# The Write Plain Language Standard

## To apply the Standard to any document, first:

- list your reader(s) and describe their context and questions

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- write the intended or ideal outcomes for this document

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## Then mark 'Yes' or 'Needs work' against the 10 statements below.

**'Big Picture' elements**

|  | Yes | Needs work |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The purpose of the document is clear at the start | ○ | ○ |
| 2. The content supports the purpose of the document | ○ | ○ |
| 3. The structure of the document is clear and logical to the reader | ○ | ○ |
| 4. The headings signal the key content | ○ | ○ |

**Language elements**

| | Yes | Needs work |
|---|---|---|
| 5. The paragraphs are mostly short and focused on one topic | ○ | ○ |
| 6. The sentences are mostly short and straightforward | ○ | ○ |
| 7. The words are precise and familiar | ○ | ○ |
| 8. The tone supports the purpose of the document | ○ | ○ |

**Presentation elements**

| | Yes | Needs work |
|---|---|---|
| 9. The layout and presentation help the reader absorb the message quickly and easily | ○ | ○ |
| 10 The document is error-free and consistent with your style guide | ○ | ○ |

**write**

# Write Plain Language Standard

## What the Standard is

The Write Plain Language Standard is a set of 10 statements that together describe the features of a clear, reader-friendly document. If you assess a document and get 10 ticks, chances are your document will achieve your purpose and keep your reader happy. Win–win!

The Standard works alongside other best-practice approaches for achieving clear communication, including testing with real users.

## How to use the Standard

- Use the Standard as a checklist to quickly assess any document
- Adapt the Standard to your own context or add hints — for example, next to 'The sentences are short and straightforward' you could add 'aim for an average sentence length of 15–20 words'
- Best idea of all — adopt the Standard as company policy for all print and web documents. For a how-to primer, see *Rewrite: How to overcome daily sabotage of your brand and profit*

## Your rights

# How the Standard came to be

We developed the Standard over 25+ years of analysing written business communications and reviewing best practice with our international colleagues. The Write Plain Language Standard is a short version of the more in-depth WriteMark Plain Language Standard that we originally developed for practitioners.

# Thoughts or questions?
# We'd love to hear from you

Freephone us on **0800 497 483** (in New Zealand)
or email **enquiries@write.co.nz**

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