Plain Language

April 7, 2021

https://selfadvocacyinfo.org/

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What does “cognitively accessible” mean?

About thinking & understanding

Lots of people can use it, including disabled people

Something is **cognitively accessible** if lots of people, including people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, can use it and understand it.
Plain Language is information most people with intellectual disabilities can understand.

Self-Advocates are the experts.

We decide if information is in plain language.

Universities X

Agencies X

Health Departments X
Cognitively Accessible ToolkitTypes

**Plain Language**
- Important details come first
- Active voice
- Simple, familiar language
- Few acronyms

**Easy Read**
- Clear and easy to understand
- A picture for every idea
- Fewer ideas on a page
Plain Language

- Active voice (“I ate cake,” not “The cake was eaten.”)
- Important details come first
- Simple, familiar language
- Few acronyms (“developmental disabilities,” not “DD”)
- Accessible spacing (1.5 is good)
#1. Always begin by hiring people with intellectual disabilities.

#2. Often the job is to take information and re-write it into plain language.

#3. Work together.

#4. Take turns reading one sentence at a time.

#5. Ask people to say it in their own words.
Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants emerge and persist. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic.

The CDC wrote:

Viruses change all the time. For example, the flu is a virus. It changes each year. There are many kinds of COVID-19 in the United States and in the world.

Self-Advocates wrote:

1 idea in a sentence

Shorter sentences

Smaller words
Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. These studies, including genetic analyses of the virus, are helping scientists understand how changes to the virus might affect how it spreads and what happens to people who are infected with it.

A virus looks like a ball with spikes. Scientists watch for changes in the virus. Sometimes the spikes change. They want to know how it spreads. They find out what happens to people who get the virus.
The United Kingdom (UK) identified a variant called B.1.1.7 with a large number of mutations in the fall of 2020. This variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. In January 2021, experts in the UK reported that this variant may be associated with an increased risk of death compared to other variant viruses, but more studies are needed to confirm this finding. This variant was first detected in the US at the end of December 2020.

In South Africa, another variant called B.1.351 emerged independently of B.1.1.7. detected in early October 2020, B.1.351 shares some mutations with B.1.1.7. Cases caused by this variant have been reported in the US at the end of January 2021.

In Brazil, a variant called P.1 emerged that was first identified in travelers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at an airport in Japan, in early January. This variant contains a set of additional mutations that may affect its ability to be recognized by antibodies. This variant was first detected in the US at the end of January 2021.

Self-Advocates wrote:

- In the United Kingdom they identified a variant called B.1.1.7
- In Brazil they identified a variant called P.1
- and in South Africa they identified a variant called B.1.351
A virus looks like a ball with spikes. Scientists watch for changes in the virus. Sometimes the spikes change.
Has lots of white space.

Uses headings. Avoid columns.

Uses page numbers. Use wide margins.

Uses lists. Uses stories instead of graphs.

Say 4 instead of “four”.

Use “do not” instead of “don’t”.

No hyphens to split words at end of a line.

Keeps all the sentences of a paragraph on the same page.
Easy Read

- Made for people with intellectual disabilities
- Clear and easy to understand
- A picture for every idea
Easy Read

- No acronyms
- Large space between paragraphs
- Fewer ideas on a page
Easy Read icons are often metaphors

health coverage
Easy Read icons are often metaphors

run for office
Easy Read icons are often metaphors

Money Follows the Person
Reading Level: The Lower, The Better!

- Check reading level using tools like Readable or Automatic Readability Checker.
- These websites use many different reading level tests on your writing, and show you all of the results.
### Readability Rating

**RATING:** B

Download Results: [PDF] [CSV]

### Readability Grade Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunning Fog Index</td>
<td>11.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coleman–Liau Index</td>
<td>8.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMOG Index</td>
<td>10.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Automated Readability Index</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORCAST Grade Level</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Text Quality

#### Spelling Issues
- Count: 1
- Percentage: 0%

#### Grammar Issues
- Count: 2
- Percentage: 13%

#### Sentences > 30 Syllables
- Count: 7
- Percentage: 44%

#### Sentences > 20 Syllables
- Count: 10
- Percentage: 63%

#### Words > 5 Syllables
- Count: 0
- Percentage: 0%

#### Words > 12 Letters
- Count: 4
- Percentage: 1%

### Writing Style

#### Passive Voice Count
- Count: 3
- Percentage: 2%

#### Adverb Count
- Count: 8
- Percentage: 3%

#### Cliché Count
- Count: 0
- Percentage: 0%
Let’s try Plain Language

Can you rewrite this sentence in plain language?

Information concerning long-term care issues for seniors and people with disabilities has been made available on a new website developed by the County Department of Community and Senior Services.

Hint: it is okay to turn this one sentence into many sentences!
Let’s try Easy Read

How can we use pictures to make our meaning clearer?

- Medicaid is a kind of health insurance.
- Having health insurance means you don’t pay the full cost of your health care.
- If you have Medicaid, the government helps pay for your health care.

Step 1: find the **most important idea** in a line.
Step 2: brainstorm pictures that could illustrate that idea (it often helps to talk to others!)
Step 3: pick the best one you can think of.
Questions?

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Accessible Language, Plain Language or Easy Read

- ASAN – Toolkits, Easy Read/Accessible Policy
  https://www.plainlanguage.gov
- Mencap’s Make it Clear
- A Guide to Making Easy Read Information
- Guide for Creating Cognitively Accessible Language (Voting)
- We Heart Health Literacy Blog
- CDC’s Everyday Words for Public Health Communication
- Getting Your Message Across

Measure Readability

- Microsoft Word and https://readable.io

Icons and Graphics

- https://thenounproject.com