Plain Language

What is Plain Language?

Plain or clear language means writing that is easy to read and easy on the eyes. With plain language, the meaning of a document is clear to the reader and **information is easy to find.**

Plain language:

- Keeps the reader in mind.
- Promotes open and honest communication.
- Lowers business costs by reducing errors.
- Allows businesses to improve their service.
- Reduces staff training time.
- Is clear, not condescending.
- Makes a document easier to understand without changing the meaning.

Plain language documents:

- Work better, because the reader can understand them.
- Work faster, because the reader can understand them the first time they read them.
- Is a way for a business or organization to show that they care about their employees and the people they serve.
- Save money!

"Be short, be simple, be human. "
    – **Sir Ernest Govers, author**

Clear communication has P-O-W-E-R!

P

Pinpoint your purpose and your audience:

Think about who will be reading the document, why they need to read it, how much time they'll spend reading it, and what format would work best.

O

Outline the document:

Have an introduction, a table of contents, and organized sections with most important information first.

W

Write and rewrite:

Use everyday words. If you need to use technical terms, explain what they mean. Write short sentences and paragraphs using a positive tone.

E

Enhance with design:

Show lots of white space with large margins. Try using columns. Highlight important information with textboxes, photos and charts. Use fonts that are easy to read, like Century Gothic.

R

Read, test and revise:

Read your document aloud. Ask a co-worker or a client to read it over and get their feedback. Make any changes necessary.

For more information on plain language, contact:

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