

Plain Writing Checklist

(adapted from the Office of Personnel Management's Plain Language Implementation Plan)

Have you ...

- Written for the average reader within your intended audience?
- Organized the document to serve your reader's needs and answer your reader's questions?
- Included useful headings to guide your reader?
- Used numbered lists, bulleted lists, or tables to present complex materials?
- Used active voice?
- Written to one person at a time rather than a group?
- Used "you" and other pronouns?
- Used "must" instead of "shall" or "will" to indicate requirements, policy, or law?
- Used the simplest tense possible?
- Defined and used words consistently?
- Eliminated unnecessary and obsolete words?
- Avoided confusing words and phrases?
- Avoided technical jargon and bureaucratese?
- Limited your use of acronyms?
- Clarified ambiguities? Placed words carefully in each sentence?
- Used verbs instead of nouns?
- Created short, concise sentences, paragraphs, and sections (covered only one topic in each sentence and paragraph)?
- Made your questions and responses neither shorter nor longer than necessary?
- Hyperlinked to rather than repeated text from other documents or resources?

Source: <http://www.howto.gov/sites/default/files/plain-writing-checklist.pdf>