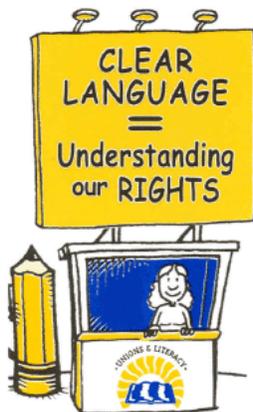


# Making it clear

## A Clear Language and Design screen and checklist



Clear language and design can help you create a usable and attractive document that your audience understands the first time they read it.



We hope this tool will help unions and other social justice groups to communicate and organize more effectively as we work toward a just and inclusive society.

# A Clear Language SCREEN



## Using the screen:

- Look at the document and review its overall appearance.
- Place the window of the screen over three or four samples of your text.



Clear language involves thinking, planning, writing, designing, testing and revising

## 1 Line Length

If your lines extend beyond the sides of the window of this screen, they are too long. Use columns or change your margins to 1.2 inches or larger.

## 2 Justification

Check the right margin of your text to make sure the lines end at different points. This "ragged right" justification helps readers follow the text. Avoid a straight line on the right or "full justification". This is harder to read because it creates hyphenation and uneven spaces between words.

## 3 Highlighting

Use larger letters or fonts, bolding and boxes to highlight headings or important text. Avoid using too many highlighting methods at once.

This screen is a quick way to check draft reports, letters and other documents printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper.

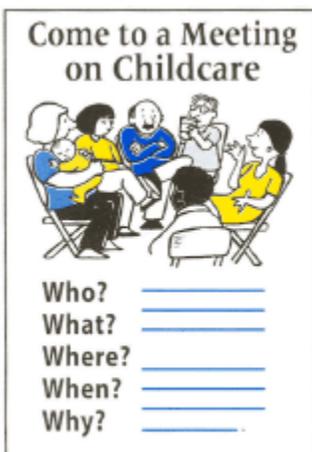
#### 4 Font Size

- Count the number of words in several sample lines. If there are 15 words or more, your font is too small.
- Count the number of text lines and spaces within the window of the screen. If there are more than 11 lines and spaces within the window, increase your font size.
- Use a 12 point font or larger.

with  
serif  
M

#### 5 Font Face

The letters in your sample should have "serifs," the little hooks on each letter. A serif font like **Bookman** or **Garamond** face is easier to read. Use "sans serif" fonts, such as **Arial**, for headings and captions.



#### 6 Text Density

White space on the page breaks up dense text and makes the content more readable. We should also have:

- space between paragraphs
- highlighted headings
- bulleted or numbered lists
- pictures.

If your sample has no white space, edit your text into shorter paragraphs.

#### 7 Pictures

Illustrations make documents more attractive.

A picture or graphic can be worth a thousand words.

Make sure pictures:

- are clear and placed with the text they illustrate
- reflect your readers and are inclusive.

# A Clear Language CHECKLIST

 Consider this checklist as you review your draft document.

## Audience

- Who do you want to read your materials?
- Why do you want them to read it?
- What do you want your reader to do after they read it?

## Content

- Will your readers be able to see how this material relates to them?
- Does it answer who, what, when, where, and why?
- Does the document contain all the information they need?



## Organization

- Is the most important information first?
- Does the introduction give a context for what follows?
- Is the information presented logically?
- Do you guide your readers through the document using headings and subheadings?
- Can readers find what they need to know quickly and easily?



## Tone

- Are you talking *to* the readers, not *at* them?
- Do you sound friendly and helpful, not bossy and distant?

## Words

- Do you see concrete, active, positive words?
- Do you use words your readers know?
- Do you explain unfamiliar words?
- Do you avoid jargon, acronyms and abbreviations?
- Do you use bias-free, inclusive language?



## Sentences

- Do you use simple sentences, with only one new item of information per sentence?
- Do you vary the sentence length, with an average length of less than 20 words?



## Paragraphs

- Do you include only one topic in each paragraph?
- Do the sentences in your paragraphs relate to each other?
- Do you use point form, question-and-answer format or lists when possible?

## Testing

- Did you test your draft material with people who represent your audience?
- Did you check for words and information that can be left out?
- Did you revise any complex sentences?
- Did you use the clear language and design screen?

The best test is to check your document with some of your intended readers.

Disponible en français.

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**Concept:** Anna Larsen, Labour Education Centre **Drawings:** Willustration **Design & Lay-out:** Irene Boucher & etc **cope 225**

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