

Plain Language Checklist

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| | Puts most important information first |
| | Focuses on need to know, not nice to know |
| | Avoids jargon and acronyms. If you can't avoid jargon, explain what the jargon means! |
| | Has words that are 3 syllables or less |
| | Uses short sentences. One idea per sentence. |
| | Has less than 15-20 words per sentence |
| | Uses common, "living room" words |
| | Speaks to the reader. Use "you" and "we" |
| | Uses active voice. (Person + action + object) Tom painted the house. The house was painted by Tom. |
| | Uses words that are culturally appropriate |
| | Repeats important words and phrases |
| | Is direct and clear |

Did you use graphics, pictures or symbols to help explain the message? Place pictures to the left of text. Use with your main points. No more than 4 to 5 pictures on a page. You do not need a picture for every sentence. Ask others to review your choice of images.

Did you follow these accessibility rules?

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| | Font type and size is Arial or Verdana (size 14 or larger) |
| | No ALL CAPS |
| | Use of bold is okay (but avoids <u>underline</u> and <i>italics</i>) |
| | Has Accessible spacing (1.5 is good) |
| | Uses lists. Numbers work better than bullets. |
| | Uses color choices with high contrast |
| | Has lots of white space |
| | Avoids columns |
| | Does not write out numbers (say 4 instead of four) |
| | Avoids text over graphics |
| | Uses headings |
| | Has wide margins (at least 1 inch) |
| | Text lines up on the left |
| | No contractions. Uses “do not” instead of “don’t” |
| | Uses page numbers |
| | Uses stories instead of graphs and statistics. |
| | Does not use a hyphen to split a word at the end of a line. |
| | Keeps all the sentences of a paragraph on the same page. |

Check readability and aim for 6th grade reading level.

Get feedback from people with disabilities. Ask the reader how they would say it!