SARTAC

Self-Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center

selfadvocacyinfo.org

A National Connection for Self-Advocates

selfadvocacyinfo.org

SARTAC
Self Advocacy and Beyond

Self Advocacy Resource and Technical Assistance Center

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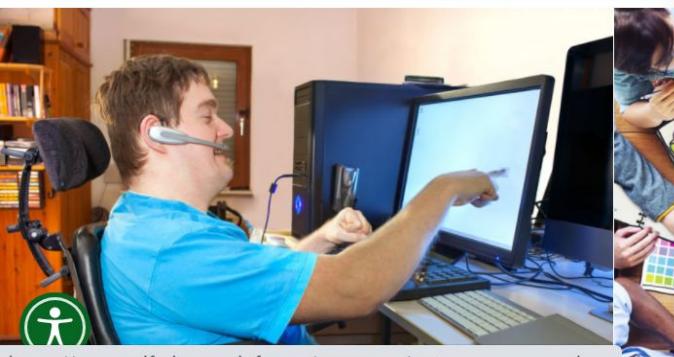
Current Issues Resources

Organization Resources

SARTAC Zoom Meetings

https://www.selfadvocacyinfo.org/resources/sartac-zoom-meetin...
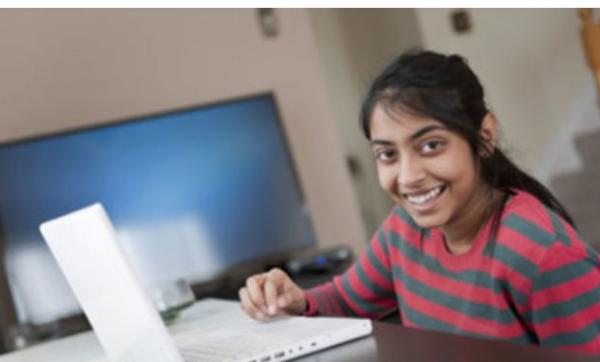
Two Clicks - #1 Click on Resources then #2 Click on SARTAC Zoom Meetings

Writing Easy Read Content

ASAN

AUTISTIC SELF ADVOCACY NETWORK

Why make accessible resources?

- Access is a civil right!
- Everyone deserves access to information
- Access helps everyone
  - Easy Read resources are more accessible for many people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, but are also helpful to people with other kinds of disabilities, English language learners, and more!
- When you make information accessible, you are including people—when you don't, you are excluding

What is Easy Read?

- A style of writing that uses clear and easy-to-understand language
  - Designed to make information accessible to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)
- Each sentence in an Easy Read document is shown next to a picture icon to illustrate the information in that sentence
- Easy Read is the best way we have found so far to make complicated information accessible to people with IDD
- Easy Read has been used in New Zealand, Australia, and the United Kingdom for longer than it has been used in the United States.
  - But by now, many organizations in the U.S. and internationally have done Easy Read work

What is Easy Read?

Original 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.

Easy Read

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.

Plain Language vs. Easy Read

Plain Language

Jack was a farmer who lived with his wife and children. One day, someone stole their cow, which made the children upset.

Easy Read

Jack was a farmer.

He lived with his wife and children.

One day, someone stole Jack's family's cow.

The children got upset that their cow got stolen.

How do I write in Easy Read?

Create an outline

- Figure out your main idea and where you need to expand your content
- Include background information so everyone starts with the same knowledge
- Split your content into sections
  - Reinforce the main ideas
  - Make the amount of content less overwhelming
- Frame each section as a question that you hope to answer within your writing
- If you're writing a document on housing policy and you have a section on affordable housing, part of an outline might look like this:
  - What is affordable housing?
    - What does "affordable" mean?
    - Who makes affordable housing?
    - Who can get affordable housing?

Passive vs. Active Voice

- Avoid using passive voice in your Easy Read writing
- 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.
- Active voice is better for accessibility, because it is clearer and more direct.
- For example:
  - **Active voice:** You want to avoid using passive voice in your writing.
  - **Passive voice:** When writing, passive voice should be avoided
- Use the "by zombies" test to figure out whether a sentence is active or passive voice.

Straightforward language

- Use straightforward language
- Watch out for using words like "this," "they," or "it" when it might not be clear what or who you're talking about
  - It is better to repeat the subject: "Elections are complicated. Elections are important."
- Avoid metaphor, sarcasm, or other figures of speech
  - If you do use them, just clarify what the figure of speech means
- For example:
  - **Original text**: The brain of someone with ADHD is like a wild horse.
  - **Reworded text**: People with ADHD sometimes feel like their brain is "hard to steer." They feel like using their brain is like riding a wild horse.

Repetition

- Repeating the main ideas can be helpful for writing in Easy Read
- Reminders can help readers better connect to different chapters/sections of your document
- Reminders also give a clear message that is more likely to be remembered once someone finishes reading the document
- Remember, "going backwards" by reinforcing these ideas can help you move forward in the Easy Read process!

Define terms

- Define terms specific to the topic of your document using accessible language
  - For example, in a document about Medicaid, you would need to define the word Medicaid
- Defined words should appear in bold the first time they are defined
- Put all definitions in a glossary
  - We call this section "Words to Know", and put this list at the front of our Easy Read documents so people can read them before the main paper
- For the most important terms, use repetition within the document to remind readers of these definitions

Bulleted lists

- You can use bulleted lists to organize ideas
- Bulleted lists separate ideas, add space, and use more pictures
- Some people avoid bulleted lists because they make the document longer
  - ASAN usually avoids numbered lists for this reason, unless we are talking about specific sequence of events

Original sentence

Some examples of public places are a hair salon, a restaurant, or a movie theater.

Reworded sentence

Some examples of public places are:

- A hair salon
- A restaurant
- A movie theater

Using examples

- Using many examples is common in Easy Read
- Examples help readers understand the content by making ideas more concrete instead of abstract
- Do not make examples too long. Readers might forget parts of the example story before it is finished. You can create 2 hypothetical people to compare scenarios. Or, you can add short sections between examples to separate ideas.

Using examples

- In the example below, "homelessness" should be defined earlier for this example, but adding that Jim doesn't know where he can sleep also helps remind readers of what "homeless" means
- Using a third-person example instead of a first or second makes things clearer

Original sentence

If you were homeless, you might try and call the local shelter, but they might not have a bed for you.

Reworded Sentence

Jim is homeless.

He does not know where he can sleep tonight.

He tried to call the local shelter.

But the shelter did not have a bed for him.

Checking reading level

- ASAN aims to write our documents between 3rd–4th grade reading level
- Avoid using longer words where simpler ones will do
- Be mindful of sentence length
- Check the reading level of a document with websites like Hemingway, Readable, and Automatic Readability Checker
- Temporarily replace predefined words that would "throw off" the score
  - For example, if you defined the term "housing insecurity" the first time you used it, you should it with a shorter placeholder word, so that the phrase will not get flagged every time.
  - You should also take out words your audience already knows, like "disability"
- Check small sections at a time, rather than the whole document

Checking reading level

- Using less complex words does not mean you cannot talk about complex ideas
- 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. You can talk about things like how people get the help they need, problems that people deal with, things that people need to be able to go to school and work, and more! 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](#).

Translating Documents into Easy Read

Starting from the original document

- Your Easy Read document must have the same information as your original document
  - You can change the order of ideas, the words you use, and other things about your writing. Easy Read was created to make sure people have equitable access to information.
- Break down the document into smaller parts and start with an outline
  - This can help you figure out if you need to change the order or the framing
  - It can also help you figure out what ideas you need to flesh out or separate into more sentences
- Think about which terms in your original document should be defined vs. replaced

Defining words

- Define words that show up often in the field you're writing about
  - For example, if you're talking about housing policy, you might define "affordable housing"
- Replace less common jargon
  - For example, if you're talking about natural disasters, you could replace "emergency management" with "dealing with an emergency." Then, you could define what an emergency is in the context of a natural disaster.
  - Keep in mind that in some cases, like this, shorter sentences are not always better. Even though "dealing with an emergency" is more words than "emergency management", the wording is more accessible.

Make sure Easy Read has the same information

- All publicly available versions of a document, complex and Easy Read, must have the same information
  - ASAN releases all versions of our documents at once to make sure they're uniform
- Compare both versions to make sure they have the same information
- When making an Easy Read version of an existing document, do not remove information
- When making both versions together, you can remove information to make it more accessible as long as you remove it from both versions
  - For example, let's say you are translating an unpublished resource about how dogs evolved. If there is a long section comparing dogs to cats, you might remove that from both. You should leave in a section about how dogs developed from wolves because people need to know about that to understand dog evolution.

Summarizing

- Organizations without the resources to translate their documents into Easy Read could write an Easy Read summary
- Summarizing means cutting down the content of your document to a paragraph or two, similar to an abstract in other papers, but put into Easy Read format
- An Easy Read summary is not equal access
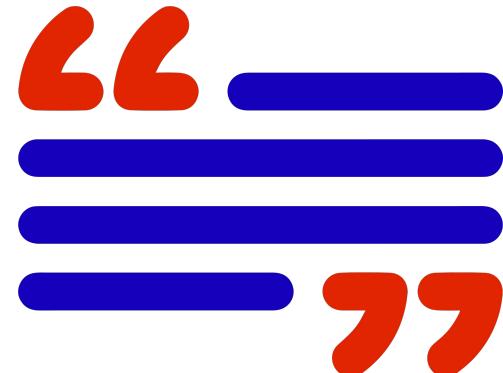
What does writing Easy Read content look like?

Original sentence

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

Drafts

1. Many autistic students say it is hard to get information.

2. It has been said by many autistic students that getting information about accommodations is hard.

3. Many autistic people say it is hard to get information about how to get accommodations for their disabilities.

Final Easy Read sentences

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

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

Exercise 1

Some people communicate in ways that are not speech, such as through pointing at pictures or typing on an iPad.

Exercise 2

One difference between part-time and full-time jobs is that full-time jobs have to offer employees health insurance, while part-time jobs do not.

Exercise 3

When I met with a representative from the California Department of Education, they told me about their plan to stop requiring certain standardized tests.

Upcoming Webinars

Mon, Jul 1 4:00 PM - 05:00 PM ET - Easy Read icons

Mon, Aug 5 4:00 PM - 05:00 PM ET - Formatting basics

Mon, Aug 19 4:00 PM - 05:00 PM ET - Office Hours

Thanks for listening! Any questions?

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network
http://autisticadvocacy.org/
Twitter: @autselfadvocacy   Facebook: /AutisticAdvocacy/