

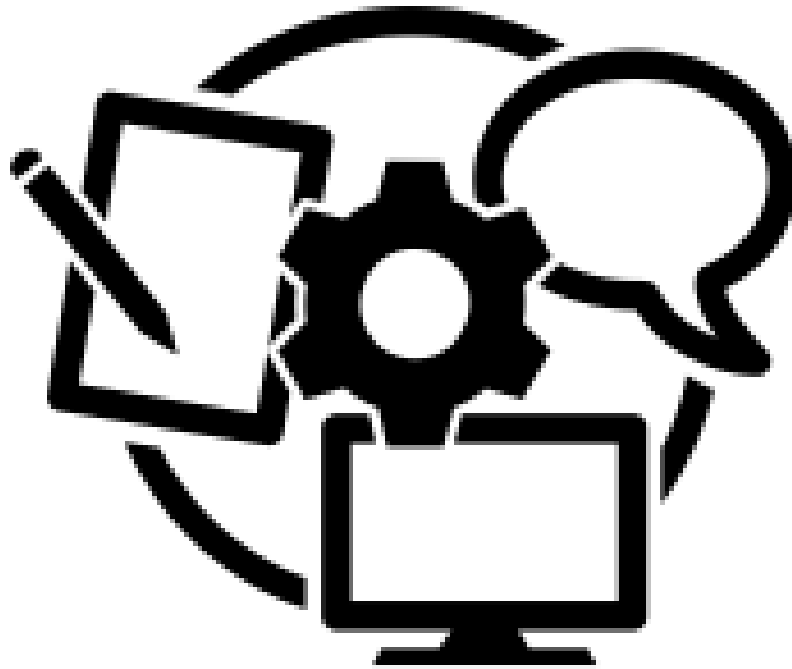


Plain Language: An Introduction

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What is plain language?



Plain language helps your readers:



Find it

Understand it

**Use it to meet
their needs**

It helps you too, with:

Customer-relations



Compliance



Content in other languages

What does your audience need?



Reading literacy affects all of us

50% low literacy!

We're all:

- Rushed
- Tired
- Multi-tasking



How do you do it?



1. Reader Focus

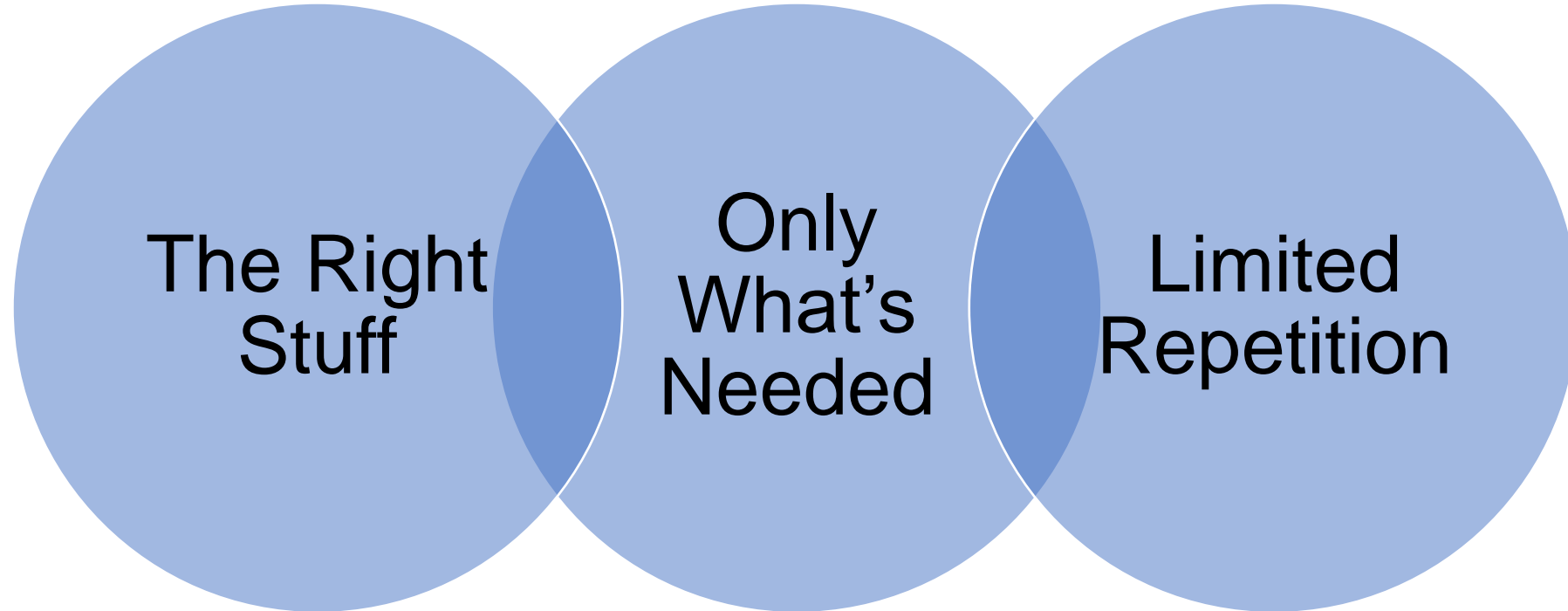
2. Common Words

3. Pronouns (You)

4. Active and Short

5. Seemingly Easy

Not “dumbed down”!



Example: the right stuff, only what's needed, limited repetition

- **Wordy, formal, not reader focused:**

In order to demonstrate sufficient teaching experience, classroom instructors must have at least 60 hours of classroom instructional experience.

- **Improved:**

Instructors must have at least 60 hours of in-class teaching experience.

Cut extra or formal words

Use common ones

- flood event = flood
- crisis situation = crisis
- cleanup effort = cleanup
- registration process = registration/register
- make a determination = determine
- in accordance with = by, per, under, according to
- in the event of = if
- with regard to, regarding = about



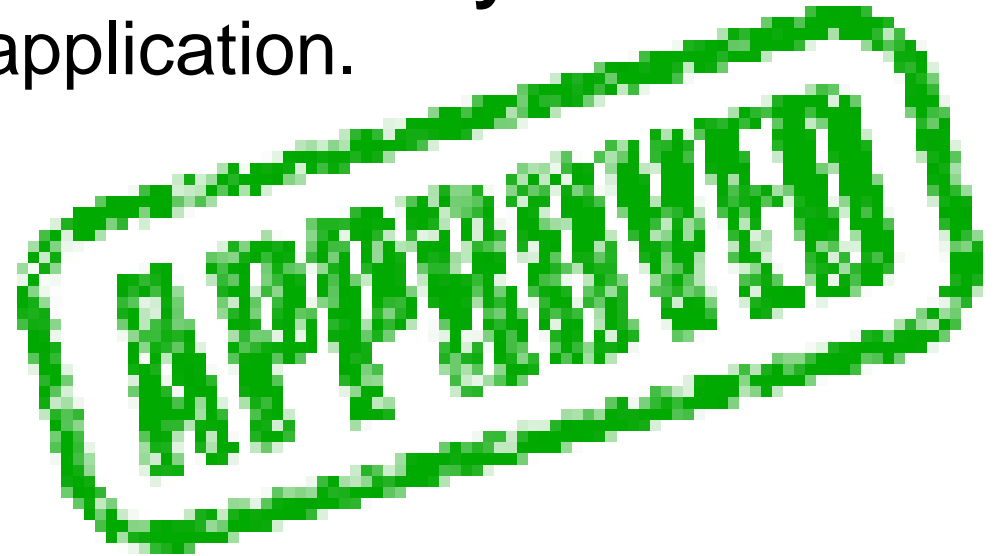
Examples: pronouns AND active

Thing focus

- Loan applications will **be** reviewed to ensure that procedures have **been** followed.

Reader focus

- **We** will review **your** loan application.



Examples: passive to active

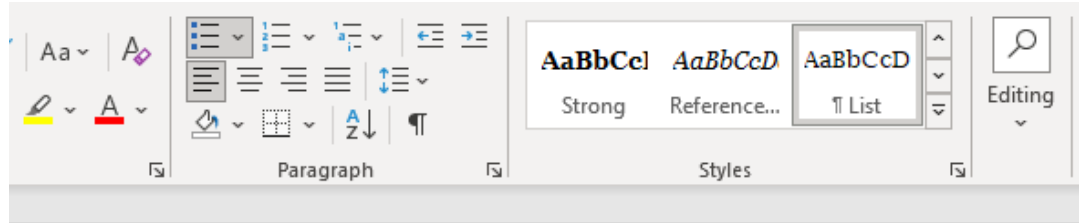
Passive

- The entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew.
- Instructions will be mailed.
- This permit shall be kept on file for six months.

Active

- The crew paved the entire stretch of highway.
- You will receive instructions in the mail.
- Keep this permit on file at your facility for six months.

Our last tip: seemingly easy



Headings

Short paragraphs

White space

Bulleted lists

Seems Easy

Introduction content

A Heading

Add a bulleted list:

- Thing 1
- Thing 2

Example: types of headings

Question

- Do I need to publish a public notice?

Statement

- Publish a Public Notice

Topic

- Public Notice

Example: does it seem easy to read?

When a new sensitive feature is discovered it must be reported to TCEQ. Protection of the feature can be accomplished by removing the sediment from the area adjacent to the feature without disturbing the feature and installing a rock berm or other appropriate BMP around the feature to control and filter any potential flows into the feature. Work must be stopped after protection for the feature is installed.

Example: bullets and...

Report any new sensitive **feature** to TCEQ. **Protect it** with the following steps:

- Remove the sediment from the adjacent area, taking care to not disturb the **feature**.
- Install a rock berm or other appropriate structure around **it**, controlling and filtering any potential flows into **it**.
- Stop work after installing the protective structure.

Online resources

Essentials of Plain Language - GovLoop Academy

<https://academy.govloop.com>

Plain Language Basics: Online Workshop – Digital.gov

<https://digital.gov/event/2020/09/10/taking-plain-language-workshop-online/>

Plain Language Is for Everyone, Even Experts

www.nngroup.com/articles/plain-language-experts/

Tips for starting a plain language program

www.plainlanguage.gov/training/tips-for-trainers