



A National Connection for Self-Advocates



<https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/>



Self Advocacy Resource and
Technical Assistance Center

Home About ▾ Events Resources ▾ Self Advocacy Support ▾ Contact Us



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Organization
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Meetings



<https://www.selfadvocacyinfo.org/resources/sartac-zoom-meetings>



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

Apply to Be on the SARTAC Advisory Committee



Work with
George and
Juliana from
Arizona

Earn Money By Doing Plain Language Projects

This webinar was created by self-advocacy organizations. It is about how self-advocacy groups can make money

- through focus groups
- writing new documents
- translating or taking complicated information and making it easier to understand

Agenda:

- What is Plain Language? Why is it important?
- Taking Care of Business
- Using a Focus Group
- Translating or Rewriting a Document
- Creating a New Resource

What is Plain Language? Why is it important?

What is Plain Language?

- Plain Language is a style of writing that uses **cognitively-accessible** language
- **Cognitive accessibility** means that your writing is easily understandable by anybody, **including** people with different intellectual and developmental disabilities
- We'll talk about the specific features of Plain Language writing in a little bit

Why is Plain Language important?

- People with disabilities should have **equal access** to information
- You can write about any topic in plain language, even topics that are very technical or complex
- Ideally *all* writing would be cognitively accessible or have a cognitively accessible version available, but this is **especially** critical when writing on topics that **directly involve or impact** disabled people!
- Remember: nothing about us, without us!

Be prepared to explain why it is important to create accessible resources?

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



Taking Care of Business

Ask... Are we getting paid to do this work?



If someone asks you to help them with a plain language project:

- Say thanks! Tell them how important it is to include people with disabilities.
- Ask - Are we getting paid to do this? Or are you asking us to volunteer our time.

Figure Out your Rate of Pay / What to Charge

Payroll expenses:

- Make a list of the people who will work on the project.
- Ask your bookkeeper to tell you how much each person gets paid. Remember to include fringe benefits. This means taxes, health care, retirement and more. Your bookkeeper will be able to give you an hourly rate for each person.



Figure Out your Rate of Pay / What to Charge



- Consider adding an additional amount to cover costs like your office space, computer equipment or to put towards what you pay your bookkeeper. This is called **overhead expenses**. Many groups charged 10%.
- **Stipends** for people who will be in your focus groups.

Before You Decide to Do This Job Find Out:



What? Find out what do they want you to do and get it in writing!

- Get a copy of the text they want to be in Plain Language.
- Do you know about this topic? Ask yourself if you need to read anything to get ready.
- How many pages is it? Is it hard to understand?

Later – we will discuss estimating time to re-writing information...

Before You Decide to Do This Job Find Out:

Who are these people?

- Is this a group you know?
- Do you like to work with them?
- Do they believe in self-advocacy?
- Ask yourself if it is important to spend time working with these people to help them with accessible information



Before You Decide to Do This Job Find Out:

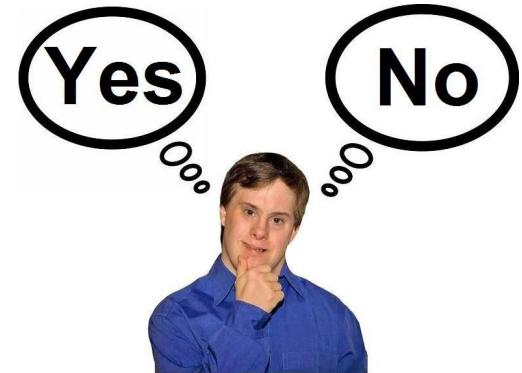
When?



- Get the date it is due
- Make a list of everything you need do.
- Estimate how many hours you will need to do everything on your list.
- What else is going on? Is your team available to work on this?

Make a Decision

- Do you know how to do the job?
- Do you want to do this?
- Are you available?
- If the topic is unfamiliar, do you have the time to learn about this new topic?
- Do you have the help you need to do this?
- Do you like working with these people?
- Is it important to self-advocacy?



Make a Decision - And Tell Them Your Answer



Get written information about the job.
You need to decide and tell people your answer
by 1 week.

Do Not Make People Wait for Your Answer.

For example, "Thanks for asking us to do this work. We will let you know by next Friday if we can do it.

If you agree to do the job - get everything in writing

Ask the people you are working for to please put all the details in writing and email them to you. Here are a few things to include:



- What they want you to do
- When it is due
- How much you are getting paid

Using Focus Groups

Why focus groups are important

- Focus groups will help you get the best results. If you're making something for people with disabilities. We will know best if something is unclear or wrong.
- Nothing about us without us!

How to find focus group participants

- Local self-advocacy groups
- Agencies who provide supported employment services
- Ideally, you want to recruit about 7 people for the focus



Make sure your Focus group is 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.

Make sure your Focus group is accessible

Set up accommodations

- Accommodations are help people might need for their disability, that let everyone take part in ways that work for them.
- Provide all info in Plain Language

Make sure your Focus group is accessible

Start with an icebreaker

- 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.

Always pay your focus group editors

- The job of focus editors is specialized and difficult. Plain language and easy-read might look easy but they're not easy to write, edit, and for some people, to read.
- Make sure you also acknowledge your focus group editors in your final product. ASAN usually puts in a page that lists our focus group editors in alphabetical order and thanks them for their work, right after the title page of our materials. Check if they want their name listed.

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 all the Easy Read resource a week or two in advance.
- Show the Easy Read resource on a screen.
- 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?

Translating or Re-Writing Information into Plain Language

Overview

1. Plain language must have the same information as the original source
2. Making a new outline
3. Make a chart or table with 2 columns. Place original text on the left and your Plain Language text on the right.
4. Defining vs. replacing terms
5. Checking reading level

Original Text

Re-Write in Plain Language

Our Covenant	Our Agreement
In our interactions with each other we agree to:	When we interact with each other we agree to:
1. Allow space for open conversations and participation.	1. Be welcoming. Make sure there is time to listen to others. Support others to participate.
2. Validate and accept other people's experiences.	2. Support and accept other people's experiences.
3. Take responsibility for our own learning.	3. If there is something we do not understand we will find out what it means.
4. Be fully present.	4. Pay attention.
5. Practice active listening.	5. Listen to what a person says. Pay attention to their body language. Provide feedback.
6. Evaluate and reflect on our own and others' perspectives before responding.	6. Think about what you say before you respond.
7. Share our truth or lived experience.	7. Be honest and willing to share our experiences.
8. Maintain a judgment free zone.	8. Do not judge.
9. Support CoP members in being brave in the expression of their feelings and experiences.	9. Be supportive when others share their feelings and experiences.
10. Seek and share new resources.	10. Find and share new resources.

Plain Language
version must have
the same
information as the
original source

Plain Language must have the same information

- It will likely have additional sentences that further explain and clarify the information from the original source
- The point of translating something into PL is to **broaden the audience that has access** to the original information, so it's important that you don't leave out certain parts.
- If you leave out some parts, you're **not giving your audience equal access** to the information.

Writing in Plain Language

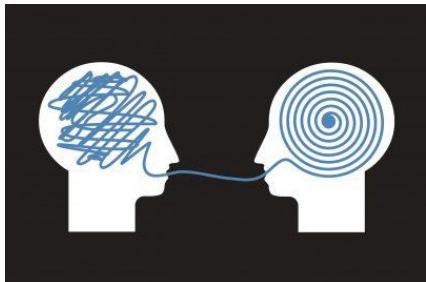
There are 8 Features of Plain Language

1. Shorter sentences & paragraphs
2. Uses more common words
3. Gives definitions for important, more complex terms/jargon
4. Uses examples to help readers understand ideas in a more concrete way
5. Avoids unnecessary information
6. Uses clear language
7. Uses straightforward language
8. Uses active voice instead of passive voice

Learn how to write in Plain Language

Review SARTAC's webinar

April 20, 2022 - Plain Language for Self-Advocates



A Webinar for Self-Advocacy Groups

Plain language writing is more accessible for people with disabilities and English language learners. Learn how to write in plain language with this webinar.

[Click here to get the handout](#)

[Click here to review the recording](#)

Plain Language writing is a skill

- It is often a skill of *unlearning*
- A lot of us have learned to write in long sentences using big words. For example:
 - Writing for school, where we learn to use a lot of words to describe things
 - Or in professional settings, where we talk about policies and use lots of initials
- Using Plain Language takes practice. Like all skills, it's one you can work on and improve

Questions?

#1: Shorter sentences & paragraphs

Guideline:

Sentences should be 10-15 words long. Paragraphs should be 5-7 sentences or fewer.

Reason:

Long sentences and paragraphs can be inaccessible to some readers. Readers might lose track of the point of the sentence or paragraph by the time they get to the end.

#2: Uses more common words

Guideline:

Use common words to explain ideas instead of more unusual words.

Reason:

Using common words makes it more likely that your reader will understand what you're saying without needing a dictionary. If your reader has to look up words in a dictionary in the middle of a sentence, their focus is interrupted. This makes reading comprehension more difficult.

#3: Gives definitions for important, more complex terms/jargon

Guideline:

When there is a more complex term that you want to keep intact for your reader, define the term and give an example if necessary.

Reason:

Giving the definition of a complex term when you use it lets the reader understand the term without needing a dictionary. It lets the reader get familiar with a term they might see in other contexts.

#4: Uses examples

Guideline:

When explaining an idea that readers might not have experience with, you can write an example about a fictional person to help illustrate the idea. Your example should be in the third-person point of view, rather than second-person.

Reason:

Examples help readers to better understand the content by “walking in someone else’s shoes”. It makes ideas more concrete instead of abstract.

#5: Avoids unnecessary information

Guideline:

Leave out any information that isn't needed to explain your main points. This applies to both sentences and paragraphs.

Reason:

Unnecessary information distracts the reader from the main points of your writing. Including unnecessary information can be confusing and make it hard for the reader to keep track of what they're reading.

#6: Uses clear language

Guideline:

Watch out for using words like “this,” “they,” or “it” when it might not be clear what or who you’re talking about. In these instances, it is better to say the subject again, or divide the sentence into two sentences.

Reason:

If the reader isn’t sure what “this”, “they”, or “it” is referring to, it can be difficult to keep track of what’s going on in the text.

#7: Uses straightforward language

Guideline:

Avoid using metaphors, sarcasm, and figures of speech like idioms.

Reason:

People with IDD may not always understand metaphor, sarcasm, or other figures of speech. Avoiding these ways of writing can make any document more accessible.

#8: Uses active voice instead of passive voice

“Passive voice” means that instead of there being a subject **doing** an action in the sentence, the subject is just **receiving** the action being done by someone or something else.

Guideline:

Use active voice instead of passive voice.

Reason:

Sentences written in the passive voice are longer and have a more complex structure. Sentences written in the active voice are more direct and easier to understand.