



12 Tips for Clear Language

1. Speak directly to your reader – use “you” where appropriate
2. Use everyday words. For example, say “use” not “utilize”
3. Keep sentences short
4. Include headings in bold
5. Lots of white space on the page
6. Choose words carefully. For example, say “Bring your tickets to the event”. Not “Your tickets should be brought to the event.”
7. Clear Design
 - Choose an easy-to-read sans serif font such as Helvetica or Arial font size 14 point or larger
 - Keep background plain
 - Avoid using italics, avoid all capitals – both are harder to read
 - Underlining is for links only
 - Any lists – 5 items or less
8. Avoid jargon, and define any specific terms
9. Use the same words over again
10. Avoid acronyms (unless they are very commonly used)
11. Numbers can be tricky for some readers – tips about numbers
 - Dates – spell out the month to avoid confusion. For example, July 6, 2022 instead of 07.06.22
 - Be specific about time frames or deadlines–use dates
 - Present numbers in tables and charts, if appropriate
 - Avoid using Roman numerals
 - Check your info is accurate

12. Read your document out loud / to a friend, and ask for feedback

Cheat Sheet

Audience and Goals: Who is my audience / why am I writing?

Mindset Change: Speak directly to your reader / imagine yourself in their shoes

Structure: Write short sentences

Wording: Use everyday words

Design: Include lots of white space and put headings in bold

Review: Read it out loud

Take-Away Questions

- Did I use headings? Are they informative?
- Is it clear what the reader should do?
- Did I start with the main message?
- If I were new in the building, would this make sense to me?
 - How clear are the directions, place names, instructions?
 - Who can the reader contact for more info? Did I include a contact name and telephone number?

Source:

Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO), The Centre for Plain Language, and The Hungarian Helsinki Committee, Let's Communicate Clearly (2019).