



**SARTAC**  
Self Advocacy and Beyond

**SARTAC**

**Self-Advocacy Resource and  
Technical Assistance Center**

**[selfadvocacyinfo.org](http://selfadvocacyinfo.org)**

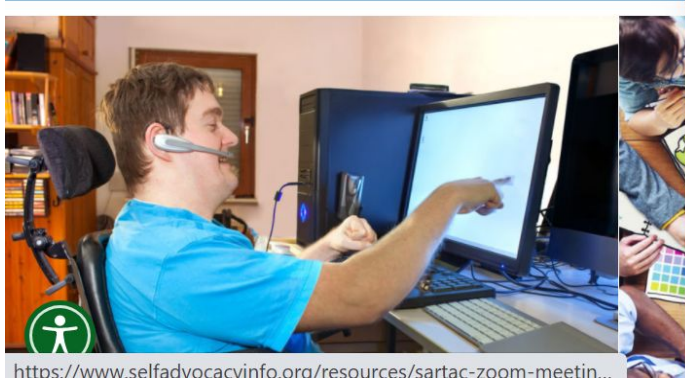
**A National Connection  
for Self-Advocates**

# [selfadvocacyinfo.org](https://www.selfadvocacyinfo.org)



Self Advocacy Resource and  
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<https://www.selfadvocacyinfo.org/resources/sartac-zoom-meetin...>

Current Issues  
Resources

Organization  
Resources

SARTAC Zoom  
Meetings



**Two Clicks - #1 Click on Resources then #2 Click on SARTAC Zoom Meetings**

# Creating Accessible Resources Overview



# Why create accessible resources?

- Accessible resources are better for everyone -- they are the clearest way to communicate information
- Accessible resources benefit people with disabilities and English language learners
- Accessible resources are inclusive
- Access is a civil right!



# Principles for creating accessible resources

- Use simple words

- For example:

These words tell a story using only the ten hundred words people use most often. Even though the words aren't hard, you can talk about hard ideas. Easy words can help you talk about hard ideas and let more people understand. You can try to do the same thing with the [Up-Goer Five](#).

# Principles for creating accessible resources

- Reduce idea density - the amount of ideas per sentence
  - For example:

**Members of Congress (your Representative and your Senators) have a national office in Washington, D.C. and one or more offices in the state they're from.**

Your Representative and your Senators are your Members of Congress.

Members of Congress have more than one office.

Each Member of Congress has one national office in Washington, D.C.

They also have one or more offices in the state they are from.

# Principles for creating accessible resources

- Cognitive accessibility is not about cutting out information, it's about conveying complex information in a simple way. For example:

## **Complex sentence**

Many autistic students have expressed difficulty accessing information regarding receiving disability accommodations.

## **Complex idea removed**

Many autistic students say it is hard to get information.

## **Complex idea explained**

Many autistic students say it is hard to get information about accommodations.

Accommodations are changes that make things easier for people with disabilities.

# Principles for creating accessible resources

- You may need to “back up” to go forward - explain background information to help readers understand your main topic
  - For example, to write in Easy Read about Medicaid, you might have to start by explaining things like:
    - What health insurance is
    - What kinds of health insurance there are
    - How the government pays for Medicaid



# Principles for creating accessible resources

- Low reading level
  - Plain language = 5th-8th grade reading level (depending on who you ask)
  - Easy Read = 3rd-4th grade reading level
- We talk about reading level using grades (“third grade reading level”).
  - We do that because it’s an easy way to measure readability. But it can give people the wrong idea.
- Lower reading levels are better for everyone, not just kids.
- We can write about complicated, “grown-up” topics at low reading levels – and we should!

# Principles for creating accessible resources

- What commonly affects reading level?
  - How many long sentences are there? (syllables per sentence, words per sentence)
  - How many long words are there? (syllables per word, letters per word)
  - Are there a lot of simple, familiar, common words? Or are there a lot of unusual, complicated words?
- These are not the only things that make text accessible!
  - You still need to pay attention to things like the structure of your sentence, active vs. passive voice, etc. But these are important things, so keep an eye on your reading level too.
- Check reading level using tools like [Readable](#) or [Automatic Readability Checker](#).
  - These websites use many different reading level tests on your writing, and show you all of the results.

### **16th grade (college) reading level**

It is a truth universally acknowledged that dogs, with their amusing antics, adorable faces, and undying loyalty, are beneficial to human beings.

### **8th grade reading level**

Everyone agrees that dogs are beneficial to people. Dogs cheer us up by acting in an amusing way. They look adorable and are endlessly loyal to us.

### **3rd grade reading level**

Dogs are good for people. Everyone says so! Dogs act silly and cheer us up. Dogs look cute. Dogs are loyal to us.

For a great explanation of reading levels and their relationship to readability, check out “What makes writing more readable?” from The Pudding:

<https://pudding.cool/2022/02/plain/>

Plain Language	Easy Read
5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> grade reading level.	3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> grade reading level
Use common words whenever possible. Define any words or terms that might be unfamiliar	
Clear, direct and short sentences	
Sentences can have more than one idea, although idea density should still be relatively low	As much as possible, keep to one idea per sentence
Can use paragraphs	Each sentence is its own paragraph
Does not need to use pictures	Each sentence has a picture next to it
Formatting should be clear and easy to understand	Formatting should include large font and lots of “white space,” with 5 or fewer sentences per page

# Plain language vs. Easy Read text

## Complex sentence

Some people with disabilities receive long-term services and supports (LTSS), such as job coaches, transportation, or personal assistance, in community settings as opposed to residential settings.

## Plain language

Some people with disabilities get **long-term services and supports (LTSS)** in the community, not in an institution. LTSS are services that help people with disabilities live our everyday lives. Some examples of LTSS are job coaches, transportation, or an in-home helper.

## Easy Read text

Some people with disabilities need **long-term services and supports (LTSS)**.

LTSS are services that help people with disabilities live our everyday lives.

Some kinds of LTSS are:

- Job coaches
- Transportation
- An in-home helper

Some people with disabilities get LTSS in their communities, not in an institution.

# Translating vs. writing from scratch

- When you write from scratch you get to decide what to include
- When you translate something that is or will be publicly available, you must include everything that is in the original
- What you *can* change when translating: can include more ideas (especially background info, definitions), can reorder information, can add infographics or icons, etc.

# Focus grouping and edits

- Why focus groups are important
  - Focus groups will help you get the best results. If you're making something for disabled people, disabled people will know best if something is unclear or wrong.
  - Nothing about us without us!



# Focus grouping and edits

- How to find focus group participants
  - Local People First chapters and other self-advocacy groups
  - State Developmental Disabilities Council



# Focus grouping and edits

- Making meetings accessible
  - Provide an agenda ahead of time
    - This lets people plan ahead for the meeting, and helps people know what is going on during the meeting.
    - You can also include questions you might ask. It can be hard for autistic people or people with other developmental disabilities to answer questions on the spot, so give us time to think of our answers before the meeting.
  - Set up accommodations
    - Accommodations are help people might need for their disability, that let everyone take part in ways that work for them.

# Focus grouping and edits

- Making meetings accessible
  - Provide all info in Plain Language
  - Start with an icebreaker
    - This is a norm in many self-advocacy groups.
    - Make sure your icebreaker is accessible: provide questions in advance and avoid questions about internal sensations, emotions, or other abstract internal experiences (e.g. “Pick one word to describe your feelings today”)
  - Include lots of breaks
    - Breaks let people rest and get ready to do more work. Without breaks, we would not get as much done. Any long meeting should have at least a 10-minute break for every hour of the meeting.

# Focus grouping and edits

- Always pay your focus group editors, and acknowledge them in your final product.
  - The job of focus group editors is specialized and difficult.

# Focus grouping and edits: How ASAN does focus groups

- We'll use Easy Read resources as an example.
  - Easy Read is primarily for people with intellectual disabilities, so we ask people with intellectual disabilities to “test” and edit our Easy Read work whenever we can.
  - Nothing about us, without us!
- Give the Easy Read resource to focus group editors a week or two in advance.
- Use a large screen or projector to show a version of the Easy Read resource at the focus group.
- While one person facilitates, another person edits the projected document in real time.
- Go through the resource line by line. If something doesn't make sense, discuss and edit as a group.

# Focus grouping and edits: How ASAN does focus groups

- Questions we ask at an Easy Read focus group:
  - Does this make sense to you?
  - Does the picture help you understand the words?
  - Are we saying the ideas in the right order?
  - Is there too much information? Not enough information?
  - Would you change anything to make this better?

# More webinars in the 2024 series on cognitively accessible formats

May 29th: Plain language

June 10th: Easy Read text

July 1st: Easy Read icons

August 5th: Formatting basics

August 19th: Office hours (group review/edit of pre-submitted drafts)

All webinars are from 4-5 Eastern time

# Thanks for listening! Any questions?



The Autistic Self Advocacy Network

<http://autisticadvocacy.org/>

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