

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>

<http://execsec.od.nih.gov/plainlang/index.html>

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

**FAA Plain Language
Program Office**

Bruce.Corsino@faa.gov

HC009871



**Federal Aviation
Administration**

**PLAIN LANGUAGE
Tool Kit**

— part of the FAA Plain
Language course

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"

Short Paragraphs: less than 7 lines
Layout: "Question and Answer" or "If—Then" formats
Vertical Lists: use chunks for long lists
Blank Space: as important as 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