

Accessible Communications

Plain English principles

We are committed to improving the accessibility of communications to make it easier for people to understand and use health information. Accessible communications means ensuring everybody understands the information you are sharing. It also considers cultural or language differences which may impact a person's understanding or interpretation.

What is plain English?

Plain English uses direct, clear, and simple language to give information that people can understand quickly and easily. In Australia, it refers to writing that is equal to a year 7 level.

Why do we need to use plain English?

- More people understand what you are trying to say.
- It helps when developing and translating written text into languages other than English
- Supports the development of other communication formats such as Easy Read.

Quick tips

Below are some tips on how to make your communications easy to understand.

- Use active voice instead of passive voice. An active voice is easy to read and put into practice. For example:
 - **Passive voice:** "Membership will be sought through an expression of interest form"
 - **Active voice:** "You can sign up via an expression of interest form."
 - **Passive voice:** "Particular attention should be given to ensure people can understand and use the information in the way it was planned."
 - **Active voice:** "Make sure people can understand and use the information in the way intended."
- Use short sentences – keep it to one idea per sentence.
- Use dot points for lists of more than four ideas.
- Try to use words that have two syllables or less.
- Try not to use jargon or medical terms. If you need to use them, explain them.
- Keep the use of acronyms to a minimum. If you need use them, spell them out first.
- Use just enough words to get the message across clearly.

- Try not to use the word 'include'. It often creates a hidden or extra verb.
- Aim to write for a year 7 level.

Try using the below alternatives to make your information easier to understand

Don't write this	Try using
Access	Get/Able to get
Accomplish	Achieve
Annually	Each year
Audience	Group of people
Available	Have
Beneficial	Helpful
Bilateral	Both sides
Collaborate	Team up/Help each other/Work together
Commence	Start
Communicating	Putting
Complete	Finish
Continue	Keep on
Culturally appropriate	Culturally safe
Deepen	Grow
Develop	Create
Diagnosis and prognosis	Health condition and likely course of their condition
Duration	Length/Time
Effective	Good
Encourage	Support
Ensure	Make sure
Everybody/everyone	People/all people
Fracture	Broken bone

Fundamental	Key
Further	More
Idiopathic	Unknown cause
Illustrate	Show
Improve	Make better
Inability	Not being able to
Key considerations	Key things to think about
Laceration	Wound
Manage	Look after
Medication	Medicine
Metastasise	Spread
Nodule	Lump
Opportunity	Chance
Outcome	Result
Participate	Take part
Perforation	Hole
Permanent	Long term
Prevent	Stop further
Provide	Give/Give them/Offer/Sharing
Quarterly	Every three months
Register	Sign up
Review	Go over
Temporary	Short term
The aging population	Elderly people
Virtual	Online