



ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST



Content Follows Plain Language Guidelines

- Use familiar, short, concrete words. “Use” is better than “utilize.”
- Stick with simple words and phrases. Instead of “disseminate,” try “send.”
- Use concise sentences, phrases, and paragraphs. “Several” is better than “a number of.”
- Use a conversational tone. Write how you talk. You’re allowed to use contractions.
- Avoid jargon and minimize abbreviations. Write for your audience by using words they’ll understand.
- Include descriptive and concise titles, headings, and links that make sense out of context. If you typed a heading on a blank page, would you understand what type of content it covers?
- Avoid duplicate titles, headings, and links. If all links say, “click here,” a screen reader user won’t have enough information to know where each link will lead or how to distinguish one from another.
Visit [Plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/guidelines/) for more information.

Use Reader Friendly Formatting

- Follow WCAG guidelines for fonts and text sizes, including:
 - Using accessible sans-serif fonts such as Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana.
 - Making text size at least 10-point for standard text. Large text is defined as 14-point or larger when bolded or 18-point or larger when unbolded.
- Use underlining for hyperlinks only.
- Limit use of italics and all caps.
- Avoid walls of text. Break up paragraphs and sections with bullets, numbers, and whitespace.
- Use built-in style features of tools like Word, Google Docs, and PowerPoint (e.g., Title, Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.).
- Follow WCAG color contrast and image guidelines.
- Meet 508 compliance standards for documents and presentations. Consult your [Clearance Officers](#) to ensure all documents and presentations meet 508 compliance.

People-first (or Person-first) Language

- Avoid using labels to define people. “People with disabilities” is better than “disabled people.” “A person with diabetes” is better than “diabetic.”
- EXCEPTION: Some prefer “identity-first” language. For example, many in the autistic community prefer “autistic” to “person with autism.” When possible, it’s best to ask.
- Err on the side of people-first language if no preference can be determined.