The Write Plain Language Standard

To apply the Standard to any document, first:

- list your reader(s) and describe their context and questions
- write the intended or ideal outcomes for this document.

Then mark 'Yes' or 'Needs work' against the 10 statements below.

	Yes	Needs work
'Big Picture' elements		
1. The purpose of the document is clear at the start	○	○
2. The content supports the purpose of the document	○	○
3. The structure of the document is clear and logical to the reader	○	○
4. The headings signal the key content	○	○
Language elements		
5. The paragraphs are mostly short and focused on one topic	○	○
6. The sentences are mostly short and straightforward	○	○
7. The words are precise and familiar	○	○
8. The tone supports the purpose of the document	○	○
Presentation elements		
9. The layout and presentation help the reader absorb the message quickly and easily	○	○
10. The document is error-free and consistent with your style guide	○	○

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What the Standard is

The Write Plain Language Standard is a set of 10 statements that together describe the features of a clear, reader-friendly document. The statements are consistent with the ISO Plain Language Standard (ISO 24495).

If you assess a document and get 10 ticks, chances are your document will achieve your purpose and keep your reader happy. Win–win!

The Standard works alongside other best-practice approaches for achieving clear communication, including testing with real users.

How to use the Standard

- Use the Standard as a checklist to quickly assess any document
- Adapt the Standard to your own context or add hints
- Best idea of all — adopt the Standard as company policy for all print and web documents. For a how-to primer, see *Rewrite: How to overcome daily sabotage of your brand and profit*

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How the Standard came to be

We developed the Standard over 25+ years of analysing written business communications and reviewing best practice with our international colleagues. The Write Plain Language Standard is a short version of the more in-depth WriteMark Plain Language Standard that we originally developed for practitioners.

Thoughts or questions?

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