



Communication Inclusion People



Communication inclusive writing checklist¹

Section1: Writing something for others to read

1. Write down what you want to say without worrying about how you will say it.
2. Cut your message into sections, one section for each topic or point.
3. Put sections in the order people need to know them.
4. Break each section into short sentences that each say 1 or 2 things.
5. Be politely direct.
6. Use “Active” sentences.
7. Use everyday words whenever you can. Avoid jargon. Do not use acronyms or abbreviations.
8. Make hyperlinks meaningful.
9. Fix the font.
10. Layout your text
11. Add pictures.
12. Check accessibility.
13. Produce documents in Braille and large print.
14. Save your document in an accessible format.

Section 2: Asking people to write for you

1. Give people a choice.
2. Make writing as easy as possible.

For more detailed guidance read on.



Communication inclusive writing - step by step guide

Use this guide for all written communication including emails, text messages, appointment letters and cards, reports, posters, leaflets, and website content. It gets easier to apply these steps to everyday communication the more you practice. Check your writing also aligns with your organisations branding and style guide.

Section1: Writing something for other people to read.

1. **Write down what you want to say** without worrying about how you will say it.

2. **Cut your message into sections**, one section for each topic or point.

Create a main heading for the document and sub-headings for sections.

3. **Put sections in the order** people need to know them.

For example, if you are giving information about an appointment a good order is -

- Appointment title, for example “Interview”
- Day
- Time
- Place
- Who will be there
- What will be discussed or asked
- What the person is expected to do before the meeting or bring along.
- Who to contact for more information and how.

4. **Break each section into short sentences** that each say 1 or 2 things.

A sentence with a lot of “and” and “or” is probably too long.

If you are listing things, use an opening line followed by bullet points taking up one line each.

5. **Be politely direct.**

The writing style you use depends on

- your personal style
- how formal you want to be

- the audience you are writing for

It is more inclusive to:

- minimise the amount of writing
- avoid “perhaps,” “if possible,” “if that is all right,” type phrases which make for complicated and long sentences.

6. Use “Active” sentences.

“Passive” sentences are more difficult to understand. An active sentence begins with **who** is doing something, then says **what** they are doing, then ends with what they are doing it to. For example,

- Do write “The researcher will write the report.”
- Do not write “The report will be written by the researcher.”

Avoid sentences with “Ifs and buts” and text in brackets.

7. Use everyday words whenever you can.

Use the same words as your colleagues to describe things. For example, names for buildings and forms.

Avoid

- jargon and words people may not come across every day.
- long words with more than 2 or 3 syllables.
- abbreviations or acronyms.
- metaphors like “,” “blue sky thinking” or “cold feet.”

If you must use jargon, longer words or acronyms always explain them.

8. Make hyperlinks meaningful.

Give links a description. Do not just write “click here.” For example, “For more information click [Home - Communication Inclusion People](#)”

9. Fix the font.

Use good sized “Sans Serif” or “without tails” font such as:

- size 14 Arial for headings
- size 12 Arial for main text

Some people may need larger fonts. The Royal National Institute for the Blind recommends font size 16-18.

- Do not use *italics*, underlining or all CAPITAL LETTERS.
- Use **bold** sparingly to highlight key words, headings, or phrases.

10. **Layout your text**

Good layout has

- text that is left aligned rather than centred or justified
- 6-point spaces between sentences
- 12-point space between paragraphs
- text rather than tables. Tables do not work well with screen readers.
- white space and uncluttered layout
- no text overlayed on pictures or abstract designs
- clear colour contrast between the background and text. People with dyslexia prefer a cream rather than a white background.

11. **Add pictures** - photographs, cartoon drawings, icons, symbols, graphics

Pictures help readers to

- look, focus and pay attention
- understand roughly what the writing is about
- find what they are looking for quickly in the text.
- decide if they want someone to read it to them if they cannot read it themselves.

Select pictures which

- match the meaning of headings, key words or ideas as much as possible
- are easily understood by most people without a lot of explanation.
- are not very abstract or heavily stylised

Avoid a lot of pictures all over the page.

Place symbols to the left of text. Wrap “in line” with text or “square” with text.

Add “Alt text” to pictures for people who use screen readers. If people need to know what is in the picture to understand the message add a description. If they do not – mark the image as “decorative.”

12. Check accessibility

- Use [Hemingway Editor \(hemingwayapp.com\)](https://hemingwayapp.com). Hemingway gives text an accessible language score. Edit your writing to increase your access score. Or
- Use the “Accessibility checker” on your computer.
- Use the “Read aloud” function to listen to what you have written. It helps to spot complicated language and mistakes.

13. Produce your document in Braille and large print versions if requested and if it's for the public or unknown readers.

14. Save your document in an accessible format.

Protected Word documents are a good format for saving your document.

Avoid saving as a PDF. PDFs do not work easily with screen readers. If you must use PDF, make it as accessible as possible.

Section 2: Asking people to write for you

Give people a choice

Offer people options of ways they can communicate with you, so they do not need to write if they prefer not to. Let them choose another the way that works for them.

For example, offer -

- a phone call
- a face-to-face conversation

Make writing as easy as possible

If people do need to write

- provide plenty of space to write by hand
- offer support to write down what people tell you
- minimise the amount people must write by providing tick boxes.

ⁱ Communication inclusive writing checklist and guide created and published by Communication Inclusion People Community Interest Company, 2023 www.communicationinclusionpeople.com