

Plain Language Checklist

	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?

	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!