

Plain Language



Plain Language is important as a disabled professional because the purpose of this translation is to break all context down to help everyone understand the content, no matter the individual's comprehension level. This skill will give everyone knowledge about the world around them, by having this writing tool.

Plain Language was started by a movement that came from advocates going to Washington D.C. and showing them that people with disabilities, specifically people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), are educated enough to understand the voting ballot. What they didn't understand was some of the verbiage on the ballot and the amendments being voted. President Barack Obama signed the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (H.R.946/Public Law 111-274) on October 13, 2010.

The five most used steps to construct a complex sentence into plain language:

1. Define the target group who will use the documents.
2. Structure the content to guide the reader.
3. Write short but logical sentences; leave out words that will distract the reader.
4. Use information design to help readers see and understand (i.e., icons and pictures).
5. Work with the target user groups to test the design and content for editing suggestions.

Translating sentences into Plain Language format:

- All sentences are written at a 6th grade level or lower.
- Try to find out who will be in your audience. This is extremely helpful when you want to keep the audience's interest and at the same time write content that remains at grade level.
- Please remember not to use slang words and idioms. For Example, Epic, Lit, or "low key." These types of words and phrases can cause confusion.
- Use common words whenever possible. Define the word when it's not possible to replace the word with a common word. Clear short sentences are best.
- Test your assumptions: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/test/>.

The following sentences are written at 6th grade level or below:

1. Water freezes into ice when it gets cold.
2. Birds build nests in trees to lay their eggs.
3. Bees collect nectar from flowers to make honey.
4. The moon orbits around the Earth.

How to Advocate for Plain Language:

- Express how it will benefit you and a wide range of people.
- Explain the history behind how Plain Language started, which will grab people's attention.

After an individual feels comfortable translating text into this format, there are many things they can do to assist their community. For instance, translate policies for local nonprofits, or work in an office that works with the disabled population.

References

[President Obama Signed the Plain Writing Act Plain Writing PlainLanguage.gov](#)
[Center for Plain Language](#)

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