

Plain English Checklist

Review a letter, leaflet, report or form to see if it uses plain English and is easy to follow.

Use the organisation checklist too.

a b c d e f
g h i j k l
m n o p q r
s t u v w x
y z 0 1 2 3
4 5 6 7 8 9

26Ten
Get the tools for life

Step 1: Think

- 1 The purpose of the document is clear to the writer and the reader
- 2 The tone is suitable for both purpose and reader
- 3 The reader is likely to be able to understand it on the first read

Step 2: Organise

- 4 Information is organised logically, with the most important points first
- 5 Paragraphs are short – average 2 to 5 sentences
- 6 Each paragraph has just one topic
- 7 Informative headings have been used to break up long text
- 8 Dot-points or numbered lists have been used for detailed information

Step 3: Write

- 9 Personal pronouns like ‘you’ and ‘we’ are used where possible
- 10 Sentences are short – average of 15 to 20 words, try not to go over 25
- 11 Each sentence has just one idea
- 12 Sentences are in active voice, except where passive voice is necessary
- 13 Words are precise, and familiar to the reader
- 14 There are no unnecessary words or phrases

Step 4: Check

- 15 Spelling, grammar and punctuation are all correct
- 16 Everything the reader needs to know is there, and no more

Step 5: Design

- 17 Layout is easy to scan and read
- 18 Font is an easy-to-read type and large enough for the intended reader
- 19 Line spacing is ideal for reading – spacing of 1.15 or 1.5