



Plain Language Checklist

Plan

- Know your purpose
- Understand your reader and their situation
 - Create personas for your readers
- Imagine a conversation with your reader
 - Anticipate questions and concerns

Organize

- Select the right content
 - Only put in necessary information
- Arrange information logically
 - Format for easy reading and use
- Place your key message first
 - Use a clear and informative subject line

Write

- Use personal pronouns (I, me, we, you)
- Use active voice
 - Write doer first, action second, and receiver third (“We approved it for you.”)
- Use words your readers know
- Write sentences that are short and clear
 - Include only one thought or two tightly connected thoughts in each sentence

Edit

- Go over your draft
- Use lists and tables when possible
- Use highlighting, bold, and italics sparingly

Review

- Step away and review later
 - Put yourself in your readers’ shoes using personas
 - Consider readability scores (Use Microsoft Word and the Hemingway App)
- Ask colleagues to read
- Test with readers and users



Plain Language Document Planning Worksheet

1. What am I writing about?

2. Why am I writing it?

What do I want to happen because I wrote this content?

What action must or should my reader take?

What background info does my reader need to know, if any?

3. Who am I writing this for?

List your readers and create personas to describe them.

4. How will the person get this (email, mail, website)?

Imagine the reader's environment when they first see what you write.

5. What is my key message?

6. What questions or concerns will my reader have?

7. How will I review and check my document for effectiveness?
