**SLIDE 2**

**Plain Language and Effective Communication**

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**SLIDE 2**

**Learning Objectives**

1. What is plain language?
2. ADA effective communication and Language Access requirements
3. Inclusive language
4. Tips and tricks for writing in plain language
5. Navigating communication challenges

**SLIDE 3**

*“The ability to seek out and understand information gives us all independence to make choices, to advocate for ourselves and to learn about our community and world.”*

- LitWorld International, Inc.

**SLIDE 4**

**What is Plain Language?**

1. Visually inviting
2. Logically organized
3. Understandable on the first reading
4. Concise
5. Generally written at a 6th grade reading level
* PlainLanguage.gov

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**Title II of the ADA & Effective Communication**

1. Communication with people with these disabilities is as effective as communication with people without disabilities.
2. Provide tools, supports, auxiliary aids, and services.
3. Support use of a person's preferred method(s) of communication
4. Support autonomy with direct communication wherever possible.

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**Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 131666**

1. Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin - this includes those with limited English proficiency in any program or activity that receives Federal funds or other Federal financial assistance.
2. Must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to City of Madison’s programs, services, and activities for people with a primary language other than English.

**SLIDE 7**

**Language Access and Language Justice**

**Language Access** - providing services to remove barriers

**Language Justice** –

1. Recognizing language as a fundamental right
2. Building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organizations so that everyone's voice and lived experience can be heard
3. Working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice.

**SLIDE 8**

**Plain Language Benefits**

1. Disrupt systemic power dynamics
2. Increase engagement
3. Foster inclusion
4. Increase the quality of translation and interpretation services
5. Reach a broader audience
6. More persuasive stronger writing

**SLIDE 9**

**Before You Start…**

1. What is your message?
2. Key takeaways (no more than 5)
3. Who is your audience and what do they need to take action?

**SLIDE 10**

**Writing Process**

1. Creative\*
2. Architect
3. Carpenter
4. Judge

- Betty S. Flowers, *Roles and the Writing Process*

**SLIDE 11**

**Mind Map**

[Image description: Circle in the middle of the slide with four thought bubbles reaching out in different directions. End of image description.]

**SLIDE 12**

**Inverted Pyramid**

[Image description: Upside-down pyramid divided in horizontally into three sections. The largest section at the top labeled “Lead.” The middle section labeled “Context.” The smallest section at the bottom labeled “conclusion.” End of image description.]

**SLIDE 13**

**F pattern vs. Z pattern**

[Image description: Graphic showing a reading pattern in the shape of an F. Line begins at the upper left portion of the page and then extends to the upper right. The line comes back to the left side of the page and extends right at the first sentence of the next paragraph making a shape like a capital letter “F.” End of image description.]

**SLIDE 14**

**Headings**

[Image description: Photograph of signpost with street signs. From top left to bottom right, the signs read: What? Where? Who? When? Why? How? End of image description.]

**SLIDE 15**

**Audience and Tone**

1. Conversational
2. Write in the second person: “you” “we”
3. Don’t assume expertise
4. Write for connection, not to impress
5. Write for your audience, not yourself

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**Inclusive Language**

1. Gender neutral language
2. Avoid metaphors, acronyms, slangs, or idioms
3. Remove ableist metaphors such as crazy, insane, lame, suffers from/with, high or low functioning, duh, spaz, and many more from our speech.
4. “Accessible feature” vs. “Accommodation”

**SLIDE 17**

**Disability is Not a Bad Word**

Much of the language people with disabilities use is rooted in different social movements.

People with disabilities may describe themselves in a variety of ways. Allies should only use person-first or identity-first language unless a person has expressed another preference.

**SLIDE 18**

**People-First Language**

The People-First movement began in the 1970’s. It literally puts the person first - “person with a disability,” “employee who is bi-polar.”

This language is rooted in the idea that people with disabilities are not defined by their disabilities. They are people first.

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**Identity-First Language**

Identity-First language is rooted in the social model of disability.

‘Disabled’ is a political term used to emphasize the social cause and nature of the exclusion and discrimination faced as people with impairments. It uses the term “Disabled” to mean disabled by society.

**SLIDE 20**

**Tips for Writing in Plain Language**

1. Sort sentences
2. Avoid clauses
3. Define terms of art
4. Use lists
5. Be direct
6. Active voice

**SLIDE 21**

**Word Choice**

Provide = give

Receive = get

Shall = should/must

Individual = person/you

Assistance = help

Entity = business/employer/school

Accommodation = different way of performing a task

Financial burden = too expensive

**SLIDE 22**

**Word Choice and Translations**

These do not translate into other languages:

1. Rhyming
2. Alliteration
3. Acronyms that spell out a word
4. Cultural references

**SLIDE 23**

**Communication Challenges**

1. Wait for folks to finish their thoughts
2. Ask questions

Open-ended

Yes/No

1. Repeat back what you understood and confirm
2. Ask for a re-cap
3. Would you like me to write it down?
4. Explore language access services

**SLIDE 24**

**Example 1:**

“The Frances Street side of the State Street Campus Garage will remain open during construction, though space will be limited due to the capacity reduction with the Lake garage closure. We encourage customers to use the City’s [real-time garage availability tracker](https://www.cityofmadison.com/parking/accessibility/current-hourly-parking-availability) prior to visiting this location or use alternate garages for the duration of this closure. You can locate the City operated garages and rates nearest to your destination by visiting Parking’s [Garages and Lots webpage](https://www.cityofmadison.com/parking-utility/garages-lots).”

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**Example 1:**

The Frances Street side of the State Street Campus Garage is open during construction. Space is limited. Use the City’s [real-time garage availability tracker](https://www.cityofmadison.com/parking/accessibility/current-hourly-parking-availability) to find available parking.  Find the nearest garage and rates at the [Garages and Lots webpage](https://www.cityofmadison.com/parking-utility/garages-lots).

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**Example 2:**

Neighborhood plans serve as a guide for actions and changes to strengthen Madison's established neighborhoods and how to best accommodate anticipated growth. Plan topics include land use, zoning, mobility, housing, community services, economic development, historic preservation, urban design, open space, health, safety, and infrastructure.

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**Example 2:**

A neighborhood plan is a decision-making guide. It helps neighborhoods plan for growth.

Plans guide:

1. How land is used
2. What gets built and where
3. How people travel
4. Housing
5. Community services
6. Businesses
7. Historic places
8. Open spaces
9. Health and safety

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**Example 3:**

Vision Zero -

The projects funded focus on low-cost, high-impact strategies that are proven safety countermeasures to prevent fatalities and serious injury crashes for people walking, biking and accessing transit.

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**Example 3:**

Vision Zero -

The goal of this project is to prevent car accidents that cause death or injury to people who walk, roll or bike. It funds effective low-cost ways to make streets safer.

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**Resources**

[*Legal Writing in Plain English*](https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/L/bo199200593.html), Bryan A. Garner

[PlainLanguage.gov](https://www.plainlanguage.gov/)

[Plain Language Association International](https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/)

[Center for Plain Language](https://centerforplainlanguage.org/)

[Open Government - Plain Writing at the National Archives](https://www.archives.gov/open/plain-writing)

Tools:

* [Microsoft Readability Statistics](https://support.microsoft.com/en-au/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2)
* [Hemingway App](https://hemingwayapp.com/)

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**Questions**

Email lap@cityofmadison.com for plain language consultation

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