

Let's talk about plain language

Plain language is communication that puts the readers first.



A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure and design are so clear that the intended readers can easily:

- find what they need,
- understand what they find, and
- use that information.

Source: [The International Plain Language Federation](#)

Plain language matters

Everyone benefits from communication that is clear and easy to understand. Using plain language helps people to understand information the first time they read or hear it.

The four principles of plain language are important. Information should be:

1. Relevant
2. Findable
3. Understandable
4. Usable



The Adult Literacy for Life programme office offers a short free online course on plain language.

www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/aware



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Using plain language helps everyone.

Tips for using plain language



Tip 1	Tip 2	Tip 3
When writing	When online	When speaking
5 guidelines: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Think of the person you are writing for.2. Use the active voice where possible.3. Use the simplest and clearest language possible.4. Be consistent with terms.5. Keep sentences short.	It is good to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Break text into chunks.• Use headings and subheadings to help your readers scan it.• Keep content clear and concise.• Present information in order of importance.	4 guidelines: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Introduce yourself.2. Speak clearly and slowly.3. Use other methods of communication to support what you are saying.4. Ask open-ended questions.

More information

Writing and design tips booklet

www.nala.ie/publications/writing-and-design-tips/

More information

The Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach

<https://universaldesign.ie/communications-digital/customer-communications-toolkit-a-universal-design-approach>

More information

HSE National Healthcare Communication Programme

<https://www.nhcprogramme.ie/>

Find out more on the website: www.adultliteracyforlife.ie
For plain English training or editing contact www.nala.ie