

# Easy English

## Writing Style Guide



## **Introduction**

- **Who is this guide for?**

Many people find it hard to read complex text.

This guide has been designed to assist you when preparing documents for people who have difficulty reading and understanding written information. The documents may be reports, forms, information sheets, flyers, brochures, booklets, and other written information. It provides you with information that you can apply to the readability of websites.

- **How to use this guide**

This guide will help you write information that is easy to understand. You need to check that the information you write follows the guidelines set out.

## Contact details

### Communication Resource Centre - Scope

Address: 830 Whitehorse Road.  
Box Hill, Victoria. 3128.

Phone: (03) 9843 2000

Fax: (03) 9843 2033

Toll free: 1800 888 824

Web site: [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

Email: [crc@scopevic.org.au](mailto:crc@scopevic.org.au)

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## 1. Before you start

Ask yourself:

- **Who is the target audience?**
- **How much information and detail is needed?**

Keep it to the minimum.

- **What type of written information is it? For example, flyer, brochure.**

- For **information sheets or flyers** use one side of the page. This makes it easy to know what to read first.
- For **brochures** use A4 or A3 size paper that opens once. This makes it easy to find the information.
- For **booklets** use a ring binder or spiral bind to hold the document together. This makes it easy to turn the pages.

## 2. Title

- Always use a title.
- Make the title clear and simple.
- Use a title that makes the content clear. Avoid using a catchy marketing phrase.

## 3. Contents – ‘in this book’

Make a list of what is in the document.

Include:

- Who the document is for.
- How to use the document.
- Where to get extra help to read the document.
- Use an index (if needed).
- Use a glossary (if needed).
- Give information about other formats and languages. Put this information inside the front cover.

Put:

- Date and year of publication.
- Where to find the original document.
- Contact details on the back page. Include names, phone numbers, fax numbers, TTY numbers, email and website addresses.

## 4. Layout

- **Margins**

Use wide margins, at least 2.5 cm wide.

- **Left Justify**

Line up all text to the left, including headings.

Do **not** centre text

- **Spacing**

Use extra space between lines and sentences. Double spacing is easy to read.

Increase space between numbers. For example, 6 and 8 .

- **Emphasis**

- Use the **bold** function for important words or phrases.

Use a box to highlight information.

- Use lower and upper case.
- DO **NOT** USE UPPER CASE ONLY.
- Do *not* use *Italics*.
- Use the underline function for websites only.

For example: [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

- **Length**

- Use 50-60 characters per line.
- Complete words on the line they start on.
- For example, write communication **not** communication.
- Finish a sentence on the page it starts on.

## **5. Inside the document**

- Use headings.
- Use dot points or numbers.
- Write only the key points.
- Present information in a sequence of clear steps.
- Sequence information from left to right.
- Do **not** use columns of type.
- Make sure the page numbers use the same size font as the writing in the document.

## **6. Size of writing**

- Font  
Use Arial, Verdana, Tahoma or Helvetica font.
- Font Size  
Use font size 14.

For brochures, information sheets and flyers use a font size of 16 or a font size of 18.

Use much larger font for posters.

## 7. Easy to read

- Use clear, simple language. Do **not** use slang.
- Use one idea per sentence.
- Use short sentences.
- Use direct language. Address readers as 'you'.
- Use clear examples that highlight the point you are making.
- Use active **not** passive sentences. For example, 'The girl kissed the boy.', **not** 'The boy was kissed by the girl.'
- Name the person first, then describe them. For example, 'a person with autism', not 'an autistic person'.
- Use full names. For example, 'street' not 'st.'
- Do **not** use acronyms or contractions of words. For example, write 'it is' **not** 'it's'.
- Use pictures, logos or photographs to add meaning to the text.
- Use numbers, for example 2 14 . Do **not** use words for numbers, for example, two.
- Keep punctuation marks to a minimum.

### Activity

Try to write these examples in less complex words

1. Ensure appropriate planning.....
2. Develop a package of useful ideas.

See page 17 for answers

## 8. Use of images

Read the book '**Images for Easy English**' for more information.

'Images for Easy English' is available from [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au).

- Use an image on the title page to represent what the document is about.
- Use colour pictographs (if needed).
- Put extra spacing between lines of writing with images.
- Use a plain, solid background. Do **not** use 'watermark' graphics under text.

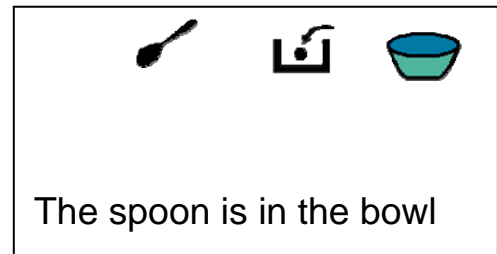
### How to use images

- Use images sparingly.
- **Only** use images to illustrate key points or the main idea in a paragraph.
- Do **not** use an image for every word in the document.
- Use the same image for the same concept throughout the document.
- Use an image that accurately shows the idea in the text.
- Use an image that is appropriate for your target audience.
- Present writing and pictographs from left to right.

Example 1:



Example 2:



### What images can you use?

- Pictures, pictographs, logos and photographs can add meaning to the document.
- Pictures, pictographs, logos and photographs can also make the document interesting and attractive to the reader.

## Pictographs

A pictograph is a visual image. The image can be used to represent a concept, idea or written word. For example - bank:



## Logos

- Use appropriate logos, as required.
- Check with the owner of the logo for their style guide (the rules for using their logo).

For example:



## Photographs

- Use clear photographs.
- Remove background and foreground clutter.
- Make the item/s in the photograph the main part of the photograph.
- Use a clear background screen when you take photographs of objects.
- Reduce glare and reflection from surfaces.



### **Check you have chosen the best images.**

Cover your writing.

- Do the images make sense visually, without the writing?
- Do the images represent the idea or concept being discussed?
- Will the person reading the document be able to relate to the images from their life experiences?

## 9. Use of Colour

- Use high contrast colours. Usually use dark colours for the writing such as:

Yellow and blue

Or

Black and white

**Make white writing big and bold. Use a dark background.**

- Highlight headings with colour.
- Do **not** overuse bright colours.
- Do **not** use a lot of different colours in the one document.

## 10. Paper

- Use heavy-weight paper, no less than 100GSM.
- Use matt paper.

## 11. References

The Easy English Writing Style Guide has been based on material from the following sources:

- Department of Human Services writing style guide (January 2003). Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne Victoria.
- Guidelines for making information accessible (August 2003). Communication Resource Centre - Scope, Victoria.
- Owens, J (2006) Accessible Information for People with Complex Communication Needs. AAC Sept 2006 Vol.22 (3) pp 196-208.
- Norah Fry Research Centre. [www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry)

### Answers for Activity on Page 10

There are no right or wrong answers. These are some ideas.

1. Plan to ... **Or**...Make a plan..... **Or**.....Write a plan....
2. Make a list **Or** Write a list

## 12. Resources

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Mayer-Johnson LLC

P.O. Box 1579

Solana Beach, CA 92075

USA

Phone: 858-550-0084

Fax: 858-550-0449

Email: [mayerj@mayer-johnson.com](mailto:mayerj@mayer-johnson.com)

Web site: [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)

- **Using the Internet**

Google is one of the recommended search engines for sourcing  
pictures.

Type in [www.google.com.au](http://www.google.com.au)

Go to 'images'.

Type the name of the image you want.

Check you are not breaching any copyright.