

PLAIN ENGLISH

FACT SHEET

PRINCIPLES OF PLAIN ENGLISH WRITING

- Adapt your style to the needs of your readers
- Use short words
- Use short sentences (15-20 words)
- Use short paragraphs (2-3 sentences)
- Use the active voice
- Cut out clutter and useless words
- Avoid jargon, clichés and abbreviations
- Explain technical terms in simple language
- Use capital letters only when it is essential
- Use simple and sincere language
- Write the way you speak
- Spell check your text
- Use clear design and layout principles:
 - wide margins
 - dot points
 - headings and subheadings
 - generous line spacing

WHAT IS PLAIN ENGLISH

Plain English is a writing style that readers can easily understand.

Plain English combines clear, concise expressions, simple sentence structure and a design that is easy to navigate.

BENEFITS OF PLAIN ENGLISH

PRECISION

By using fewer words you decrease the risk of vagueness. You can be accurate without using formal language.

CLARITY

Studies have shown that plain English can increase understanding by up to 90%.

READABILITY

Good writing is easy to understand in one sitting. Dressing up language to sound authoritative makes the text less readable.

TRANSLATABILITY

A translation can only be as good as the original: starting from a plain English text makes it easier to convey the meaning.

EFFICIENCY

Writing less saves you time and money. A shorter text is cheaper to translate.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Using the passive voice makes it harder to call anyone to account.



BEFORE

Unfortunately, your son does not meet our eligibility criteria and won't be eligible for our services.

AFTER

Unfortunately, your son won't be able to receive support from us as he does not have an intellectual disability.

WHY

The words *eligibility criteria* and *eligibility* are internal language used by the agency and probably have very little meaning to clients and families. We have explained what our eligibility criteria is (i.e. your son does not have an intellectual disability) and what it means to not meet our eligibility criteria (i.e. your son will not be able to receive support from us).

You will need to sit her up during mealtimes so she doesn't aspirate.

She will need to sit up when she's eating or drinking to make sure food does not go into her lungs.

What does *mealtimes* mean? Main meals? Snacks? Eating and drinking? Substituting mealtimes with *eating* and *drinking* makes it clear. *Aspiration* is a technical term that needs to be explained to the client.

DON'T USE

USE INSTEAD

Accordingly	As a result
Additional	Extra, more
Commence	Start, begin
Due to the fact that	Because
For the duration of	During
Forward	Send
Give consideration to	Consider
In accordance with	Under
In relation to	About, for, with
In the amount of	For
In the majority of instances	Often
In the near future	Soon
In view of the fact that	Because
Is able to, be in a position to	Can
Make provision for	Provide
At this point in time	Now, at present
Obtain	Get
Optimum	Best
Pursuant to	Based on
Terminate	End, finish
The manner in which	How
Until such time as	Until
In the course of	During
Liaising with	Speaking to
Utilise	Use

“ Next time you write something, try putting things down the way you would actually say them.

ASK YOURSELF

- How much does the reader already know about this subject?
- What information do I actually need to give?
- What tone should I use?
- Am I giving instructions or advice?

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