

The UVM Center on Disability & Community Inclusion

PLAIN LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

1. **Use active voice.** Don't let yourself get used by passive voice.

2. **Use short sentences.** Try to keep each sentence to 15-20 words.

3. **Use simple, familiar language.**

- Choose common words: "use", not "utilize"
- Aim for words of no more than 3 syllables
- Avoid jargon
- Don't use a lot of acronyms

4. **Keep it at a 6th grade level.** Use a tool such as readable.com or Yoast's [Readability Analysis](#) for measuring how complex your text is.

5. **Think about how design can make your text easier to read.**

- Make shorter paragraphs.
- Leave lots of white space for people's eyes to rest.
- Put the important information first in a paragraph.
- Use lists.
- Include headings.
- Align your text to the left.
- Choose an easy-to-read font.
- **NO PARAGRAPHS OF ALL-CAPS.** *No all-italic paragraphs.*

And finally, think about other ways to make reading your text easier and more accessible for everyone.

This can include:

- Providing both text & audio or video versions
- Providing a glossary -- in plain language
- Writing the version you're comfortable with plus a plain-language version

But most of all: get feedback from people with disabilities!