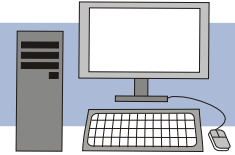


TABLE OF CONTENTS

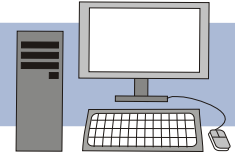


Folder #3 MAKING ADAPTATIONS

Tools and
Strategies

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GENERAL ACCOMMODATIONS



Good Solutions to Support People to be Included in Meetings.

For reading:



- Provide pictures, symbols, or diagrams instead of words
- Use voice output on computer
- Use “line guide” to identify or hi-light one line of text at a time

For writing:



- Provide templates that prompt information requested
- Allow verbal response instead of written response only
- Use voice input on computers
- Use spell-check on computers
- Provide ample space on forms requiring written response

For remembering:



- Provide checklists
- Use instructions with picture guides on frequently-used materials
- Minimize clutter
- Color-code items or resources
- Organize large tasks into multiple smaller tasks

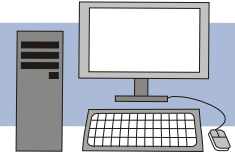
For organizing:



- Label items or resources
- Use symbols instead of words
- Use printed labels instead of hand-written labels
- Provide written or symbolic reminders
- Use alarm watch or beeper
- Arrange materials in order of use
- Use task list with numbers or symbols
- Provide additional training as needed

Excerpted
By Suzanne R. Gosden, MA,
Job Accommodation Network

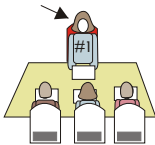
TYPICAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR BOARD MEETINGS



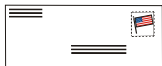
Create guiding questions for members to ask at meetings



Provide summaries of materials with plain words and pictures



Make the meeting environment-friendly (*seating arrangements, introductions of all people attending, time for discussion and comment*)



Send board packets 7-10 days before meeting

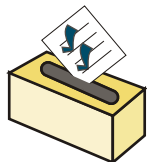
Organize the board packet so action items are easy to locate



Make board packets available in different ways by request (*audio tapes, computer disk using words with pictures, native languages*)

Use language that everyone understands during the meeting

Use plain language in all written materials



Provide instructions for voting on action items



Provide language translation during meeting

Provide support staff, also called “facilitators”



Use larger font size

PREPARING DOCUMENTS



Good Reminders

- Use few words on a page or handout. Don't be tempted to fill the page.
- Use good color contrast.
- Use plain typeface.
- Use lower case letters rather than all capitals.
- Use good spacing between sentences.
- Provide good color and tone contrast between text and background.
- Provide reasonable size. (No less than 14 point type)
- Use a clear font not *italics*.
- Use quality non-glossy paper that doesn't show printed text or graphics on the reverse side of the document.
- Do not print over a patterned background (eg. photos, logos or pictures).

Large Print

Use a larger font, **14 point or bigger** that can be found on most word processors. Whenever possible, use a laser printer for greater resolution. Using large print will mean some documents will require more pages for print. A large print version will consist of about **three pages of large print** for every page of 12 point print. Many large print readers recommend printing text in **18-point type**. Although 14-point type is acceptable in regulations, such as the U.S. Postal Service.

Left-justify text so spacing between letters is consistent and easy to track. Use block style paragraphs whenever possible. If a paragraph must be indented, use two spaces.

One inch left and right margins are ideal.

Eliminate hyphenated words.

Do not center text.

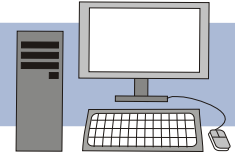
Set line spacing at 1.5 inches, do not double-space.

Graphs, diagrams, and pictures should be enlarged.

Column formatting should be removed.

12 point
14 point
16 point
18 point

WHAT IS PLAIN LANGUAGE



Plain language is communication to meet the needs of the intended audience, so people can understand information that is important to their lives. Plain language is understandable. What is clear, or what is plain to your intended audience, can only be decided by the audience. Most people expect a definition of plain language that describes writing of a certain style. **Plain language is more of a process** - it has been described as a means to an end.

Richard Coe, a Simon Fraser University English professor, states: Language that is "plain" to one set of readers may be incomprehensible for others. "Plain language" is a variable, not an absolute.

Plain language document process involves working out a plan for a writing project, preparing a draft under the plan, and verifying the effectiveness of your draft through evaluation methods using the intended audience.

An important feature of plain language is testing the writing to determine whether it conveys to the targeted reader the writer's intentions. This definition of plain language is "reader-based" and not "text-based".

Planning Guidelines

- Analyze the task
- Identify the audience
- Clarify purpose
- Determine the parameters or constraints

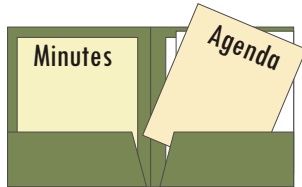
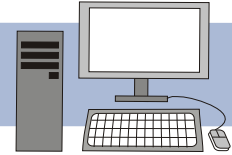
Ask Yourself

- In what situation or environment will the document be used?
- Who will be the readers or users of the document?
- What is the reader to do after reading the document?

Ask the following Questions

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

WRITING WITH PLAIN LANGUAGE



Planning

1. Determine purpose and identify the audience.
2. Gather information.
3. Organize information.
4. Visualize what the final product will look like.

Writing

1. Create a draft.
2. Revise content.
3. Check for accuracy.
4. Edit for clarity and style.
5. Design lay-out and add graphics.

Tips for Writing and Organizing Information:

1. Write with personal pronouns: you, we, I.
2. Be direct - cut information that is not essential to the purpose.
3. Prioritize information and put the most information at the beginning.
4. Use graphics and pictures to reinforce important facts and points.
5. Use a summary introductory paragraph.

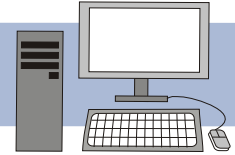
Rewriting or Editing the Writing of Others

1. Keep subject and verb together at the beginning of the sentence.
2. Explain only one idea in each sentence - keep sentences short.
3. Use verbs instead of nouns for your action.
4. Use active voice: identify person and the action.
5. Use positive words and sentences.
6. Avoid negatives.
7. Simplify words; choose everyday language.
8. Cut jargon and avoid acronyms.

Evaluate Your Own Work - Ask These Questions

1. Will people really use this document?
2. Is it attractive? Is it legible? Is it interesting?
3. Is the information accessible and well organized?
4. Is it clear? Is it concrete? Is it personal?

USING PLAIN LANGUAGE



Use concrete, not abstract, language.

For instance, saying that walking on thin ice on the river is dangerous - may not mean much to someone. Telling them that walking on thin ice may cause them to fall through and drown gives a clearer picture of the danger.

Use the active voice.

It identifies the person taking the action. For instance, say “*the Liberals won the election*”, not “*the election was won by the Liberals*”.

Address your readers directly.

For instance, use *you* and *I* or *we*, rather than *one* or *he/she*.

Don't change verbs into nouns.

Using verbs keeps your sentences shorter. Try, “*you will hire and train employees*”, instead of “*you will work on the hiring and training of employees*”.

Avoid officialese/bureaucratese.

This is a fatal combination of passive voice, needlessly long words, strings of nouns and euphemisms. Here is an example: “*Strict enforcement of the speed limit by the police will cause a reduction in traffic fatalities*”. Instead, you could say: “*Police will fine drivers who speed. That will cut down deaths on the roads*”.

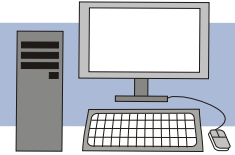
Use correct terminology.

If you need to use a specific term, include a definition right beside the word. It doesn't help to stick the definition in a glossary at the end of the document. Few people think to look there. For example, *Counselor* (*that means someone who is trained to listen well and to help you work out your problems*).

Use gender-neutral language.

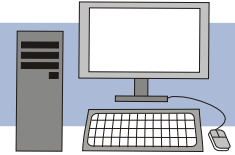
You can avoid repetitious use of *he* or *she* or the hard-to-read *s/he* by using plurals in most places. Even if you have used *someone*, it is considered acceptable to follow it with *they*, as in is this sentence: *If someone has a seizure, make sure they have space so they will not get hurt if they fall down.*

PLAIN WORD EXAMPLES



Accompany	- go with
advise	- tell
assist	- help
choose/decide	- pick
colleague	- co-worker
confidential	- we will not tell anyone
consent	- agree
consult	- ask
demonstrate	- show
discuss	- talk about
economical	- cheap
eliminate	- cut out
expend	- pay out; use up
facilitate	- help; make easier
failed to	- did not
finances	- money; funds
in view of the fact	- because
interview	- talk to
it is necessary	- you need
legislation	- laws
limited number	- few
option	- something you can pick
perform an assessment	- test
permit	- let
Policy/regulation	- rule
prior to	- before
provide	- give
purchase	- buy
referral	- we can tell you where...
refuse	- say no
remuneration	- pay; wages
require	- need
residence	- home; where you live

LAYING OUT YOUR WORK SO IT LOOKS GOOD



Page 1

Before we start to read something, we are either drawn to, or repelled by, the way it looks. Think of how quickly we turn away from an advertisement with many different fonts, or text that doesn't stand out from the background. We are discouraged by a paragraph of instructions that could have looked clearer as a list, with bullets.

When a document is easy to look at, it usually means it is easier to read. The steps listed below are as important as choosing plain words when creating materials for slower readers.

Keep sentences short. On average, they should be about 20 words. For slower readers, reduce to about 15 words and no more than two clauses.

Use bullets or numbers for lists. Use for a series of actions in a sequence. Special note: if you are using numbers to indicate a list is ordered from most to least important, use bullets.

Keep paragraphs short. Limit ideas to one per paragraph. It's OK to have a one-sentence paragraph! Use titles and headings. Titles should be short.

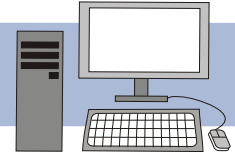
Headings and subheadings. Headings break up text and allow readers to pick out what is important. A question heading followed by an answer paragraph often works well. *Example, What is Diabetes?*

Don't hyph-enate words. A word split over two lines is much harder to read. You will be helping slower readers when words are complete since slower readers tend to pause at the end of each line.

"Empty" space. Use plenty of white space around text. Do not reduce space between lines even if you are looking for ways to save space. An absence of text is not emptiness, but contrast to make the text stand out. If the document becomes long, cut words, or see if you should be making two documents instead.

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LAYING OUT YOUR WORK SO IT LOOKS GOOD



Page 2

Fonts. There are two basic types of font, serif and sans serif. Serif fonts have little tails on the letters, **like this**. People create documents for the average reader using a serif font because it is supposed to lead the eye across the page. A plain sans serif font without little tails are easier for slower readers. If you look at school text books, you'll often see a sans serif font. Arial is a typical type and is excellent for people with visual impairments. Another commonly used font is Twentieth Century or Zapf Humanist. Experiment with fonts to see which one seems easiest for your intended reader.

Left justify. With full justification, spaces between letters and words are stretched or squeezed, which makes reading harder.

Upper and lower case. Use upper case letters judiciously, they are OK for short headings. Lower case letters vary in their position on the line with some rising above the line and others hang down below the line. This makes them easier to identify.

Tables of contents. In longer documents, number pages and put in a table of contents. Make it as easy as possible for readers to find their way around.

Documents for different audiences. Consider having different versions or make an easy-to-read executive summary.

Contrast between print and paper. Standard black print on white paper is fine, especially if you make photocopies. Any dark print on light colored paper is OK. Yellow or pastel colors on white or pale paper is hard to see. Avoid blocks of pale print on a dark background. It is tiring to the eyes.

Spell and grammar check. Computer spell checks cannot distinguish between “there and their”, or any of the various alternatives for “to”. The grammar check can be useful for basic information only. It can count how many times you have used the passive voice. Try to find a volunteer to read your work before you consider it completed.

Add pictures. Insert pictures that are clear, easily understood and applicable to the text. They lighten up a document and give readers a clue to the written content.

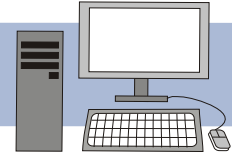
Adapted from: Rehabilitation Review, monthly publication

VRRRI Research Department

www.vrri.org

Page 9

MAKING TEXT LEGIBLE



Impaired vision often makes reading difficult by:

Reducing the amount of light that enters the eye therefore blurring an image. Blurring reduces contrast of the text and retinal damage impairs the ability to see small print and to make eye movements that are crucial to reading.

Suggestions to make your documents legible

HIGH CONTRAST



LOW CONTRAST



1. COLOR

Contrast is the difference between the lightest and the darkest color.

Value or tone is the lightness or darkness of a color.

Tint is adding white to a color.

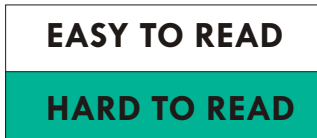
Shade is adding black to a color.

ABC ABC



Text should be printed with the highest possible contrast. Many readers who are older or partially sighted, light (white or light yellow) letters on a dark (black) background are more readable than dark letters on a light background.

EASY TO READ



HARD TO READ



2. Font Color:

Printed material is most readable with black ink on white paper. Different colors are important for design reasons, but limit use for larger or highlighted words only.

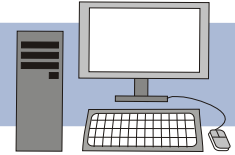
This text is 14 point Twentieth Century with normal leading.

This is the same type size and font with 30% extra leading.

3. Leading:

Leading, the spacing between lines of text, should be at least 25 to 30 percent of the letter height. Because many people have difficulty finding the beginning of the next line while reading.

MAKING TEXT LEGIBLE



Roman or serifed typefaces are effective.

San-serif typefaces are effective.

Condensed typefaces are not as effective

Decorative typefaces are not

4. Font:

Avoid complicated, decorative or cursive fonts. These fonts should be used for emphasis only. Sans-serif fonts are more legible when type size is small.

This letter spacing is effective.

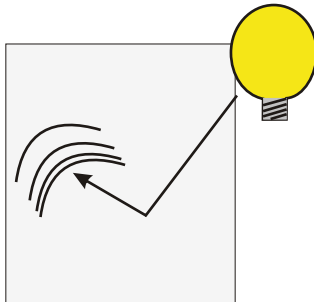
This letter spacing is effective.

This letterspacing is not as effective.

This letterspacing is not as effective.

5. Letter Spacing:

Words with close letter spacing present difficulties for readers with limited vision. Where possible, spacing should be wide. Monospaced fonts rather than proportionally spaced fonts seem to be more legible.



6. Paper Finish:

Paper with a glossy finish lessens legibility. Light bounces off glossy paper and creates a glare that makes reading text harder to see.