

## Plain English tips

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Always imagine yourself in your reader's shoes when you write ask yourself:

- Are they going to understand what you want them to?
- Will they want to bother reading your information?

### Remember to

1. **Avoid jargon**  
If you must use technical terms explain them
2. **Remove any ~~extra unnecessary~~ words that ~~you are using that~~ don't explain your point**  
Keep it concise
3. **Always DUAAF**  
Always Describe Unfamiliar Abbreviations and Acronyms in Full (DUAAF)
4. **Avoid Latin and French phrases**  
Par exemple, inter alia Non!
5. **Keep to 15 to 20 words per sentence**  
Long sentences are difficult to understand Short sentences are clearer
6. **Keep paragraphs short**  
Stick to one idea per paragraph
7. **Be consistent with important terms**  
Avoid inconsistent words from the start/beginning/outset
8. **Take care with emphasis**  
MAKING THINGS ALL CAPITALS, **making phrases all bold**, or *making things all italics* or underlining **is distracting It takes *people longer to understand* the information NOTHING STANDS OUT ANYMORE ANYWAY**
9. **Use headings to break up text**  
Headings help people navigate and act as signposts explaining the key points for your topic
10. **Bullet lists of information**  
This formatting makes key points:
  - distinctive
  - easy to scan by eye
  - understood quickly
11. **Use short words rather than long ones**  
Don't use complicated words when a simple one will suffice do

**12. Use positive language**

“Remember, you can enter this competition if you live in the UK” *not*

“Don’t forget, you can’t enter this competition if you live outside the UK”

**13. Use active verbs**

“The cat sat on the mat” not “The mat was being sat on by the cat”

**14. Don’t use abstract nouns**

“This tool analyses and solves the problem” not “This tool gives an analysis of the problem and offers a solution”

## CHECKLIST: REVIEW YOUR WRITING

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### Your document overall

- ☐ the main messages is obvious
- ☐ it is simple, clear and concise
- ☐ any processes and/or calls to action are easy to follow

### Your document structure

- ☐ concise and meaningful title or headline
- ☐ summary or key point follows title or headline
- ☐ content organised in a logical sequence for the reader
- ☐ each paragraph explains one point
- ☐ short paragraphs
- ☐ subheadings and short lists break up solid text
- ☐ sections flow from one to another

### Your sentences

- ☐ short sentences
- ☐ no extra unnecessary words
- ☐ mainly active verbs ("i saw the cat" not "the cat was seen by me")
- ☐ only one main idea in each sentence
- ☐ bullets for lists rather than sentences

### Check your words

- ☐ correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- ☐ words that are common, simple, and familiar to your target audience
- ☐ no jargon (note: technical terms are ok for a technical audience)
- ☐ explanations for acronymns and abbreviations
- ☐ no tired, old, clichéed phrases
- ☐ no latin and french
- ☐ consistent words: using the same word for the same thing throughout the document
- ☐ few abstract nouns, eg words ending in -ment, -tion, -ance, -ence, -ancy, -ency, -ity, -ism
- ☐ words positive in meaning and tone

### Check readability

- ☐ visit [www.read-able.com](http://www.read-able.com)
  - copy and paste in your text
  - analyse it
  - check the flesch kincaid reading ease index\* is more than 60%

*\* this index represents the percentage of adults who should understand your text easily*

### Check design

- ☐ consistent, neat and well-organised layout
- ☐ plenty of white space (in margins, between paragraphs, between lines )
- ☐ font that's big enough to read

- ☐ font face that's easy to read
- ☐ sufficient **colour** contrast
- ☐ limited USE **OF EMPHASIS**

## Wordiness checklist

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Check and see if you are tempted to use any of these phrases in your writing. You can replace them with their shorter alternatives.

- ☐ a number of: *some, many*
- ☐ afford an opportunity: *allow, let*
- ☐ an appreciable number of: *many*
- ☐ as a means of: *to*
- ☐ as prescribed by: *in, under*
- ☐ at the present time: *now*
- ☐ by means of: *by, with*
- ☐ comply with: *follow*
- ☐ due to the fact that: *because, due to, since*
- ☐ during the period of: *during*
- ☐ for a period of: *for*
- ☐ has a requirement for: *needs, requires*
- ☐ have an adverse effect on: *hurt, set back*
- ☐ in a timely manner: *on time, promptly*
- ☐ in accordance with: *by, following, per, under*
- ☐ in addition: *also, besides, too*
- ☐ in an effort to: *to*
- ☐ in close proximity: *near*
- ☐ in lieu of: *instead of*
- ☐ in order for: *for*
- ☐ in order that: *so*
- ☐ in order to: *to*
- ☐ in regard to: *about, concerning, on*
- ☐ in relation to: *about, to, with*
- ☐ in the amount of: *amounting to, for*
- ☐ in the event of: *if*
- ☐ in the near future: *shortly, soon*
- ☐ in the process of: *(omit without replacement)*
- ☐ in view of: *because, since*
- ☐ is applicable to: *applies to*
- ☐ is authorized to: *can, may*
- ☐ is in consonance with: *agrees with follows*
- ☐ is responsible for: *handles*
- ☐ it is essential that [one]: *[one] must*
- ☐ it is incumbent upon [one] to: *[one] should, [one] must*
- ☐ it is requested that you: *please*
- ☐ pertaining to: *about, of, on*
- ☐ provide(s) guidance for/to: *guides*
- ☐ relative to: *about, on*
- ☐ set forth in: *in*
- ☐ similar to: *like*
- ☐ successfully accomplish/complete: *accomplish/complete*
- ☐ take action to: *(omit without replacement)*
- ☐ the month (or year) of: *(omit without replacement)*

- ☐ the use of: *(omit without replacement)*
- ☐ time period: *period, time*
- ☐ under the provisions of: *under*
- ☐ until such time as: *until*
- ☐ with reference to: *about*
- ☐ with the exception of: *except*