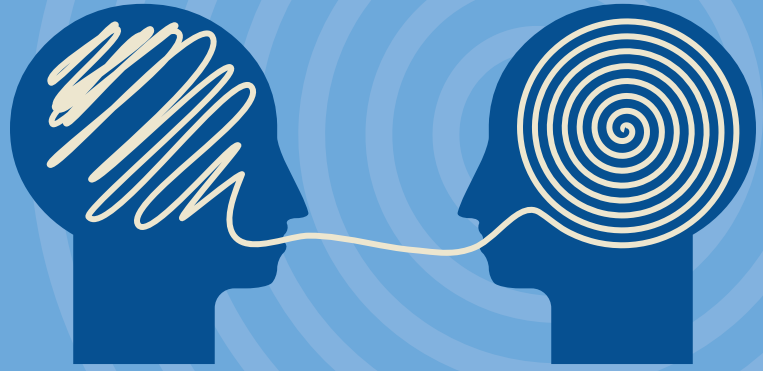


# PLAIN LANGUAGE CHECKLIST



## EIIC

EMSC Innovation and Improvement Center

### What is plain language?

Plain language is communicating in a way your audience can quickly and easily understand.

### Plain language is not:

- “dumbing down” > plain language does not neglect accuracy.
- easy to do > it requires knowledge of your subject and plain language strategies.

### Why does plain language matter?

Plain language makes communication more equitable and effective.

### **P** Purpose-oriented

- Identify and research your target audience.
- Consider your audience’s needs before deciding on messaging and format.
- Identify and emphasize a call-to-action.
- Get feedback from your target audience.

### **L** Layout & design

- Prioritize visuals and graphics.
- Use bullets, lists, and tables.
- Use headings and subheadings.
- Organize content thoughtfully, starting with basics and then getting into details.
- Use size and placement to emphasize priorities.
- Allow for ample white space.

### **A** Active

- Hook in the reader with a compelling statement, statistic, or story.
- Use “you” and other pronouns that speak to the reader.
- Use active voice.
- Use the present tense.
- Use examples to clarify concepts.

### **I** Inclusive

- Be thoughtful about your audience’s cultural sensitivities.
- Portray diversity in your visuals.
- Use person-first language.
- Avoid stigmatizing language.
- Use simple, large fonts and high-contrast colors.
- Follow accessibility best practices, like including alternative text for images.

### **N** No fluff

- Use short words, sentences, and paragraphs.
- Avoid complex, technical words and slang.
- Use contractions.
- Omit excess words, like “very” or repetitive phrases, like “join together.”
- Use free editing software like [hemingwayapp.com](https://hemingwayapp.com).
- Use free readability analyzers like [datayze.com/readability-analyzer](https://datayze.com/readability-analyzer).

Learn more at [plainlanguage.gov](https://plainlanguage.gov) or contact [communications@emscimprovement.center](mailto:communications@emscimprovement.center) for editing and design support.

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