

How To Communicate In Plain Language To Two Very Different Audiences

*Justice System & Public Safety Services
Study Design: 2015*

(LOGO)

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How To Communicate In Plain Language To Two Very Different Audiences

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How To Communicate In Plain Language To Two Very Different Audiences

PURPOSE

This paper is one of several public outreach documents developed to share information about Josephine County's (JO CO's) Justice System & Public Safety Services (JS&PSS) Problem/Issue (Appendix A).

What do people mean, when they say to communicate to the "public," you need to use plain language? More specifically is the task at hand for this paper, which is how will the authors explain their *Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015* project (i.e. Study Design) to the public?

It appears that each individual knows plain language when they read it because, if it is plain language to them, it is their reading level. Therefore, for the purpose of communicating Study Design to the "public," the authors must explain it to the target public audience, or audiences, at their reading level(s).

Stated another way, the authors need to develop a common understanding, and ownership, for the meaning of "plain language," for their average targeted audience's reading level.

Jon & Linda:

October 15, 2015

This very first rough draft document (i.e., about 15 pages not counting appendices) is for your review and edits. EVERYTHING IS EDIBLE AND CHANGEABLE. From my point of view the most important chapters are "Purpose" and chapter VI, Summary/Conclusion.

I believe our review and edit goal of this draft document is to develop a plan for communicating to the "public" the Study Design project in plain language. Do you agree?

It appears that each individual knows plain language when they read it because, if it is plain language to them, it is their reading level. Therefore, for the purpose of communicating Study Design to the "public," the authors must explain it to the target public audience, or audiences, at their reading level(s). Do you agree?

Stated another way, the authors need to develop a common understanding, and ownership, for the meaning of "plain language," for their average targeted audience's reading level. Do you agree?

Lots of do you agree questions? I think our job is to develop a consensus. Do you agree? Smile.

Mike :)

I. STUDY DESIGN'S TWO AUDIENCES

The JS&PSS Exploratory Committee (Committee), Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNA&HS), recognized a problem in the general writing style of Study Design being too technical and bureaucratic for the general public. This is in conflict with the major goal of explaining Study Design to the public in an understandable way.

The authors believe that there are two main audiences that they need to explain their Study Design project.

1. General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes
2. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning

In many ways Study Design was, and is, written primarily for the large private public policy foundation audience with significant technical planning language conducive to securing a large sum of grant money to fund Study Design. Just as important, perhaps more, is the fact that the owner and decision-maker audience of Study Design is the general public (i.e., the voters of Josephine County). The question is how to use a writing style that produces a more interesting and enjoyable, more informative, clearer and more understandable, and a more credible outreach to both audiences is still being pursued.

It's no secret that science has a public relations problem. Scientists and technical specialists are generally viewed as distant and competent but not warm and trustworthy. According to social psychologist Susan Fiske¹ of Princeton University, a person's perceived warmth strongly influences how much they are trusted. This presents a problem for scientists, especially in an era when funding, research impact, and science literacy rely so heavily on communicating effectively with a broader audience. Even when seeming warm and trustworthy could help their message be heard, it can be hard for scientists to shake the distant, "cold and competent" stereotype. The authoritative and unemotional way that scientists are taught to write for journal articles is not usually appropriate when communicating with a general audience. Learning the principles of journalistic nonfiction often requires scientist authors to step away from an academic writing style that has come to feel intuitive. Nevertheless, using these styles can make the scientist's work more relatable, memorable, and trusted (Burke, Katie L. July 31, 2015. *12 Tips for Scientists Writing for the General Public*. American Scientist).

Footnote 1. Susan Tufts Fiske (born August 19, 1952) is Eugene Higgins Professor of Psychology and Professor of Psychology and Public Affairs at the Princeton University Department of Psychology. She is a social psychologist known for her work on social cognition, stereotypes, and prejudice (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Glick, Peter, and Susan T. Fiske. 2001. "Ambivalent Stereotypes as Legitimizing Ideologies." Pp.278-306 in *The Psychology of Legitimacy: Emerging Perspectives on Ideology, Justice, and Intergroup Relations*, edited by John T. Jost and Brenda Major. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Fiske, Susan T., Jun Xu, Amy C. Cuddy, and Peter Glick. 1999. "(Dis)respecting versus (Dis)liking: Status and Interdependence Predict Ambivalent Stereotypes of Competence and Warmth." *Journal of Social Issues* 55(3):473-489.

II. WHAT IS PLAIN LANGUAGE? (*What is Plain Language?*)

- DuBay, William H.. 19 July 2004. *What is Plain Language?* Prepared for the Plain Language Ad Hoc Committee of the Productivity and Quality Commission, Impact Information Plain-Language Services

A. What is Plain Language?

Plain Language is language that everyone in your audience can easily understand. It helps them to read and comprehend instructions easily and to read and fill out forms accurately and completely

Plain Language means writing in a way that is easy-to-read, looks good, is organized logically, and is understandable the first time you read it.

1. What are the basics of plain language?

Adults have different levels of reading skill. The National Adult Literacy Survey shows that the average adult in the U.S. reads at the 7th grade level, with nearly 50 percent below the 6th grade level and over 80 percent below the 10th grade level (Appendix C).

Plain Language Means

1. Determine the reading level of the audience.
2. Create texts that match that reading level.

Experts recommend that documents for the general public be written at the 7th-grade level. Documents about health, medicine, or safety should be written at the 5th-grade level. Documents for special groups can be adjusted according to their reading skill and the purpose of the document. Plain language means:

1. Determine the reading level of the audience.
2. Create texts that match that reading level.

2. Why do we need plain language?

In the 1960s, consumer groups began promoting and winning legislation requiring plain language in contracts, insurance forms, and legal notices. Now, governments at every level, in the U.S. and around the world have plain-language requirements for official documents. For example, Section 6215 of the California Government Code states:

Each department, commission, office or other administrative agency of state government shall write each document which it produces in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.

The California Administrative Code also requires regulations in plain language, defined as “written or displayed so that the meaning of regulations will be easily understood by those persons directly affected by them.”

3. The Costs of Poor Writing

As much as 40% of the cost of managing business transactions is spent on problems caused by poor communications. Poorly designed forms can waste up to 28% of staff time. Eighty percent of the adult reading population cannot find consumer-health information written at their levels. This problem costs the U.S. a whopping \$62 billion a year in extra health costs.

Business and government web sites regularly present information written at the 12th-grade level and up, reaching less than 15% of their intended audience.

If you are not using plain language, you are wasting money and paying costs like the following.

- Support calls resulting from documents too difficult to read.
- Memos and business letters that require endless clarification.
- Legal notices and procedures that no one can read.
- Newsletters that reach only a fraction of the targeted audience.
- Web sites that fail to inform and motivate readers to act.

4. The Benefits of Plain Language

A plain-language program can be one of the best investments your organization can make. As part of best practices in business and government, plain language produces many benefits.

1. Reduced cost of communications at all levels.
2. Increased customer satisfaction.
3. Increased readership and understanding of documents.
3. Completion of forms on the first try. More correct information gets back to your office.
4. Reduced liability.
5. Reduced costs of customer support.

write each document which it produces in plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style.

5. Using a Readability Formula

Readability formulas have long been used by publishers, schools, and other organizations to determine the reading ability required to read a text. The most popular formulas have an 80 percent reliability. They give a rough estimate of reading level within one or two grades of the actual text difficulty.

Fortunately, popular word-processing programs such as Microsoft Word and Corel WordPerfect feature readability formulas.

B. Readability

Readability is the ease with which a written text can be understood by a reader. The readability of a particular text depends both on its content (for example, the complexity of its vocabulary and syntax) and on its typography (for example, its font size, line height, and line length).

Flesch Reading Ease Reader's Digest magazine has a readability index of about 65, Time magazine scores about 52, an average 6th grade student's written assignment (age of 12) has a readability index of 60–70 (and a reading grade level of 6–7), and the Harvard Law Review has a general readability score in the low 30s. The highest (easiest) readability score possible is around 120 (e.g. every sentence consisting of only two one-syllable words; "The cat sat on the mat." scores 116; Flesch–Kincaid readability tests. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

Score	Notes
90.0–100.0	easily understood by an average 11-year-old student
60.0–70.0	easily understood by 13- to 15-year-old students
0.0–30.0	best understood by university graduates

Flesch–Kincaid Grade Level On October 13, 2015 a Readability Test of this document, *How To Communicate In Plain Language To Two Very Different Audiences*, was determined by the authors with WordPerfect X6.

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

- *How To Communicate* 13.35
- Hemingway Short Story Grade Level 4

Passive Voice (% of finite verb phases)

- *How To Communicate* 8
- Hemingway Short Story 3

Sentence Complexity (100 = very complex)

- *How To Communicate* 39
- Hemingway Short Story 14

Vocabulary Complexity (100 = very complex)

- *How To Communicate* 41
- Hemingway Short Story 5

The follow are Readability Test analyses for two more stories: 1. Hemingway's short story

<i>Hills Like White Elephants</i> and Melville's massive <i>Moby Dick</i> . So Hemingway wrote at fourth		
		grade level, and
Hemingway's short story -	Melville's massive -	Melville at below
"Hills Like White Elephants"	"Moby Dick"	sixth grade level. Both
		have some passive
Flesch-Kincaid Grade level 4	Flesch-Kincaid Grade level 5.48	language, and both
Passive Voice 3%	Passive Voice 7%	use very simply
Sentence complexity 14	Sentence complexity 10	sentences and
Vocabulary complexity 5	Vocabulary complexity 9	vocabulary.

In summary, different readability tests like

the Flesch–Kincaid readability test above can provide a rough, but reasonable analysis of the readability of your documents after the fact.

Conclusion Summary Questions

The authors of *How To Communicate In Plain Language* accept the position that “Plain Language” means: 1. determine the reading level of the audience, and 2. create texts that match that reading level. They also agree that each of them individually could write the document to meet the needs for writing in plain language, but feel they would have different answers without a team collaboration for the meaning of plain language.

What if your audience is the general public? If the “experts” are correct that documents for the general public should be written at the 7th grade level. How do you write at the 7th grade level?

Quite candidly the authors do not believe they have the time or inclination to learn the English language well enough to apply a readability model to write a document at the 7th grade level, or any level. Smile. At this time the goal of writing in plain language to accomplish a “*plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style*” is the intuitive gut telling us to try and write it that way.

In summary, the goal for *How To Communicate In Plain Language* is plain language to the consensus level of the authors.

C. Other Plain Language Approaches Compared to *What is Plain Language?*

What is Plain Language? Adults have different levels of reading skill. The National Adult Literacy Survey shows that the average adult in the U.S. reads at the 7th grade level, with nearly 50 percent below the 6th grade level and over 80 percent below the 10th grade level (*What is Plain Language?*).

- DuBay, William H.. 19 July 2004. *What is Plain Language?* Prepared for the Plain Language Ad Hoc Committee of the Productivity and Quality Commission, Impact Information Plain-Language Services

Working with Plain Language For these reasons, experts recommend writing documents intended for the general public at the 9th-grade level, health and safety information at the 5th-grade level. Knowing the average reading level of your audience, however, is not the same as writing for that audience. That takes study, practice, and discipline. It is very difficult to write for a class of readers not one's own. One must become aware of the reading habits and the types of documents with which your audience is familiar.

- DuBay, William H. 2008. *Working with Plain Language, A Training Manual*. Impact Information. Costa Mesa, California.

Reading Grade Levels (RGL)

Level 1 - RGL 1-2

Level 2 - RGL 3-6

Level 3 - RGL 7-11

Level 4 - RGL 12-15

Level 5 - RGL 16+

According to the research:

1. **Documents written at the intermediate (9th grade) level reach the largest public audience** (emphasis added).
2. College graduates read comfortably at the 10th-grade level.
3. High-school graduates read comfortably at the 8th grade level.
4. Health and safety information as well as consent forms should be written at the 5th-grade level.
5. Nearly 50 percent of the population reads at the two lowest literacy levels, below the 9th-grade.
6. With enough motivation, people will master texts that are two grades above their reading level.
7. They will find texts that are more than two grades above their reading level too difficult. They will stop reading, without even thinking about it, and do something else.
8. People read most comfortably two grades below their reading level. The most popular books are those written at the 7th-grade level.

Rates of literacy in the United States depend on which of the various definitions of literacy is used. Governments may label as literate those individuals who can read a couple of thousand simple words they learned by sight in the first four grades in school. Other sources may term such individuals functionally illiterate if they are unable to use basic sources of written information like warning labels and driving directions. The World Factbook prepared by the CIA describes the definition of literacy in most countries as "age 15 and over can read and write." [1] The literacy rates are not completely measurable (Literacy in the United States, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

- Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Downloaded October 14, 2015 Literacy in the United States.

III. WRITING STYLE GUIDES (*Style guide* From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

A style guide is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organization, or field. (It is often called a style sheet, though that term has other meanings.)

A style guide establishes and enforces style to improve communication. To do that, it ensures consistency within a document and across multiple documents and enforces best practice in usage and in language composition, visual composition, orthography and typography. For academic and technical documents, a guide may also enforce best practice in ethics (such as authorship, research ethics, and disclosure), pedagogy (such as exposition and clarity), and compliance (technical and regulatory). Style guides are common for general and specialized use, for the general reading and writing audience, and for students and scholars of various academic disciplines, medicine, journalism, the law, government, business, and specific industries.

Varieties Style guides vary widely in scope and size.

Sizes This variety in scope and length is enabled by the cascading of one style over another, in a way analogous to how styles cascade in web development and in desktop publishing (e.g., how inline styles in HTML cascade over CSS styles).

A short style guide is often called a style sheet (emphasis added). Some examples of these industry style guides include the following:

- Oxford style and **Chicago style for general publishing and readership** (emphasis added)
- USGPO style or AGPS style for government publications
- AP style for journalism
- APA style and ASA style for the social sciences
- CSE style for various physical sciences
- ACS style for chemistry
- AMA style for medicine
- Bluebook style for law

Ironically, the Committee was using the Chicago Manual of Style for all its Study Design documents.

- The University of Chicago Press. 1969, 12th Edition, Revised. *Manual of Style*. Chicago, Ill.

IV. EVOLVING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

The Committee feels that there are two main audiences that it needs to explain its Study Design.

1. General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes
2. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning

The Committee has not attained the plain language goal for Study Design, all its supporting appendices, and outreach documents. Its evolving strategy goal is to use a plain language writing style for the general public audience's outreach documents, and a science communication writing style for the technical grant funders audience for Study Design and appendices.

As a fun thought process in the difficulty of using plain language to explain something, the authors of *How To Communicate In Plain Language*, Mike Walker, Jon Whalen, and Linda Whalen, will think about a hypothetical job from the perspective of one of their career backgrounds.

For this exercise, Mike will use one of his careers - NEPA EIS Team Leader. He will think about writing a government impact statement on Timber Management without using NEPA acronyms (e.g., FONSI, EA, EIS, NOI, BLM, USDI, etc.) or jargon, or technical silvicultural acronyms (e.g., LISS, WSCA, B/C, BIA, CFI, CFR, CFSI, CRR, DC, DBH, EA, ESA, etc.) and terms (e.g., prescription, cohort, reproduction, basal area, breast height, codominant, stand, crown, composition, coppice, dysgenic, etc.). Oh ya, NEPA means National Environmental Policy Act, and EIS means environmental impact statement.

Jon will use one of his careers - Coordinator of Grants Pass Chapter of the John Birch Society. He will think about writing a limited government safety alternative without the use of acronyms (e.g., ALG, NCCLG, etc.) or jargon related to limited government (e.g., just powers, limited government, division of powers, compound republic, checks and balances, general welfare, original, controlling intent, resistance to usurpers, etc.), wealth redistribution, economic interventionism, collectivism, totalitarianism, and socialism.

Linda will use one of her careers - Business Owner and Manager of Action Hair Designs. She will think about advertizing to potential male customers that have never been to a hair salon, without the use of trade names (e.g., Kerastase, Pureology, Redken, Shu Uemura, etc), acronyms (e.g., HS, TSPHS, MBHS, MBHS, BoBraz, BW, DW, FBW, FR, IC, IH, etc.), or jargon relating to cosmetologists (e.g., blowout, free-style curls, hairdressing, finger waves, barrel curls, pin curls, heat styling, angled bob, face framing, straight styling, etc.), or hair salon products (e.g., conditioner, shampoo, treatment, etc.). Mike observes - I wrote the first draft of Linda's paragraph, but I don't even know what most of it means - Smile.

1. Audience No. 1A. General Public Interested in Safety and Taxes The writing style goal for Audience No. 1A, General Public, is to use plain language and keep it understandable (e.g., Chpt II; language needs to be simple; do not overuse clichés, jargon, and expressions or try to impress with big words; keep sentences and paragraphs short and concise; etc.).

Public Outreach Documents For General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes

- Arguments For Supporting Study Design
- Interested In Becoming Involved?
- Publicly Identified Problems/Issues
- Publicly Identified Range of Alternative Solutions
- Equal Public Safety Facts
- Study Design's Planning Horizon Is Flexible
- Table Talk Discussion Script
- JS&PSS Issue Overview Educational Brochure
- Aspiration Letter From Authors Of Study Design
- Enquiry Stakeholder Letters/Emails

2. Audience No. 1B. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning Documents The writing style for Audience No. 1B, Technical Grant Funders, is technical science communication (Appendix A).

Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015, Including Its Appendices

- Appendix A. Issues
- Appendix A1. Being Heard
- Appendix A2. All Values Are Legitimate
- Appendix A3. Measures Representing Public Opinion
- Appendix A3.1. Letters To The Editor As A Measure of Crime Salience
- Appendix A3.2. Content Analysis For Public Opinion
- Appendices B - G

V. RELATED INFORMATION

Science communication (SC) generally refers to public communication presenting science-related topics to non-experts. This often involves professional scientists (called "**outreach**" or "popularization"), but has also evolved into a professional field in its own right. It includes science exhibitions, journalism, policy or media production. SC can aim to generate support for scientific research or study, or to inform decisionmaking, including political and ethical thinking. There is increasing emphasis on explaining methods rather than simply findings of science. This may be especially critical in addressing *scientific misinformation*, which spreads easily because it is not subject to the constraints of scientific method.

Science communicators can use entertainment and persuasion including humor, storytelling and metaphors. Scientists can be trained in some of the techniques used by actors to improve their communication. SC can also simply describe communication between scientists (e.g. through scientific journals, etc.), as well as between non-scientists.

- **Make it Clear** – Avoid jargon, write or speak clearly, keep to the point.
- **Make it Real** – Use examples or data to illustrate, tie information to your audience’s situation, consider storytelling to bring your information to life.
- **Keep it Relevant** – Keep asking yourself ‘Does my audience need to know this?’

Many of those who work with complex information believe it can’t be done, and hence we have the mind-numbing, jargon-riddled, overloaded presentations that do little to engage or inform. That can be frustrating for everyone involved, and even disastrous for Study Design if the audience does not understand, or ignores what were trying to share with them.

So how do you present complicated information that anyone can understand? Just as you would any other information. It needs to be clear, concise and told in a compelling way. Just because the information is complex doesn’t cancel out the need to be a good storyteller and convey your information in a way that educates and moves your listeners to action.

The following are two examples, not necessarily the Committee’s position, on how to communicate. They, along with *What is Plain Language?* (Chpt II) are examples of starting the communication dialogue (Appendix A).

1. *Article On 6 Ways to Clearly Communicate Complex Information*
2. *Article On Technical Communication*

VI. SUMMARY/CONCLUSION (very draft like total document)

What do people mean, when they say to communicate to the “public,” you need to use plain language? More specifically is the task at hand for this paper, which is how will the authors explain their Study Design project to the public?

It appears that each individual knows plain language when they read it because, if it is plain language to them, it is their reading level. Therefore, for the purpose of communicating Study Design to the “public,” the authors must explain it to the target public audience, or audiences, at their reading level(s).

Stated another way, the authors need to develop a common understanding, and ownership, for the meaning of “plain language,” for their average targeted audience’s reading level. The authors believe that their public to explain their Study Design is comprised of two main targeted audiences.

1. General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes
2. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning

In many ways Study Design was, and is, written primarily for the large private public policy foundation audience with significant technical planning language conducive to securing a large sum of grant money to fund Study Design. Just as important, perhaps more, is the fact that the owner and decision-maker audience of Study Design is the general public (i.e., the voters of Josephine County). The question is how to use a writing style that produces a more interesting and enjoyable, more informative, clearer and more understandable, and a more credible outreach to both audiences is still being pursued.

Plain Language is language that everyone in your audience can easily understand. It means writing in a way that is easy-to-read, looks good, is organized logically, and is understandable the first time you read it.

A style guide is a set of standards for the writing and design of documents, either for general use or for a specific publication, organization, or field. It is often called a style sheet, though that term has other meanings. The authors’ research found that the Chicago Manual of Style was considered appropriate for general publishing and readership. Ironically, since 2013 when it was formed, the Committee had been using the Chicago Manual of Style for all its Study Design documents.

The authors accept the position that “Plain Language” means: 1. determine the reading level of the audience, and 2. create texts that match that reading level. What if your audience is the general public? If experts are correct that documents for the general public should be written at the 7th - 9th grade levels, how do you write at these grade levels? For example, an after the fact readability analysis of this very draft document on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level scale identified that it was at the 13.35 grade level (i.e., freshman in college). So far, the authors have

failed to meet the plain language requirement of it targeted general audience's reading level of 7th - 9th grade.

Quite candidly the authors do not believe they have the time or inclination to learn the English language well enough to apply a readability model to write a document at the 7th - 9th grade levels, or any level. Smile. At this time the goal of writing in plain language to accomplish a *"plain, straightforward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style"* is the intuitive gut telling us to try and write it that way.

In conclusion, the authors of *How To Communicate In Plain Language* have researched and documented some facts about plain language that they accept as credible.

1. "Plain Language" means: 1. determine the reading level of the audience, and 2. create texts that match that reading level.
2. The targeted general public's reading level is at the 7th - 9th grade.
3. Each of them individually could write the Study Design documents to meet the needs for writing in their plain language, but feel they would have different answers without a team collaboration for the meaning of plain language.
4. There are two main targeted audiences: 1. General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes, and 2. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning.
5. They are still working on how to write documents at the 7th - 9th grade reading level. The authors' method is to use their collective consensus gut (i.e., quality control by review and editing successive drafts of a plain language goal) to determine whether they are accomplishing their goal, and then to test the documents for readability.

The authors interim, and/or permanent strategy, for explaining Study Design is being implemented from the position that there are two main audiences that it needs to communicate.

1. Audience No. 1A. General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes
2. Audience No. 1B. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning

The authors have not attained the plain language goal for Study Design, all its supporting appendices, and outreach documents. Its evolving strategy goal is to use a plain language writing style for the general public audience's outreach documents, and a science communication writing style for the technical grant funders audience for Study Design and appendices.

1. Audience No. 1A. General Public Interested in Safety and Taxes The writing style goal for Audience No. 1A, General Public, is to use plain language and keep it understandable (e.g., Chpt II; language needs to be simple; do not overuse clichés, jargon, and expressions or try to impress with big words; keep sentences and paragraphs short and concise; etc.).

Public Outreach Documents For General Public Interested in Public Safety and Taxes

- Outreach 1. Arguments For Supporting Study Design
- Outreach 2. Interested In Becoming Involved?
- Outreach 3. Publicly Identified Problems/Issues

- Outreach 4. Publicly Identified Range of Alternative Solutions
- Outreach 5. Equal Public Safety Facts
- Outreach 6. Study Design's Planning Horizon Is Flexible
- Outreach 7. Table Talk Discussion Script
- Outreach 8. How To Communicate In Plain Language
- Outreach 9. JS&PSS Issue Overview Educational Brochure
- Outreach 10. Aspiration Letter From Authors Of Study Design)
- Outreach 11. Enquiry Stakeholder Letters/Emails)

2. Audience No. 1B. Technical Grant Funders of Public Policy Planning Documents The writing style for Audience No. 1B, Technical Grant Funders, is technical science communication (Appendix A).

Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015, Including Its Appendices

- Appendix A. Issues
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- Appendix A3.2. Content Analysis For Public Opinion
- Appendices B - G

VII. AUTHORS

The Hugo JS&PSS Exploratory Committee has been trying to understand this issue since 2013 (Appendix B), and we would like to get together and brainstorm ideas. For example, some of the Exploratory Committee's core beliefs are that all citizens, voters, and votes are legitimate. Our 2015 JS&PSS Study Design project flows from this center. The results are a study to be researched and written from a neutral point of view, meaning representing fairly, proportionately, and, as far as possible, without bias, all public views that have been published by reliable sources on the safety topic.

The final Study product of the Study Design project is to document a comparison of the publicly identified range of alternative solutions for the JS&PSS Issue. The Study will be accomplished by documenting: 1. the publicly identified issues, range of JS&PSS alternative solutions, and affected conditions; and 2. analyzing the impacts of each alternative evaluated by condition indicators and standards through a combination of citizen input and professional expert investigations.

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APPENDIX A. TWO EXAMPLES ON COMMUNICATING COMPLEX INFORMATION

1. *6 Ways to Clearly Communicate Complex Information*
2. *Technical Communication*

6 Ways to Clearly Communicate Complex Information

6 Ways to Clearly Communicate Complex Information

By Anita Bruzzese | Posted on June 9, 2014

<http://quickbase.intuit.com/blog/2014/06/09/6-ways-to-clearly-communicate-complex-information/>

Downloaded October 9, 2015

It's difficult enough getting people to listen these days, but when you're trying to impart complex information it's like trying to get a 2-year-old to understand the Gettysburg Address. But there are those who excel at getting others to grasp even the most complicated information, and you can learn to do the same.

We've become a world that communicates in two-minute sound bites and 140 characters, but how can anyone expect you to explain complex information so quickly and concisely?

Well, they do – and you can.

Many of those who work with complex information believe it can't be done, and hence we have the mind-numbing, jargon-riddled, overloaded PowerPoint presentations that do little to engage or inform. That can be frustrating for everyone involved, and even disastrous for your career or company if a boss or customer ignores what you're trying to tell them.

So how do you present complicated information that anyone can understand?

Just as you would any other information. It needs to be clear, concise and told in a compelling way. Just because the information is complex doesn't cancel out the need to be a good storyteller and convey your information in a way that educates and moves your listeners to action, experts say.

If you're looking for some ways to become better at communicating complex information, consider:

Being concise. As Albert Einstein once said, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Try to keep your opening sentence to less than 50 words. After that, use the "Twitter test" and try to reduce each important point down to 140 characters. You may not hit that number exactly, but it will force you to think of boiling the information down to the bare bones.

Taking an improvisation class. At Vanderbilt University, for example, students are put through improvisational theatre to help them be more relatable when conveying complex ideas. Improvisation classes have been shown to teach people to react and adapt to situations and to think more creatively. Learning to think on your feet can be critical when you're conveying complicated information, because you need to be able to change tactics if your audience isn't grasping the information.

Learning to tell stories. Scientists and other technical experts often begin a report with data and statistics, but that bores listeners. By thinking of how the information can be crafted into a story, the audience is immediately engaged. “[A]s a storyteller, you want to position the problems in the foreground and then show how you’ve overcome them. When you tell the story of your struggles against real antagonists, your audience sees you as an exciting, dynamic person,” says Robert McKee, a creative writing instructor known for his popular “Story Seminar.”

Using visual metaphors to help the audience understand and remember. New research in the Journal of Consumer Psychology finds that visual metaphors – such as an illuminated light bulb to suggest new ideas – can prompt participants to have better insights than those who are shown no image. Consider sites like Flickr, Creative Commons and Compfight.com to find images to use in a presentation.

Channeling Steve Jobs. When Jobs first tried to explain to others what a personal computer was and how it would work, he became frustrated when others didn't understand. But he learned to use metaphors and analogies to communicate complex ideas. For example, Jobs described IBM in 1984 as Big Brother come to life, bringing the idea to a famous television commercial pitting the Mac against IBM. Jobs also once described a computer as “the most remarkable tool that we have ever come up with. It's the equivalent of a bicycle for our minds.”

Continually asking “so what?” Challenge each of your key points to ensure that you're relating it to the listeners and their lives. Again, Jobs was a pro at doing deep research so that he understood a product thoroughly. He could put it in terms that answered anyone's “so what?” whether the person was 6 years old or 60 years old. In 2007, when he introduced the iPhone, he said: “We've designed something wonderful for your hand.” Who can't grasp that?

Technical Communication

Technical Communication

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Technical_communication

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Technical communication is a means to convey scientific, engineering, or other technical information.[1] Individuals in a variety of contexts and with varied professional credentials engage in technical communication. Some individuals are designated as technical communicators. These individuals use a set of methods to research, document, and present technical processes or products. Technical communicators may put the information they capture into paper documents, web pages, computer-based training, digitally stored text, audio, video, and other media. The Society for Technical Communication defines the field as any form of communication that focuses on technical or specialized topics, communicates specifically by using technology or provides instructions on how to do something.[2][3] More succinctly, the Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators defines technical communication as factual communication, usually about products and services.[4] The European Association for Technical Communication briefly defines technical communication as "the process of defining, creating and delivering information products for the safe, efficient and effective use of products (technical systems, software, services)".[5]

Whatever the definition of technical communication, the overarching goal of the practice is to create easily accessible information for a specific audience.[6]

As a profession [edit]

Technical communicators generally tailor information to a specific audience, which may be subject matter experts, consumers, end users, etc. Technical communicators often work collaboratively to create deliverables that include online help, user manuals, classroom training guides, computer-based training, white papers, specifications, industrial videos, reference cards, data sheets, journal articles, patents, and forms and documents.

Technical domains can be of any kind, including the soft and hard sciences, high technology including computers and software and consumer electronics. Technical communicators often work with a range of specific Subject-matter experts (SMEs) on these educational projects.

Technical communication jobs include the following:[3]

- API writer
- E-learning author
- Information architect
- Technical editor
- Technical illustrator
- Technical Trainer

- Technical translator
- Technical Writer
- Usability expert
- User experience designer
- User interface designer

In 2015, the European Association for Technical Communication published a competence framework for the professional field of technical communication. [7]

Content creation [edit]

Technical communication is a professional task performed by specialized employees or consultants. For example, a professional writer may work with a company to produce a user manual. Some companies give considerable technical communication responsibility to other technical professionals—such as programmers, engineers, and scientists. Often, a professional technical writer edits such work to bring it up to modern technical communication standards.

To begin the documentation process, technical communicators identify the audience and their information needs. The technical communicator researches and structures the content into a framework that can guide detailed development. As the body of information comes together, the technical communicator ensures that the **intended audience can understand** (emphasis added) the content and retrieve the information they need. This process, known as the 'Writing Process', has been a central focus of writing theory since the 1970s, and some contemporary textbook authors apply it to technical communication. Technical communication is important to most professions, as a way to contain and organize information and maintain accuracy.

The technical writing process can be divided into five steps:

- **Determine purpose and audience** (emphasis added)
- Collect information
- Organize and outline information
- Write the first draft
- Revise and edit

Determining purpose and audience [edit]

All technical communication serves a particular purpose—typically to communicate ideas and concepts to an audience, or instruct an audience a particular task. Technical communication professionals use various techniques to **understand the audience and, when possible, test content on the target audience** (emphasis added). For example, if bank workers don't properly post deposits, a technical communicator would:

- Review existing instructional material (or lack thereof)
- Interview bank workers to identify conceptual errors
- Interview subject matter experts to learn the correct procedures

- Author new material that instructs workers in the correct procedures
- Test the new material on the bank workers

Similarly, a sales manager who wonders which of two sites is better for a new store might ask a marketing professional to study the sites and write a report with recommendations. The marketing professional hands the report off to a technical communicator (in this case, a technical editor or technical writer), who edits, formats, and sometimes elaborates the document in order to make the marketing professional's expert assessment usable to the sales manager. The process is not one of knowledge transfer, but the accommodation of knowledge across fields of expertise and contexts of use. This is the basic definition of technical communication.

Audience type affects many aspects of communication (emphasis added), from word selection and graphics use to style and organization. Most often, to address a particular audience, a technical communicator must consider what qualities make a text useful (capable of supporting a meaningful task) and usable (capable of being used in service of that task). **A non-technical audience might misunderstand or not even read a document that is heavy with jargon—while a technical audience might crave detail critical to their work. Busy audiences often don't have time to read entire documents** (emphasis added), so content must be organized for ease of searching—for example by frequent headings, white space, and other cues that guide attention. Other requirements vary according to particular audience's needs.

Technical communication in the government is particular and detailed. Depending on the segment of government (and country), the government component must follow distinct specifications. The US Army, for example, uses the MIL-spec (Military specification). Information changes continuously and technical communications (technical manuals, interactive electronic technical manuals, technical bulletins, etc.) must be updated.

The United States Department of Defense, for example uses many technical manuals, and their creation and maintenance is a core agency responsibility. Though detail-oriented in their requirements, the DoD has deficiencies in technical communication.[8]

Collecting information [edit]

Technical communicators must collect all information that each document requires. They may collect information through primary (first-hand) research—or secondary research, using information from existing work by other authors. **Technical communicators must acknowledge all sources they use to produce their work** (emphasis added). To this end, technical communicators typically distinguish quotations, paraphrases, and summaries when taking notes.

Organizing and outlining information [edit]

Before writing the initial draft, the technical communicator organizes ideas in a way that makes the document flow well. Once each idea is organized, the writer organizes the document as a whole—accomplishing this task in various ways.

- Chronological: used for documents that involve a linear process, such as a step-by-step guide that describes how to accomplish something
- Parts of an object: Used for documents that describe the parts of an object, such as a graphic showing the parts of a computer (keyboard, monitor, mouse, etc.)
- Simple to complex (or vice versa): starts with easy ideas and gradually goes into complex ideas
- Specific to general: starts with many ideas, then organizes the ideas into sub-categories
- General to specific: starts with a few categories of ideas, then goes deeper

After organizing the whole document, the writer typically creates a final outline that shows the document structure. Outlines make the writing process easier and save the author time.

Writing the first draft [edit]

After the outline is complete, the writer begins the first draft, following the outline's structure. Setting aside blocks of an hour or more, in a place free of distractions, helps the writer maintain a flow. Most writers prefer to wait until the draft is complete before any revising so they don't break their flow. Typically, the writer should start with the easiest section, and write the summary only after the body is drafted.

The ABC (abstract, body, and conclusion) format can be used when writing a first draft of some document types. The abstract describes the subject, so that the reader knows what the document covers. The body is the majority of the document and covers topics in depth. Lastly, the conclusion section restates the document's main topics. The ABC format can also apply to individual paragraphs—beginning with a topic sentence that states the paragraph's topic, followed by the topic, and finally, a concluding sentence.

Revising and editing [edit]

Once the initial draft is laid out, editing and revising can be done to fine-tune the draft into a final copy. Four tasks transform the early draft into its final form, suggested by Pfeiffer and Boogard:[citation needed]

Adjusting and reorganizing content [edit] In this step, the writer revises the draft to elaborate on topics that need more attention, shorten other sections—and relocate certain paragraphs, sentences, or entire topics.

Editing for style [edit] Good style makes writing more interesting, appealing, and readable. In general, the personal writing style of the writer is not evident in technical writing. Modern technical writing style relies on attributes that contribute to clarity:

- Headings, lists, graphics
- Generous white space
- Short sentences
- Present tense
- Simple nouns
- Active voice[9] (though some scientific applications still use the passive voice)
- Second and third person as required

Technical writing as a discipline usually requires that a technical writer use a style guide. These guides may relate to a specific project, product, company, or brand. They ensure that technical writing reflects formatting, punctuation, and general stylistic standards that the audience expects. In the United States, many consider the Chicago Manual of Style the bible for general technical communication. Other style guides have their adherents, particularly for specific industries—such as the Microsoft Style Guide in some information technology settings.

Editing for grammar and punctuation [edit] At this point, the writer performs a mechanical edit, checking the document for grammar, punctuation, common word confusions, passive voice, overly long sentences, etc.

Footnotes: Not copied; see web address.

APPENDIX B. *Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015*

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

- ***Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015*** (draft, 140 pages)
 - **Public Outreach** (Draft documents being developed: expect many changes)
 - Outreach 1. Arguments For Supporting Study Design (draft, 4 pages)
 - Outreach 2. Interested In Becoming Involved? (draft, 3 pages)
 - Outreach 3. Publicly Identified Problems/Issues (draft, 13 pages; expect many changes)
 - Outreach 4. Publicly Identified Range of Alternative Solutions (draft, 8 pages; expect many changes)
 - Outreach 5. Equal Public Safety Facts (Not started)
 - Outreach 6. Study Design's Planning Horizon Is Flexible (Not started)
 - Outreach 7. Table Talk Discussion Script (Not started)
 - Outreach 8. How To Communicate In Plain Language (Just started)
 - Outreach 9. JS&PSS Issue Overview Educational Brochure (Not started)
 - Outreach 10. Aspiration Letter From Authors Of Study Design (draft, 4 pages, expect many changes)
 - Outreach 11. Enquiry Stakeholder Letters/Emails (Ongoing)
- **Appendix A. Issues** (draft, 154 pages)
 - Appendix A1. Being Heard (draft, 4 pages)
 - Appendix A2. All Values Are Legitimate (draft, 3 pages)
 - Appendix A3. Measures Representing Public Opinion (draft, 36 pages)
 - Appendix A3.1. Letters To The Editor As A Measure of Crime Salience
 - Appendix A3.2. Content Analysis For Public Opinion
- **Other Resource Appendices** (Draft documents being developed and/or not started yet)
 - Appendix B. Affected (draft, 49 pages)
 - Appendix B1. Potential Affected Conditions (draft, 79 pages)
 - Appendix B2. Studies & Information (draft, 89 pages)
 - Appendix B3. Analysis of Public Situation (draft, 39 pages)
 - Appendix C. Alternatives (Not started)
 - Appendix D. Procedural Requirements, *NEPA Design Group's Comments on the Hellgate RAMP/DEIS* (draft, 53 pages)
 - Appendix DD1. Appendix A. Selected Parts Of BLM's National Environmental Policy Act Handbook: H-1790-1
 - Appendix DD2. Appendix B. Selected CEQ Regulations For Implementing The Procedural Provisions of The National Environmental Policy Act
 - Appendix DD3. Appendix C. Selected Portions Of CEQ's 40 Questions
 - Appendix DD4. Appendix D. Evaluation Of Significant Impacts Model And Recommended Impact Methodology
 - Appendix DD5. Appendix C. NEPA's Significantly, *Scoping Rogue River's Outstandingly Remarkable Values*
 - Appendix D1. Impact Methodology Model (draft, 30 pages)
 - Appendix D2. Conditions, Indicators & Standards (draft, 22 pages)
 - Appendix E. Impacts (Not started)
 - Appendix F. Public (Not started)
 - Appendix F1. Interest Groups (Not started)
 - Appendix F2. Potential Funders, Sponsors, & Sources (draft, 69 pages)
 - Appendix G. Public Study (Not started)
- ***Justice System & Public Safety Services Issue Scope Of Work*** (2013 Authority; draft, 41 pages)

Appendix C. National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL)

- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. April 2002, Third Edition. *Adult Literacy in America*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement NCES 1993-275. Washington, D.C.

The U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences has conducted large scale assessment of adult proficiency in 1992 and 2003 using a common methodology from which trends could be measured. The study measures Prose, Document, and Quantitative skills and 19,000 subjects participated in the 2003 survey. There was no significant change in Prose or Document skills and a slight increase in Quantitative attributes. As in 2008, roughly 15% of the sample could function at the highest levels in all three categories. Roughly 50% were at either basic or below basic levels of proficiency in all three categories.[2] The study identifies a class of adults who, although not meeting criteria for functional illiteracy, face reduced job opportunities and life prospects due to inadequate literacy levels relative to the requirements of contemporary society.

The study, the most comprehensive study of literacy ever commissioned by the U.S. government, was released in April 2002 and reapplied in 2003 giving trend data. It involved lengthy interviews of over 90,700 adults statistically balanced for age, gender, ethnicity, education level, and location (urban, suburban, or rural) in 12 states across the U.S. and was designed to represent the U.S. population as a whole. This government study showed that 21% to 23% of adult Americans were not "able to locate information in text", could not "make low-level inferences using printed materials", and were unable to "integrate easily identifiable pieces of information." Further, this study showed that 41% to 44% of U.S. adults in the lowest level on the literacy scale (literacy rate of 35 or below) were living in poverty.[2]

A follow-up study by the same group of researchers using a smaller database (19,714 interviewees) was released in 2006 that showed some upward movement of low end (basic and below to intermediate) in U.S. adult literacy levels and a decline in the full proficiency group.[3]. Thus, if this bottom quantile of the study is equated with the functionally illiterate, and these are then removed from those classified as literate, then the resultant literacy rate for the United States would be at most 65-85% depending on where in the basic, minimal competence quantile one sets the cutoff.

The 15% figure for full literacy, equivalent to a university undergraduate level, is consistent with the notion that **the "average" American reads at a 7th or 8th grade level** (emphasis added) which is also consistent with recommendations, guidelines, and norms of readability for medication directions, product information, and popular fiction.

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2. Adult Literacy in America, Third Edition (PDF), National Center for Educational Statistics, April 2002, retrieved 2011-01-12
3. A First Look at the Literacy of America's Adults in the 21st century (PDF), National Center for Educational Statistics, 2006, retrieved 2007-12-11

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