

# Clear Writing for Inclusive Communication

By The Clarity Editor

Sound smarter & get your message across.

## Plan & organize it

### KNOW WHOM YOU'RE WRITING FOR

Who is your audience? What do they know/not know? What do they want to know?



### KNOW YOUR MESSAGE

What do you want your readers to know/feel/do? If you don't know, no one will. (Practice: write it in a tweet.)

### CHOOSE WHAT TO INCLUDE/EXCLUDE

Space is precious. Think of what **must** go in and what to keep out.

### ORDER: PUT IMPORTANT INFO FIRST

Give your busy reader the important info first. Order the info in a logical way or to tell a story.

## Choose your words

### USE SHORT, PLAIN WORDS

Don't try to sound sophisticated. Use short, everyday words, like *start* (not *initiate*) or *use* (not *utilize*).

### AVOID JARGON & ABBREVIATIONS

If you must use them, explain what they mean (in plain words, if possible). Also avoid slang and cultural references.

### USE SHORT SENTENCES

Aim for an average of 15-20 words per sentence—some longer, some shorter.

### SAY "WHO" IS DOING "WHAT"

Make it clear *who* is doing *what* (active voice helps). And find the actions that are hidden in nouns: instead of *hold a discussion*, write *discuss*.

## Design it for readability

### USE DESCRIPTIVE SUBHEADINGS

Let your readers get the key info by skimming your headings. Use statements as headings, not just labels ("Introduction" is a label).

### USE WHITE SPACE

"White space is thinking space." Be selective what to put in your precious space. Don't make it overwhelming.

### THINK OF COLOR

Use color with intention. Don't rely only on color to convey meaning. Also make the contrast strong between text and background so it's readable, even if printed in black and white.

### LIMIT YOUR FONTS

Pick readable fonts. Stick to two different types at most, unless you know what you're doing.

## RESOURCES TO START WITH

Plain language & inclusive copy  
[Plain English Campaign](#) (free guides).  
[PlainLanguage.gov](#) (guidelines).  
[How to write inclusive copy](#) (Crescendo).



### Accessibility

[Accessible Communications Guidelines](#) (PRCA).

### Design

R. Williams. 2014. *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).  
[Fundamental design principles for non-designers](#) (Mészáros).

## FOR MORE TIPS & RESOURCES

[TheClarityEditor.com](https://TheClarityEditor.com)

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