

How to make Easy Read resources

This presentation is based on ASAN's new guide, "One Idea Per Line."

You can find it at autisticadvocacy.org/resources/accessibility/easyread/



Why make accessible resources?

Access is a civil right!

Everyone deserves access to information.

Access helps everyone.

- Easy Read resources are more accessible for many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but are also helpful to people with other kinds of disabilities, English language learners, and more!

When you make information accessible, you are including people—when you don't, you are excluding.



What is Easy Read?



- Made for people with intellectual disabilities



- Clear and easy to understand



- A picture for every idea



- One idea per line

What is Easy Read?

Easy Read has been used in New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom for longer than it has been used in the United States.

By now, many organizations in the U.S. and internationally have done Easy Read.

- SABE, GMSA, ASAN, and many others!

How ASAN makes Easy Read

This presentation is just about how ASAN makes our Easy Read resources.

At ASAN, we have been making Easy Read resources since 2016.

We have learned a lot over the last 5 years. We work with self-advocates with intellectual disabilities to make our Easy Read words and icons easier to understand.

People write in Easy Read in many different ways. This presentation doesn't explain "the one right way" to write in Easy Read—it just explains what ASAN does.

We are always trying to improve our Easy Read work!

The first things to know

- Include **all** the information, just explain it in a different way.
- You might need to “back up” and explain background information to help readers understand your main topic.
 - For example, to write in Easy Read about Medicaid, you might have to start by explaining things like:
 - What health insurance is
 - What kinds of health insurance there are
 - How the government pays for Medicaid

STEP 1: Outline

- Figure out your main ideas.
- Think about places where you need to add background information.
- Split your information into sections.



STEP 1: Outline

Example outline:

What is affordable housing?

- What does “affordable” mean?
- Who makes affordable housing?
- Who can get affordable housing?

STEP 2: Start writing!

Tips for writing Easy Read text:

- Use short sentences - about 10-15 words per sentence is best.
- Stick to short, common words
 - [Up-Goer Five Text Editor](#)
 - You can use long, unusual words if your reader **needs** those words to understand the topic, but define them.
- Use active voice, not passive voice
 - “By zombies” test



STEP 2: Start writing!

Tips for writing Easy Read text:

- One idea per sentence.

EXAMPLE:

Our fellowship program will involve working with a mentor to develop skills through a year-long project.



Fellows work with a mentor.
They work on a project together for one year.
This helps fellows learn new skills.

STEP 2: Start writing!

Tips for writing Easy Read text:

- Straightforward language
- Explain metaphors if you use them
- Define new terms, explain new ideas
- Repeat explanations and definitions (reminders)
- Use examples

STEP 2: Start writing!

READING LEVEL

Plain language = 5th-8th grade reading level (depending on who you ask)

Easy Read = 3rd-4th grade reading level

STEP 2: Start writing!

READING LEVEL

We talk about reading level using grades (“third grade reading level”). We do that because it’s an easy way to measure readability. But it can give people the wrong idea.

Lower reading levels are better for everyone, not just kids.

We can write about complicated, “grown-up” topics at low reading levels – and we should!

STEP 2: Start writing!

READING LEVEL

What affects reading level?

- How many long sentences are there? (syllables per sentence, words per sentence)
- How many long words are there? (syllables per word, letters per word)
- Are there a lot of simple, familiar, common words? Or are there a lot of unusual, complicated words?

These are not the only things that make text accessible! You still need to pay attention to things like the structure of your sentence, active vs. passive voice, etc. But these are important things, so keep an eye on your reading level too.

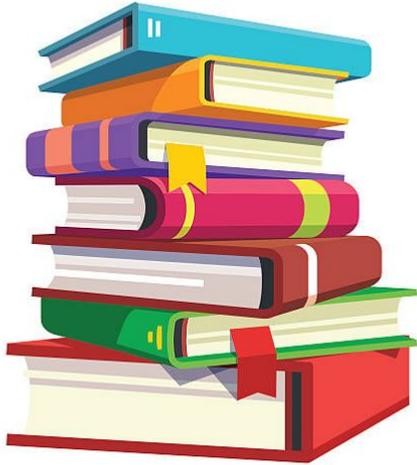
STEP 2: Start writing!

READING LEVEL

Check reading level using tools like Readable or Automatic Readability Checker.

These websites use many different reading level tests on your writing, and show you all of the results.

Translating to Easy Read



You can turn writing that is not Easy Read or plain language into Easy Read by rewriting it.

Your Easy Read translation **must** have all the same information as your original document.

It is okay to add new information in an Easy Read translation (for example, explaining background information).

It is okay to organize the same information in a different way.

Translating to Easy Read

You can start by making a new outline of the main ideas in your original document. This can help you figure out if the order of ideas makes sense for Easy Read, or needs to be changed.

Think about where to add new information.

Think about complicated words and terms in your original document. Which ones need to be **defined**? Which ones need to be **translated**?

Turning Easy Read into Plain Language

Some differences between Easy Read and Plain Language:

- Plain Language can have a slightly higher reading level.
- Plain Language doesn't necessarily use icons.
- In Plain Language, sentences can have more than one idea, and paragraphs can have more than one sentence.

Turning Easy Read into Plain Language

Easy Read version:

Jack was a farmer.

He lived with his wife and children.

One day, someone stole Jack's family's cow.

The children got upset that their cow got stolen.

Plain Language version:

Jack was a farmer who lived with his wife and children. One day, someone stole their cow, which made the children upset.

STEP 3: Lay out text using graphics software

ASAN uses Adobe Illustrator and InDesign for our Easy Read resources.

Use font size and color to make section titles clear.

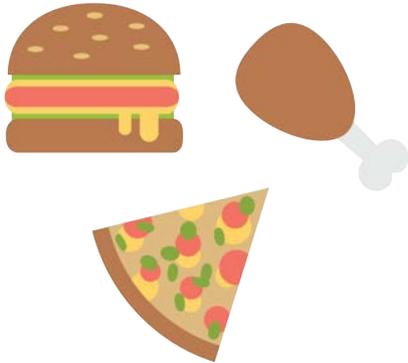
Leave plenty of white space on the page (we use a maximum of 5 lines per page) and leave room for icons!

Add “words to know” sections.

Step 4: Pick icons

Icons illustrate the main idea of each sentence.

Food



Pay



Step 4: Pick icons

Icons' meaning should be as clear as possible.



Step 4: Pick icons

Icons can combine almost like words.



pays for hospital visit



states pay a lot

Step 4: Pick icons

ASAN rules about icons:

- Don't use the exact same icon twice on one page.
- Don't use an icon for the sentence before a bulleted list.
- Icons should be diverse and show people of many races, genders, ages.
- Make icons screenreader-accessible by adding image descriptions in alt text.

Step 4: Pick icons

Where can I find icons to use? Websites like:

- Adobe Stock
- Flaticon
- Vecteezy
- Clker
- Freepik
- Envato Elements
- Human Pictogram 2.0

STEP 5: Focus group

Easy Read is for people with intellectual disabilities.

So we ask people with intellectual disabilities to “test” and edit our Easy Read work whenever we can.

Nothing about us, without us!



STEP 5: Focus group

Give the Easy Read resource to focus group participants a week or two in advance.

Use a large screen or projector to show a version of the Easy Read resource at the focus group.

While one person facilitates, another person edits the projected document in real time.

Go through the resource line by line. If something doesn't make sense, discuss and edit as a group.

STEP 5: Focus group

Questions to ask at an Easy Read focus group:

- Does this make sense to you?
- Does the picture help you understand the words?
- Are we saying the ideas in the right order?
- Is there too much information? Not enough information?
- Would you change anything to make this better?

STEP 6: Make edits

Change the words and icons in your Easy Read resource based on your focus group edits.



More information, and resources lists, are in our guide to making Easy Read resources, “One Idea Per Line.”

Download it for free at autisticadvocacy.org/resources/accessibility/easyread/



Thanks for listening! Any questions?



The Autistic Self Advocacy Network

<http://autisticadvocacy.org/>

Twitter: [@autselfadvocacy](https://twitter.com/autselfadvocacy)

Facebook: [/AutisticAdvocacy/](https://www.facebook.com/AutisticAdvocacy/)