

# What is Plain Language?

Information is all around us. Using accessible forms of communication helps all people to better understand the information around them. **Plain language** and **easy read** are two ways to make communication accessible.

## What is plain language?

**Plain language** is a style of communication that people can understand the first time they read or hear it (PLAIN, 2011). There is not one correct way to write in plain language.

What is written in plain language for one person, might not be plain language for another person. Big ideas are broken into short sentences and commonly used words when writing in plain language.

## What is easy read?

**Easy read** is another accessible way to write.

Writing in easy read looks different from writing in plain language.

Easy read uses short sentences with a picture that goes with the meaning of each sentence.

Easy read also uses spaces in between sentences to break up main ideas.

There is *only one idea per line* when writing in easy read (ASAN, 2021).

It is important to keep in mind who will be reading your writing when deciding whether to use plain language or easy read. Choose the writing style that works best for your audience.

## Easy Read Resource

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN). (2021). *One idea per line: A guide to making easy read resources*. <https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/accessibility/easyread/>

**Additional resource guides and a full list of references at <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>.** Steinbrecher, A., Fletcher, A., Cowin, A., Mallory, S., & DNEA CDS Teams. (2024). *DNEA resource guide: What is plain language*. Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.

## Why is plain language important?

Access to information is a civil right ([Public Law 111-274](#)). Being able to find and understand information is an important part of participating in the community.

Sharing plain language information and resources helps to meet the needs of all audiences.



# What is Plain Language?

## Not Plain Language

*The local artisan exhibit provides vendors with the opportunity to sell their artwork with community members and will be taking place next Friday at the park.*

This is a long sentence with many uncommon words.

This sentence is written above a high school reading level.

The most important information (event date and location ) is listed last.

## Plain Language

*The community art fair is next Friday at the park. Local artists will be selling their artwork at this fair.*

Information is broken up into two sentences.

These sentences use common words and the writing is at a 5th grade reading level.

Important information is listed first.

## Easy Read



*The local art fair is next Friday.*

There is only one idea shared in each sentence.



*This fair will be at the park.*

There are pictures to go with the meaning of each sentence.



*Artists will sell their art at the fair.*

The sentences have plenty of space between them.

## References

Plain Writing Act of 2010, Public Law 111-274. (2010).

<https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-111publ274>

Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN). (2011). *Federal plain language guidelines*.

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