**Plain Language**



Use **plain language**, so people are motivated to read and can understand your message right away.

**Prepare for a Successful Message**

Who is your reader? What does your reader need to do? Why is the message important to your reader?

**Use Plain Language Strategies**

* Start with the most important information: **What does your reader need to know, think, or do?**
* Talk to the individual readers in your audience. Use the pronouns **I, you,** and **we.**
* Write **short sentences and paragraphs.**
	+ Don’t use more words than you need.
	+ Cut out modifiers. (absolutely, actually, completely, really, quite, totally)
	+ Start a new sentence for each new idea.
* Write **active sentences.**
	+ Subject – verb – object

**No:** The application must be submitted by October 1. (passive)

**Yes: You must submit the application by October 1.** (active)

* Use **familiar words**.
	+ Avoid acronyms or jargon.
	+ Find an “everyday” way to say it.

 **No:** There are no vacancies at this point in time.

 **Yes: We don’t have open positions now.**

* Pay attention to the **look** of your message.
	+ Organize information in small chunks. (1-3 lines of text)
	+ Use bullet points and checklists to create white space.
	+ Write in 12-point font or larger.
	+ **Bold** important information.
	+ Avoid ALL CAPS and *italics*. Only underline headings and links.

**Which site should I visit first for Plain Language resources?**

* <https://plainlanguage.gov/>

**Stumped on what word to substitute? Want to tackle wordiness?**

* <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/words/use-simple-words-phrases/>
* <https://writing.wisc.edu/handbook/style/css_wordyphrases/>

**“How to Write Email That Respects Your Reader’s Time” webinar on YouTube**

* [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7P7KLH4T5w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7P7KLH4T5w%20)

**Interested in writing “readable” blogs?**

* <https://thewordyhabitat.com/how-to-make-your-blog-posts-more-readable/>

**Need research-based guidelines and tips for writing on the web?**

* <https://www.nngroup.com/topic/writing-web/>

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**Itching for a comprehensive and official overview of Plain Language?**

* <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/FederalPLGuidelines/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf>

**Need research-based guidelines and tips on “writing for the web?”**

* <https://www.nngroup.com/topic/writing-web/>

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