

plain language document check

This plain language document check will help you to analyse the plain language aspects of any document. Once you have completed these questions you will know what improvements should be made to the document.

Name of the document _____

PART 1 - Who is the reader?

1. Who is this document written for?

2. Who else might read the document even though it is not intended for them?

3. What knowledge of the subject might the readers have?

4. What opinion of the subject might the readers have?

5. What is the purpose of this document?

6. Does the reader have to take any action? If so, is the action clear?

PART 2 - Plain language checklist

Place a tick (✓) in the appropriate column.

Language	yes	to some extent	no	not sure	NA
7. Is the purpose of the document stated up front?					
8. Is the information in logical order?					
9. Is there the right amount of information? (eg. not too much or too little)					
10. Are the paragraphs brief?					
11. Is there only one topic in each paragraph?					
12. Do the sentences make sense?					
13. Are the sentences short and sharp?					
14. Are common everyday words used? (eg. no jargon or archaic words)					
15. Would the reader understand any technical terms used?					
16. Would the reader understand any abbreviations used?					
17. Is the information written directly to the reader? (eg. "we" & "you" rather than "Council" & "customer")					
18. Is it written in the active voice? (eg. subject / action / object "We will reply to your application within two weeks")					
19. Is the spelling correct?					
20. Is the language gender appropriate?					

21. What comments do you have about the language in the document?

Place a tick (✓) in the appropriate column.

Design	yes	to some extent	no	not sure	NA
22. Is the print size big enough to read?					
23. Is there enough white space around the text?					
24. Are bullet points / dashes used to break up information?					
25. Are there descriptive headings?					
26. Is numbering or lettering used to break up sections?					
27. Is the typeface easy to read?					
28. Are there only one or two typefaces?					
29. Have capital letters been used sparingly?					
30. Is the right side of the text ragged?					
31. Are there 12 to 15 words on each line?					
32. Is the line spacing adequate?					
33. Is the print easy to read, eg. black on a white background?					

34. What comments do you have about the design of the document?

Extra Helpers	yes	to some extent	no	not sure	NA
35. Is there a glossary of terms?					
36. Is there a contents page?					
37. Is there an appendix?					
38. Is there a summary at the front?					
39. Are there any graphics?					
40. Are there any tables or charts?					
41. Are there any illustrations or diagrams?					
42. Has colour been used to differentiate information?					
43. Are there quotes or important information in boxes?					
44. Are you told where to get more information?					

45. What extras would help this document?

PART 3 - Comments about the whole document

46. Do you think this document is clear?

47. What would you change to improve this document?
