Some Plain Language References

FAA Plain Language Order
(Writing Standards)
http://tinyurl.com/6qzldy

Plain Language handbook
for FAA writers
http://tinyurl.com/yelapgf

Plain Language: A Handbook for
Writers in the U.S. Federal Government:
http://tinyurl.com/68jgs8

Plain Language Guidelines for the
Federal Government:
http://tinyurl.com/6qg99k

Making Regulations Readable:
The Federal Register
http://tinyurl.com/68oskv

Answering the Critics of Plain Language:
http://tinyurl.com/6hmcn5

Writing Effective Letters:
http://tinyurl.com/5agjs7

Writing for the Web:
http://www.usability.gov
http://www.usa.gov/webcontent

General Plain Language Websites:
http://www.plainlanguage.gov
http://www.centerforplainlanguage.org

Which would you rather read?

PLAIN LANGUAGE:

A Better Way to Write.
A Better Way to Read.

Plain Language is
★ FAA Policy
★ A civil right
★ The law

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FREE LUNCH IN THE CAFETERIA

Any person who is interested, may proceed to the dining facility where food will be served to them without need of purchase!
**Before You Write**
- Know your audience and your purpose
- Write to each audience separately
- Write for your reader, not for everyone
- Think clearly, then write plainly

**Your Reader Says**
- Tell me what I need to know
- Write to me, not to a group
- Anticipate my questions
- Don’t confuse me

**Your Goals**
Help your readers:
- Find what they need
- Understand what they find the **FIRST** time
- Use what they find

**Your Values**
- Challenge every word
- Simple and less are better
- Make it readable **and** understandable
- Don’t dumb “down:” clear “up”

**Format Tools**
- **Short Sentences:** average 15-20 words
- **Headings:** question, topic, or statement
- **Tables:** columns and rows of information
- **Relevant Illustrations:** “can be worth a thousand words”

**Word Tools**
- **USE**
  - **Everyday Words:**
    - Due to the fact = Because
    - In the event of = If
  - **Pronouns:**
    - I, we, you, they, their, etc.
  - **Active Voice:**
    - NO = The candle was jumped over by Jack.
    - YES = Jack jumped over the candle.
    - NO = The tank was checked by the pilot.
    - YES = The pilot checked the tank.
  - **Active Verbs:**
    - Conduct an analysis = analyze
    - Provide assistance with = assist
    - Give consideration to = consider
  - **Present Tense:**
    - The cost is $10, not,
      The cost shall be $10
  - **Contractions:**
    - we've, you'll, etc.

- **AVOID**
  - **Acronyms/Abbreviations:**
    - The #1 reader complaint
  - **Modifiers:** “totally” unrealistic, “completely” dead
  - **Doublets:** “null and void,” “rules and regulations”
  - **Noun Strings:** “contract fee level test procedure”
  - **Jargon:**
    - Obtain assistance consistent with your requirements = get the help you need (explain technical terms)
  - **Shall:**
    - (“shall” imposes no legal obligation on the reader) instead of “shall,” use:
      - Must = mandatory
      - Must not = prohibited
      - May = optional
      - Should = recommended

**Plain Language**
- **Gives you more**
  - comprehension and compliance
  - customer satisfaction
  - time and money for customers and staff
- **Does not give you**
  - Correct spelling and grammar
  - Success as a web page
  - The right emotional tone