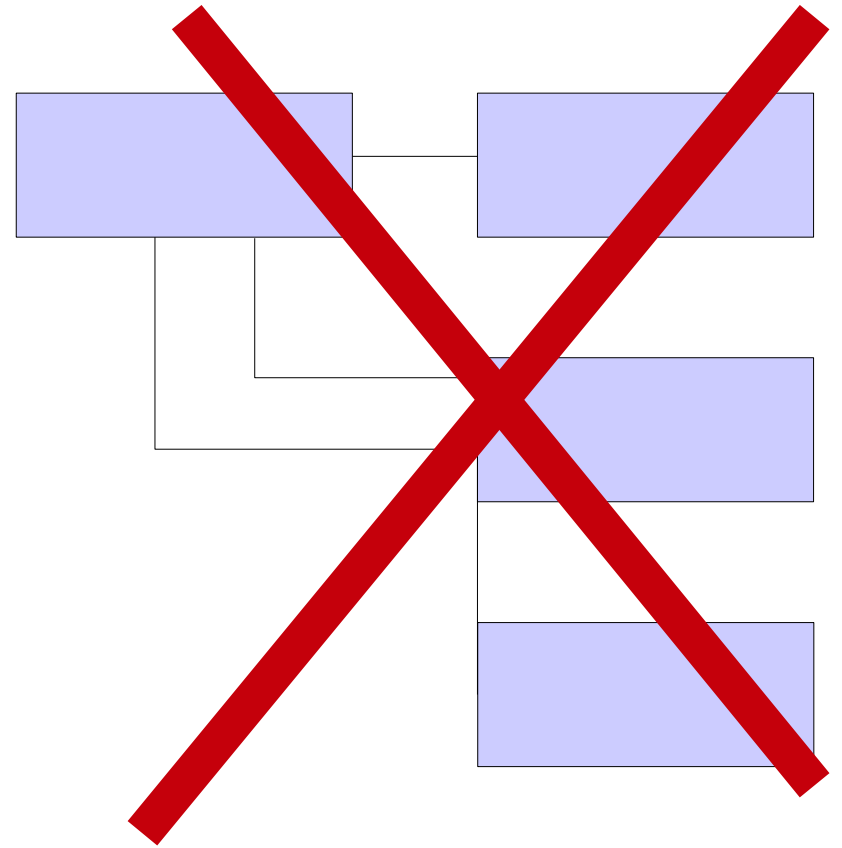
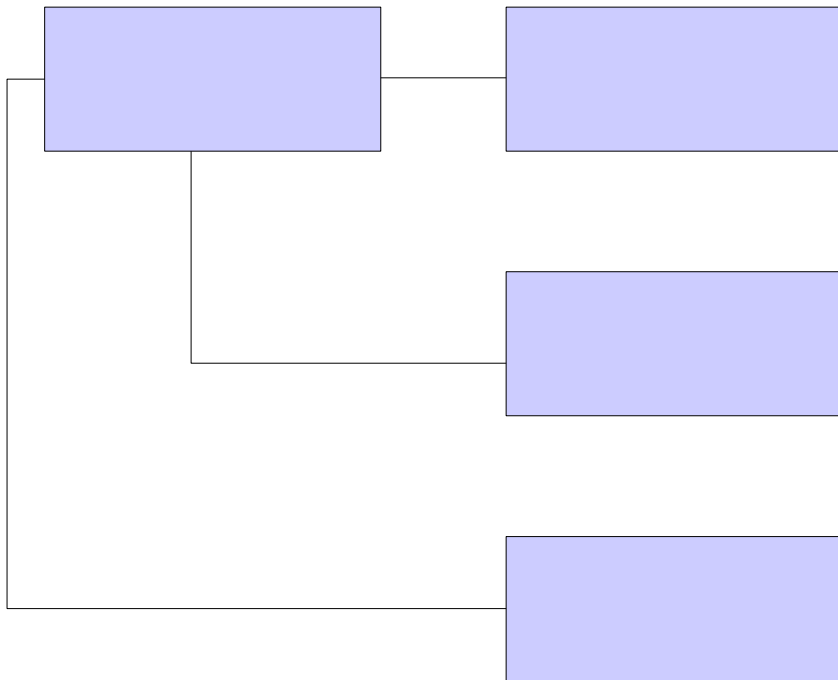
Readability Guidelines

- Avoid Curved Lines & Diagonals!



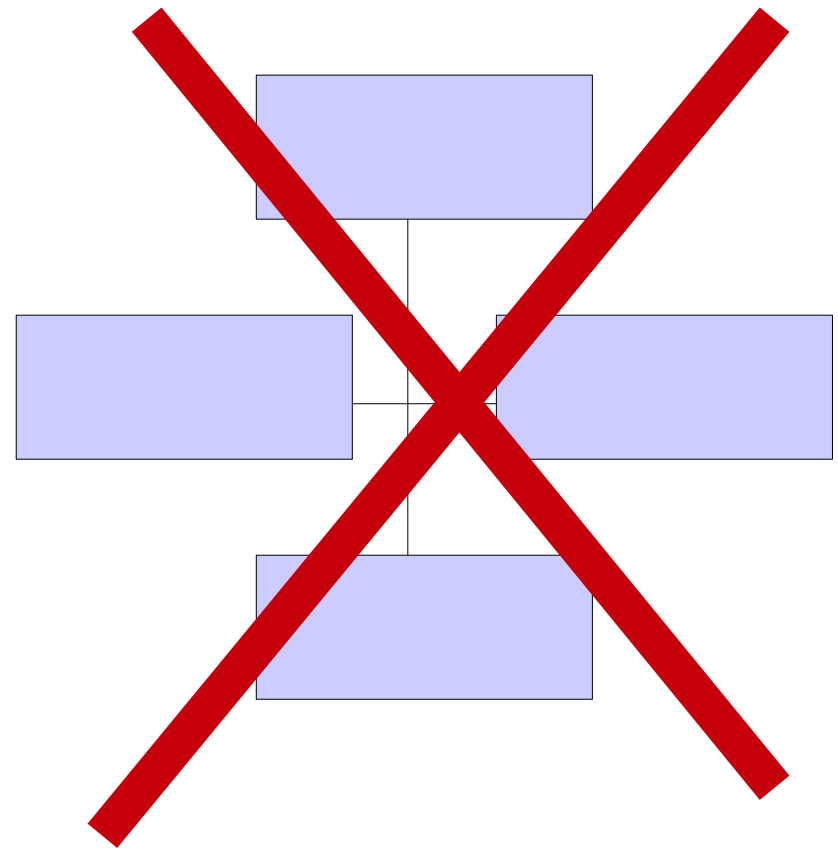
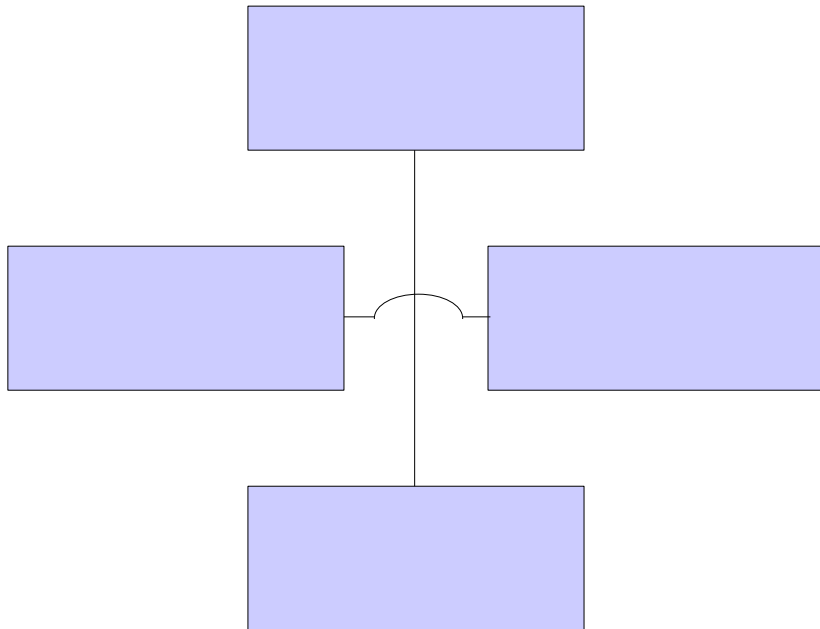
Readability Guidelines

- Avoid Crossing Lines!



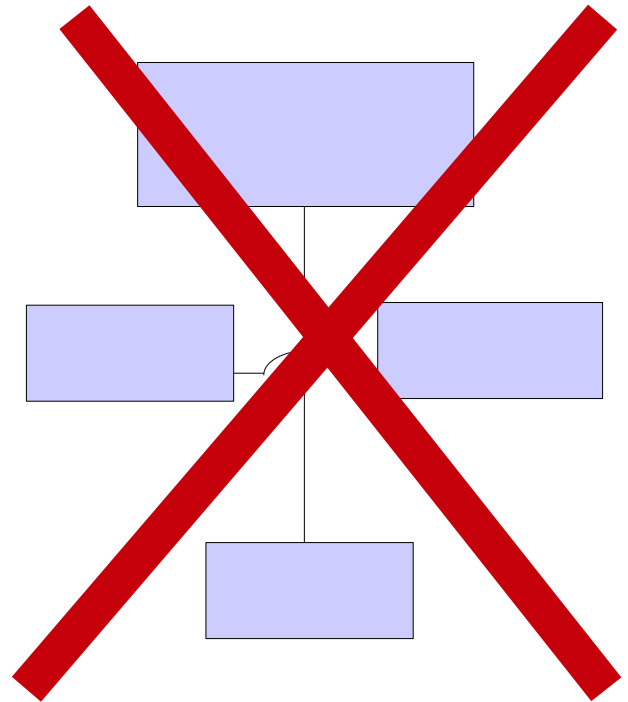
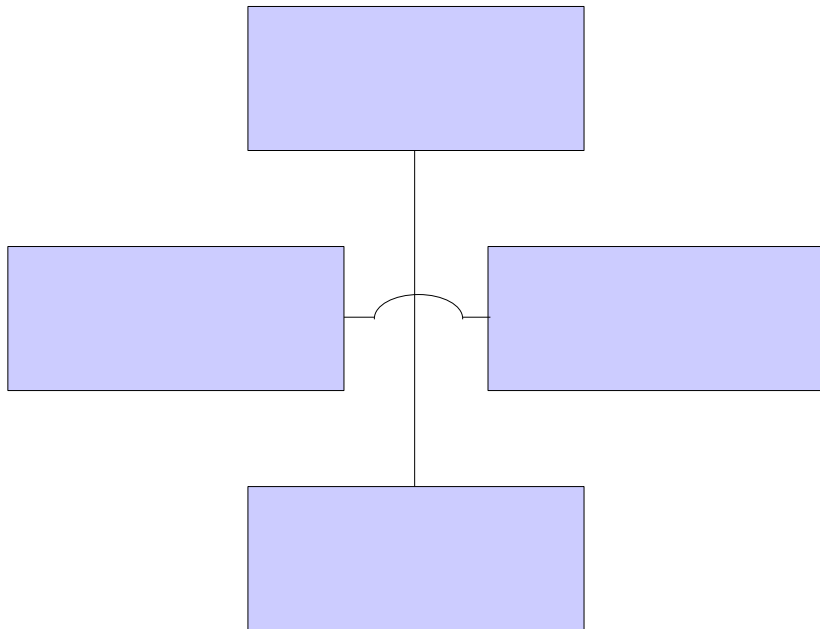
Readability Guidelines

- If you can't avoid crossing lines draw them as if one hopes the other.



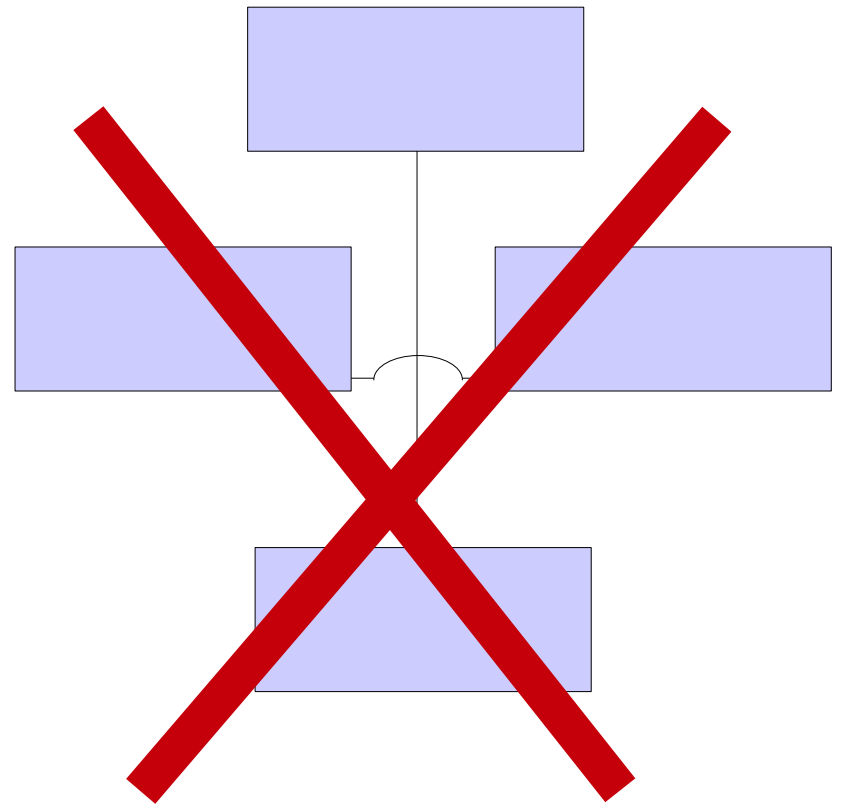
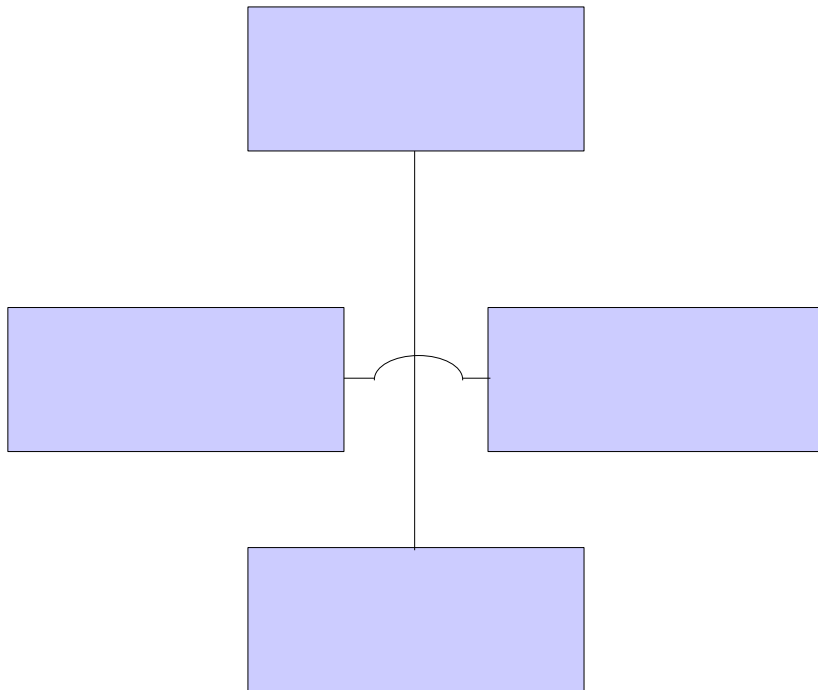
Readability Guidelines

- Keep fixed sized symbols unless you want to strength the importance of one symbol comparing the others.



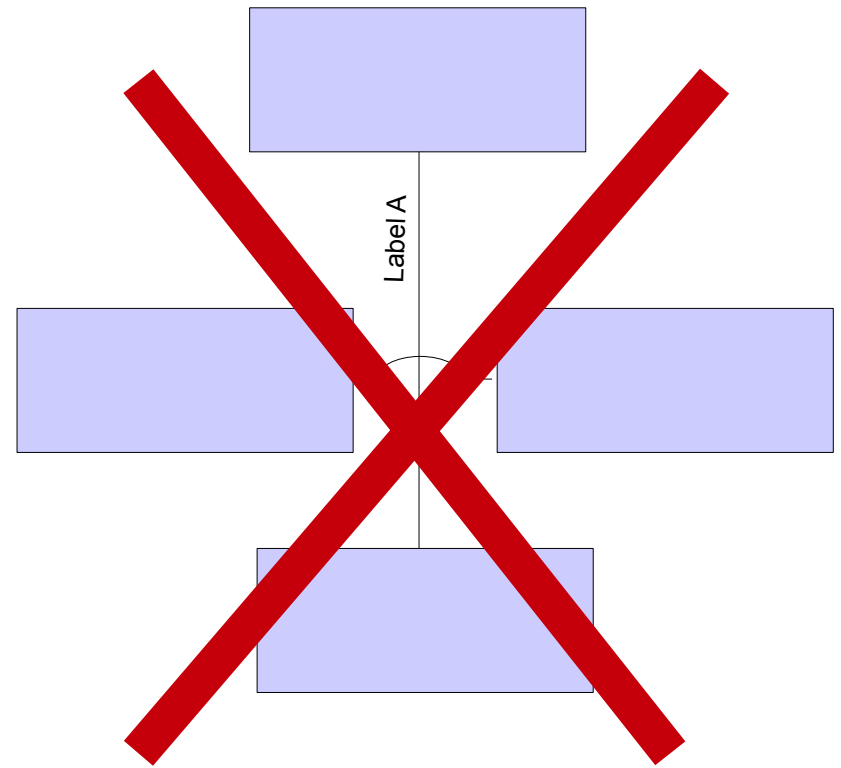
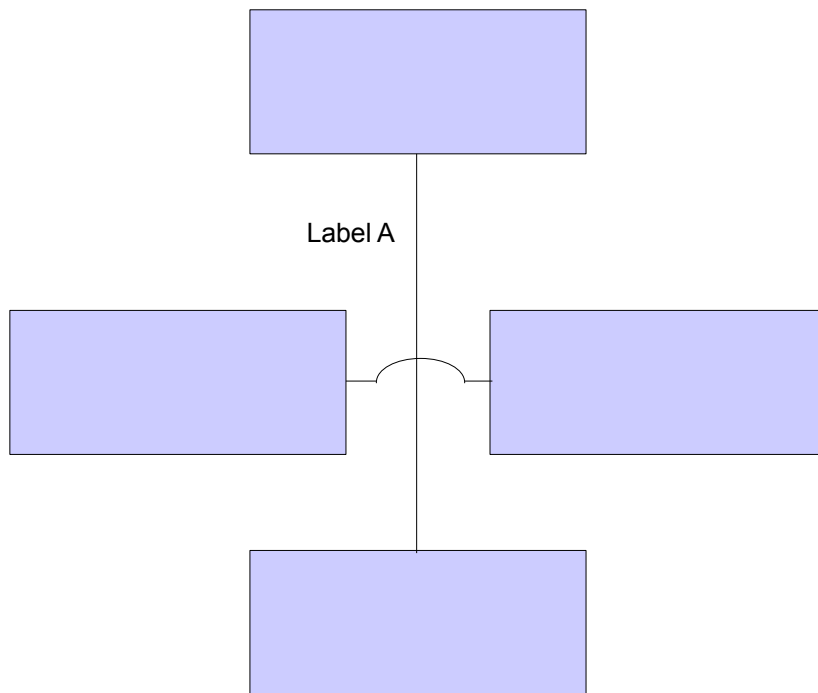
Readability Guidelines

- Keep connecting a line with a symbol in its middle.



Readability Guidelines

- Prefer horizontal labels than vertical ones (not to mention diagonal ones)!



Readability Guidelines

- Minimize the number of symbols types you use in your diagram. Too many symbols types in the same diagram will damage its clarity! Try to keep the number of symbols types you use in the same diagram up to 5 types at the most.
- Make sure to include white space in your diagram. Having too many elements in the same diagram will damage its clarity.
- When feasible, organize the diagram elements in a symmetric way. Symmetric diagrams are more understandable.

Readability Guidelines

- Try to keep your diagram elements natural order left to right and top to bottom.
- Keep enough space between the lines. Lines that are too close to each other are hard to follow.
- If you have doubts whether those that are going to use your diagram will understand its symbols add a legend to your diagram in order to explain the nature of each symbol type.

Naming Guidelines

- Set effective naming conventions.
- Be consistent with important elements naming.
- Apply terminology known to those that will use the diagram.

UML General Guidelines

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The guidelines this module covers are relevant for any graphics language (not just UML).

Simplicity Guidelines

- Avoid showing too many details. Keep your diagram simple and understandable.
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- Simplify a large complicated diagram by splitting it into several small ones.
- Single page diagrams are always more understandable than diagrams composed of several pages.

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Sometimes, showing only those diagram parts that are not obvious contribute to a better understanding of the whole model.

Diagrams composed of several pages are more complicated to understand as the user needs to switch between the pages while trying to understand the whole diagram.

Simplicity Guidelines

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- Apply different colors for different texts in accordance with a logic rules you set in advance.

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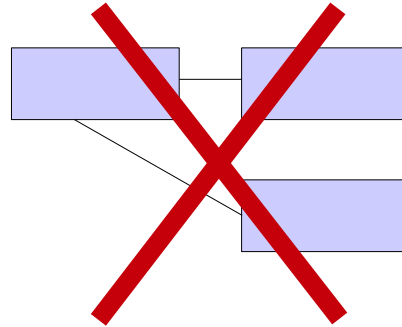
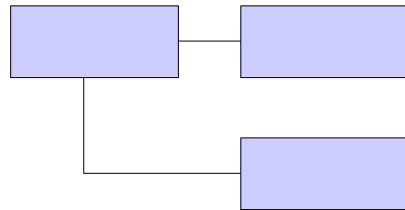
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Different colors might be very useful when setting few rules the different colors follow. Some of the possibilities include:

1. Using different colors in order to indicate which parts of the system will be developed first and which will be developed at a later stage.
2. Using different colors it is possible to indicate different parts of the project that will be taken care by different people/teams.

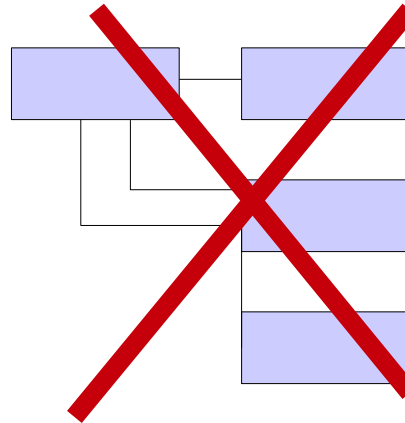
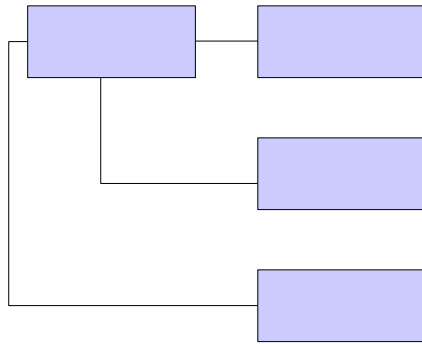
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Readability Guidelines

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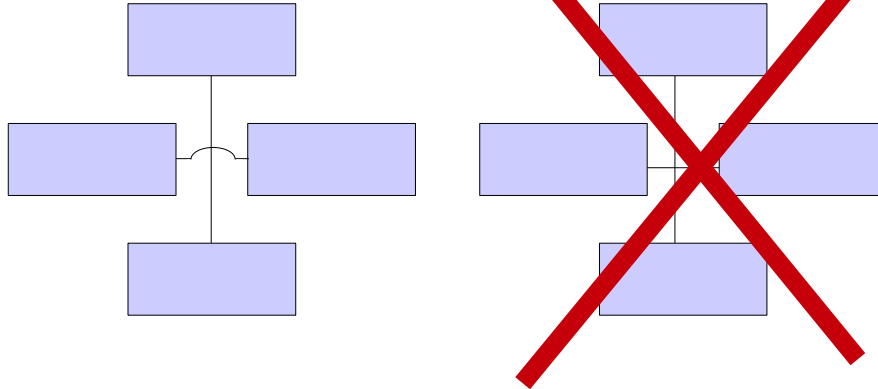
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Readability Guidelines

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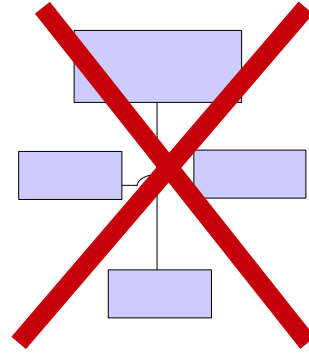
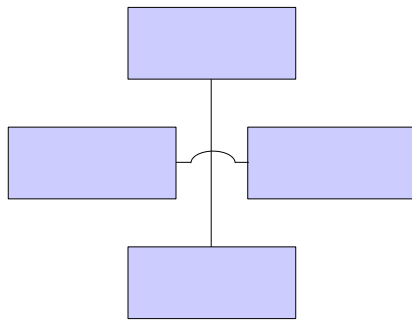
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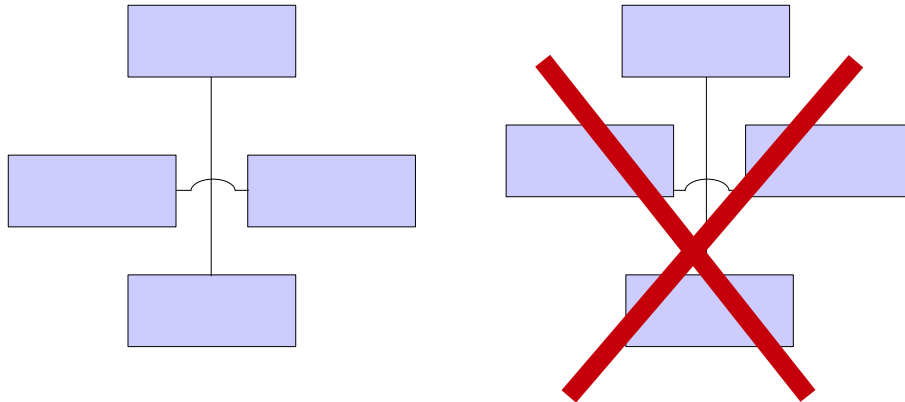
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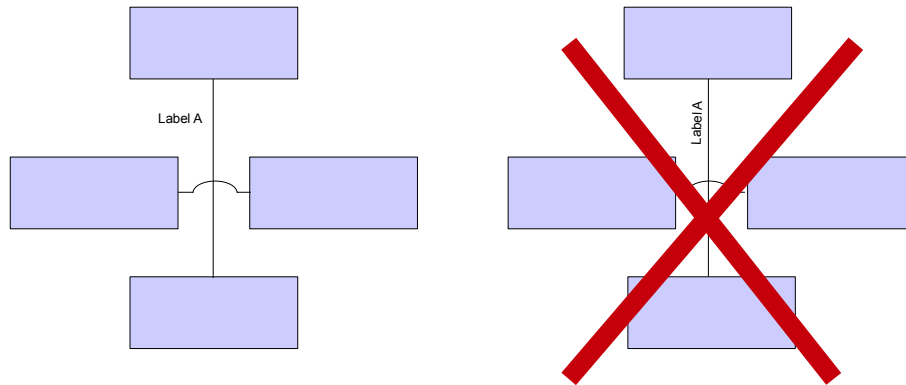
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Effective naming conventions will simplify the diagram and assists others to understand it.

A diagram usually belongs to a group of diagrams. The same element might show again in other diagrams. Keep such elements with the same names won't confuse others that examin our diagrams.

Using a terminology known to those that are going to examine our diagrams will assist them understanding them.