Writing positive behaviour support plans using Plain Language

Sarah Nicoll

NDS National Practice Lead – Zero Tolerance Initiative

NDS National Disability Services

Pre-workshop self-assessment

On a scale of 1 to 5 rate how easy are your plans to understand and use:

1	2	3	4	5

Difficult

My positive behaviour support plans, whilst targeting the critical areas for the promotion of skill development, the need for improved communication systems and the reduction of any restrictive practices, may need work on how easily comprehensible and lucid they are to a myriad of audiences.

Easy

They are:

- clear
- well laid out, and
- easy to use.

Learning Outcomes from today

Part One

1. Learn about Plain Language

2. Why Plain Language is important and how it applies to PBS plans

Part Two

3. Learn steps for Plain Language.

4. How to include practical, strength-based strategies.

5. Being aware of what we didn't cover today.

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Chrisse Maher, 1979. Plain English Campaign Image from: http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/born_to_crusade.pdf

Plain Language

A communication is in plain language if its **wording**, **structure**, and **design** are so clear that the intended audience can easily:

- **find** what they need,

- **understand** what they find, and

- **use** that information

Plain Language Association International (2020) *What is plain language?*, PLAIN website, accessed 8 February 2020

Some people are concerned that Plain Language might:

- water down their meaning
- risk poor implementation
- be damaging to their credibility, and
- take extra time (and money).

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Interval: [ ] Baseline   [ ] 2 hours post treatment   [ ] 24 hours post onset of symptoms ±20 minutes   [ ] 7-10 days
[ ] 3 months   [ ] Other _____(___ ___)

3. **Visual:** Visual fields (upper and lower quadrants) are tested by confrontation, using finger counting or visual threat, as appropriate. Patients may be encouraged, but if they look at the side of the moving fingers appropriately, this can be scored as normal. If there is unilateral blindness or enucleation, visual fields in the remaining eye are scored. Score 1 only if a clear-cut asymmetry, including quadrantanopia, is found. If patient is blind from any cause, score 3. Double simultaneous stimulation is performed at this point. If there is extinction, patient receives a 1, and the results are used to respond to item 11.	0 = **No visual loss.** 1 = **Partial hemianopia.** 2 = **Complete hemianopia.** 3 = **Bilateral hemianopia** (blind including cortical blindness).	_____
4. **Facial Palsy:** Ask – or use pantomime to encourage – the patient to show teeth or raise eyebrows and close eyes. Score symmetry of grimace in response to noxious stimuli in the poorly responsive or non-comprehending patient. If facial trauma/bandages, orotracheal tube, tape or other physical barriers obscure the face, these should be removed to the extent possible.	0 = **Normal** symmetrical movements. 1 = **Minor paralysis** (flattened nasolabial fold, asymmetry on smiling). 2 = **Partial paralysis** (total or near-total paralysis of lower face). 3 = **Complete paralysis** of one or both sides (absence of facial movement in the upper and lower face).	_____
5. **Motor Arm:** The limb is placed in the appropriate position: extend	0 = **No drift:** limb holds 90 (or 45) degrees for full 10 seconds.	

Mock graph
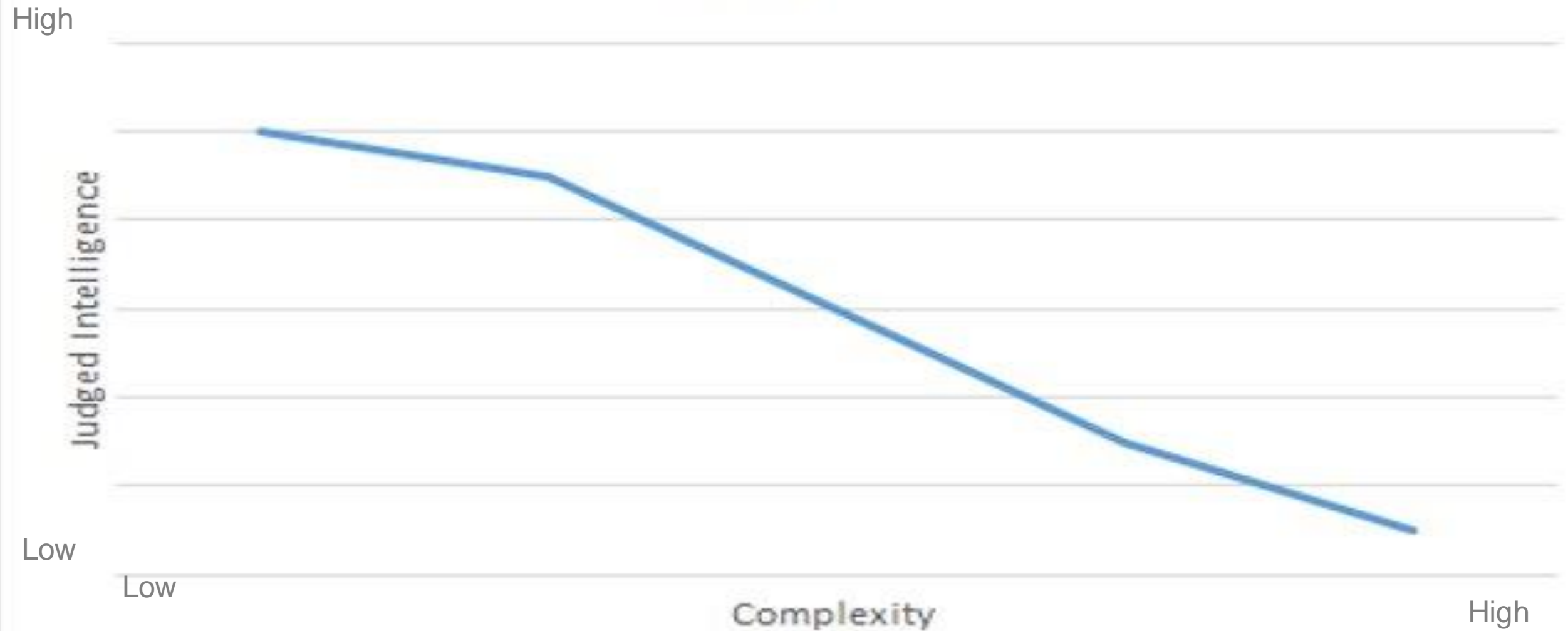
Oppenheimer, D.M. (2006). Consequences of erudite vernacular utilized irrespective of necessity: problems with using long words needlessly. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 20*, 139-156.
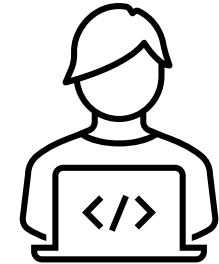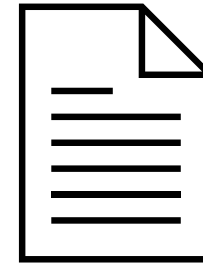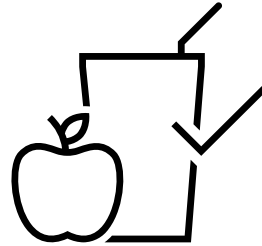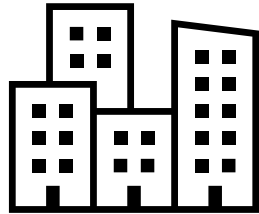
Who uses Plain Language?

Who uses Plain Language?

Professionals who want their message to be understood and actioned

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Why - we want people to understand

'Human relationships depend on communication.
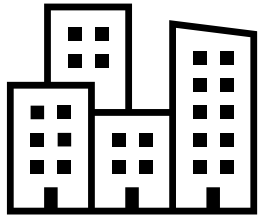
Bad writing is a barrier to communication....too often clarity and simplicity are overwhelmed by pompous words, long sentences and endless paragraphs.'

Margaret Thatcher, Former Prime Minister, Britian

Accessed at http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/about-us/quotes.html on 15/02/2021

Why - it is the just thing to do

"It is a matter of social justice that the ~~legal~~ behaviour support profession communicates effectively with the community, as it is fundamentally important that everyone affected by the ~~law~~ PBSP should be able to understand it.

Unintelligible language not only confuses and alienates people, it **causes them to become cynical about institutions**."

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Why – to meet the PBS Capability Framework

2. Functional Assessment

2.15   Adapt assessment terminology and systems to the **needs of the target audience**

3. Planning

3.12   Write a behaviour support plan in a way that is **usable** by those implementing it

3.14   Develop data collection systems that objective, **understandable** and **usable** by the key people

* Always discuss your practice with your supervisor to ensure best practice and you meet standards.

Plain Language and Easy Read

They are not the same thing

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Plain Language

Plain Language is intended for a general audience.

44%

of Australian adults have a low reading level

- Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013

Easy Read

Easy-to-read information is important for people with intellectual disabilities.

Others may also find it helpful:

- People with dyslexia.

- People not familiar with English.

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Plain Language

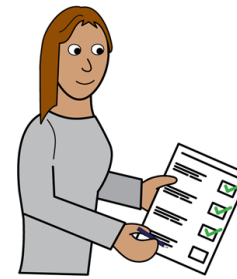**The role of behaviour support practitioners**

Behaviour support practitioners help people with disability to have a better quality of life.

This is the most important part of our job.

Easy Read

What does a **behaviour support practitioner** do?

They find out what is important to you

happy

They help you have a good life

Steps for creating Plain English plans

Plain Language

A communication is in plain language if its **wording**, **structure**, and **design** are so clear that the intended audience can easily:

- **find** what they need,

- **understand** what they find, and

- **use** that information

Plain Language Association International (2020) *What is plain language?*, PLAIN website, accessed 8 February 2020

Steps for creating Plain Language plans

1. Think of your audience.

2. Simplify font, layout and design.

3. Use simple language and structure.

4. Test it with your audience.

Modified from Five Steps to Plain Language (centerforplainlanguage.org) sourced 8 February 2021

1. Think of your audience

How people read

People with higher literacy might:
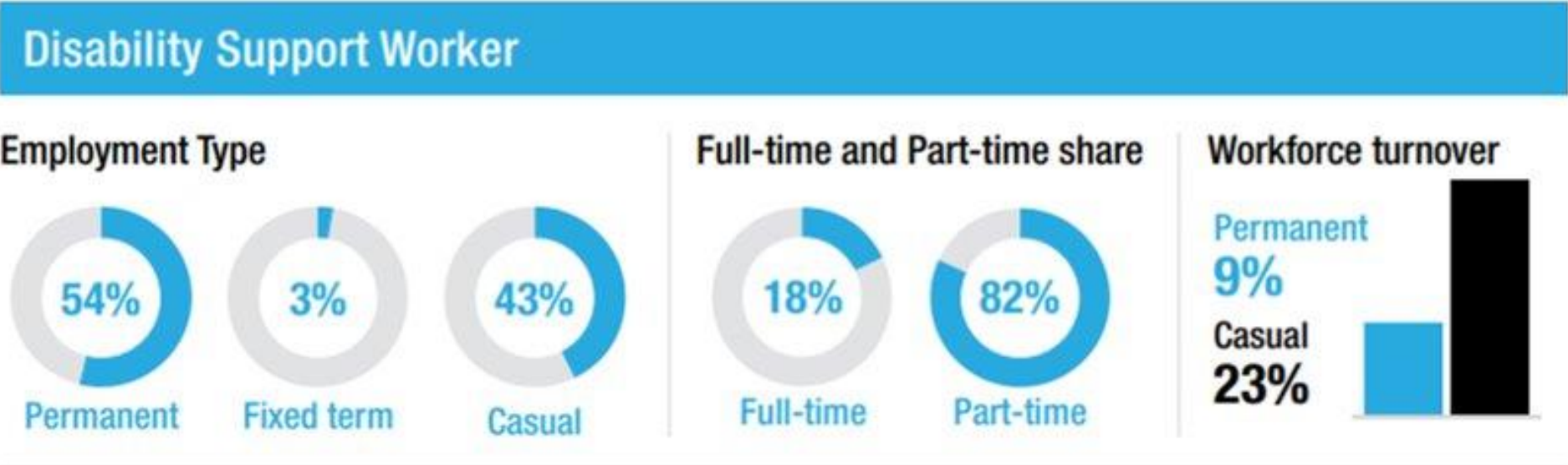
- scan documents
- take in information at the edges of their vision
- tend to read a lots of information
- not have time for lengthy, complex content.

People with lower literacy might:

- read every word to ensure the message is not missed
- find it hard to keep the ideas shared in previous pages or paragraphs in mind
- skip sections if the message is not clear straight away.

1. Think of your audience

Disability Support Workers

Disability Support Worker

Employment Type

54% Permanent
3% Fixed term
43% Casual

Full-time and Part-time share

18% Full-time
82% Part-time

Workforce turnover

Permanent 9%
Casual 23%

Average Working Hours 20.8 hrs per worker per week

EXTRACT: NDS Workforce Census Snapshot: 2020

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1. Think of your audience

Teachers and Stress

"In Australia, as in other countries, the incidence of teacher stress and burnout is a cause for serious concern"

Teachers reported:
- irritability at home (59%)
- irritability in classroom (55%)
- general anxiety (64%) and
- feelings of powerlessness (45%)

- Howard & Johnson, 2004 p399 cited in Faleki, D. (2015) Teacher Stress and Wellbeing Literature Review

1. Think of your audience

Families

High psychological distress

27%

11%

primary carers

general population

Jiali Wang & Wei Du. (2019) Factors associated with high psychological distress in primary carers of people with disability. Australian Journal of General Practice. Volume 48, (4). doi: 10.31128/AJGP-04-18-4559

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Your audience is

STRESSED

TIME POOR

JUGGLING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS / MANY

OVERWHELMED

"Traditionally good readers blamed a document if they couldn't understand it, while poor readers blamed themselves."

- Tasmanian Government Communications (2012) *Plain language in communication: guide*, Tasmanian Government Communications website, accessed 10 February 2021

A little more on your audience

'Tom' from the Zero Tolerance films - Recognising Restrictive Practices

Steps for creating Plain Language plans

1. Think of your audience.
2. **Simplify font, layout and design.**
3. Use simple language and structure.
4. Test it with your audience.

Modified from Five Steps to Plain Language (centerforplainlanguage.org) sourced 8 February 2021

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Nation shudders at large block of uninterrupted text

The ONION, 3 March 2010

Which Regulated Restrictive Practices Guide do you want to read?

Environmental restraint

What is environmental restraint? Section 6(e) of the NDIS (Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support) Rules 2018 defines environmental restraint as follows: "*environmental restraint, which restricts a person's free access to all parts of their environment, including items or activities*". It includes practices that are beyond ordinary community standards for the purposes of addressing a behaviour of concern that can cause harm to persons with disability and/ or others. An example of ordinary community practice includes locking the front door at night for safety (the person is still able to leave their home if they choose to). Environmental restraint can be difficult to identify, as this category of restriction is broad and vast. Knowing when a practice is an environmental restraint and considering the potential impact to the person is necessary to protecting the dignity and human rights of people with disability, and reducing and eliminating its use.

NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (2020). *Regulated Restrictive Practices Guide.* Penrith, Australia: NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. Accessed at https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/document/2386 on the 8 December 2020.

Environmental restraint

What is environmental restraint?

Section 6(e) of the NDIS (Restrictive Practices and Behaviour Support) Rules 2018 defines environmental restraint as follows:

> "environmental restraint, which restricts a person's free access to all parts of their environment, including items or activities".

It includes practices that are beyond ordinary community standards for the purposes of addressing a behaviour of concern that can cause harm to persons with disability and/ or others. An example of ordinary community practice includes locking the front door at night for safety (the person is still able to leave their home if they choose to).

Environmental restraint can be difficult to identify, as this category of restriction is broad and vast. Knowing when a practice is an environmental restraint and considering the potential impact to the person is necessary to protecting the dignity and human rights of people with disability, and reducing and eliminating its use.

2. Simplified font, layout and design

When a family member arrives at her home, help Rose unlock and open the door. Without her family noticing, **quietly prompt** Rose to welcome them in.

When a family member arrives at her home, help Rose unlock and open the door. Without her family noticing, *quietly prompt* Rose to welcome them in.
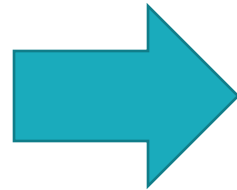
Talk with Tim EVERY TIME YOU DO THE TASK TOGETHER.

Talk with Tim **every time** you do the task together.

2. Simplify font, layout and design

- Meaningful headings

- Use short paragraphs.

- Some experts suggest using a 1.5 line spacing.

- Use some white space between key points.

- Justify to the left.

Environmental restraint

What is environmental restraint?

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> "environmental restraint, which restricts a person's free access to all parts of their environment, including items or activities".

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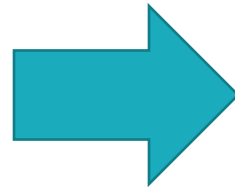
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2. Simplified font, layout and design

Fonts

- Use a consistent font.
- Use simple Sans Serif font like:
  - Arial,
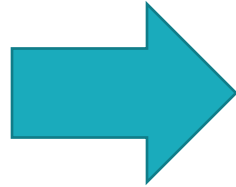 - Veranda, or
  - Calibri

Sans Serif   Serif

When a family member arrives at her home, help Rose unlock and open the door. Without her family noticing, <u>quietly prompt</u> Rose to welcome them in.

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2. Simplified font, layout and design

Fonts
- Do not use full capitals.
  THIS IS HARD TO READ.

Talk with Tim **every time** you do the task together.

Talk with Tim <u>every time</u> you do the task together.

2. Simplify font, layout and design

Nighttime Procedure: Help Jessie prepare for the next day
When Jessie wakes up she will sometimes self-harm by hitting her head with her hairbrush. When Jessie knows what she is doing the next day she is less likely to do this.

Use the Day Planner each night to help her choose where she is going...

...
_____
Daytime Procedure: Getting ready on the day
Help Jessie pack her bag ....

What to do if plans need to be changed
...

Day Planner Sample - (livingwellwithautism.com)

2. Simplified font, layout and design

Font
❑ Use a consistent simple font
❑ Do not use full capitals.

Layout
❑ Use meaningful headings
❑ Break the content up into short sections
❑ Use short paragraphs
❑ Use bullet point lists.

Design
❑ Use white space between key points
❑ Some experts suggest using 1.5 line spacing
❑ Justify to the left.

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Steps for creating Plain Language plans

1. Think of your audience.
2. Simplify font, layout and design.
3. **Use simple language and structure.**
4. Test it with your audience.

3. Use simple language and structure

| reinforced | function | PBSP |

| escalation | antecedent | environmental |

Avoid jargon or if needed explain specialist terms

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3. Use simple language and structure

a number of	some, many, few
assist	help, support , guide
cease	stop, end
cognisant of	aware of, know
prior to	before

Australian government (2021) Plain language and word choice | Style Manual https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/format-writing-and-structure/clear-language-and-writing-style/plain-language-and-word-choice Accessed at 22/02/2021

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3. Use simple language and structure

1. Cross out what is not needed.
2. Highlight what is important.

The preparation of the day bag is essential to avoiding escalation with Jessie. Staff should prepare the day bag with all the things she might need. It should have a water bottle, a small snack, her wallet, emergency information, and any small items from her statue collection that Jessie wants to take with her when she goes to the shops or the beach.

National Disability Services

3. Use simple language and structure

1. Cross out what is not needed.
2. Highlight what is important.

~~The preparation of the day bag is essen~~tial ~~to avoiding escalation with Jessie. Staff should~~ ~~as~~sist Jessie to ~~prepare the day~~ bag ~~with all the things she might nee~~d. It should have a water bottle, a small snack, her wallet, emergency information, and any small items from her statue collection that Jessie wants to take with her ==when she goes to the shops or the beach.==

3. Use simple language and structure

~~The preparation of the day bag is essen~~tial ~~to avoiding escalation with Jes~~sie. ~~Staff should assi~~st Jessie to ~~prepare the~~ day bag ~~with all the things she might nee~~d. It should have a water bottle, a small snack, her wallet, emergency information, and any small items from her statue collection that Jessie wants to take with her ==when she goes to the shops or the beach.==

Help Jessie pack her bag.

Pack:
- ❑ a water bottle
- ❑ a small snack
- ❑ her wallet
- ❑ emergency information, and
- ❑ 2 or 3 statues from her collection, if she wants these.

3. Use simple language and structure

Active voice tell who is doing what.

They can help readers take responsibility.

Passive voice can send the reader backwards looking for extra information.

They can sometimes be confusing.

3. Use simple language and structure

Passive voice

Active voice

Handwashing needs to be supported by staff each morning before Lenny goes to the toilet.

Support Lenny to wash his hands before he goes to the toilet in the morning.

Breakfast needs to be cooked by Ellie, alongside staff each day.

Help Ellie cook breakfast each day.

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3: Use simple language and structure

❑ Put the important information first – the top of the page, start of the paragraph, start of a sentence.

❑ You can use a conversational tone - 'you', 'we', the person's name.

❑ Use familiar words. For example, 'Daily notes', 'Day Book'.

❑ Use everyday words.

❑ Use the same terms consistently.

❑ Use active sentences.

❑ Leave out details that distract. ~~Even if they are interesting.~~

❑ Use shorter sentences. Aim for an average of 15 to 20 words.

❑ Avoid jargon. Define specialist terms.

Checking readability.

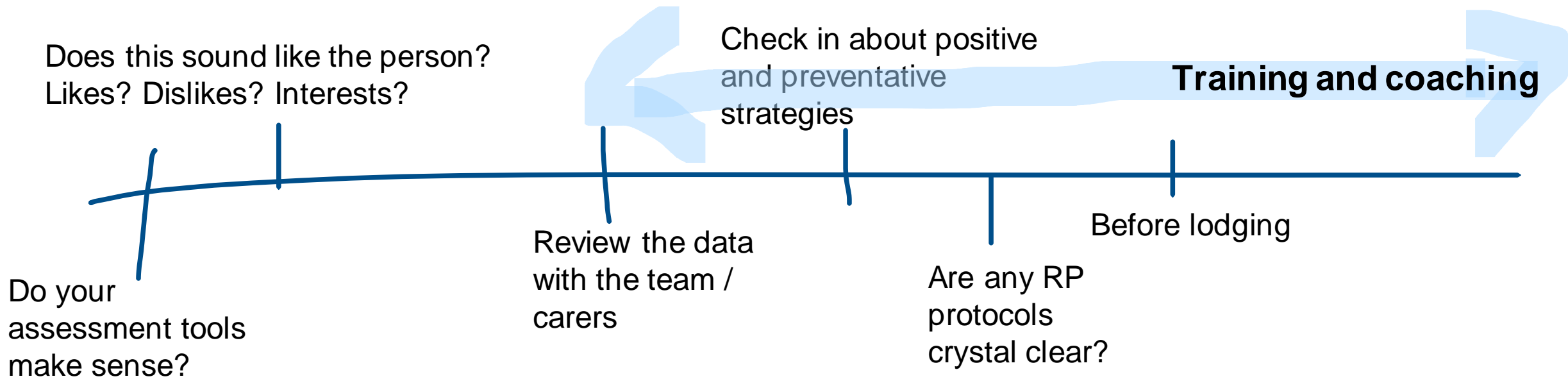# Steps for creating Plain English plans

1. Think of your audience.
2. Simplify font, layout and design.
3. Use simple language and structure.
4. **Test it with your audience.**

Modified from Five Steps to Plain Language (centerforplainlanguage.org) sourced 8 February 2021

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4. Test it with your audience

Times you might share and test your plan (and Plain English)

Does this sound like the person? Likes? Dislikes? Interests?

Check in about positive and preventative strategies

Training and coaching

Do your assessment tools make sense?

Review the data with the team / carers

Are any RP protocols crystal clear?

Before lodging

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4.Test it with your audience

- Build trust
- Model collaboration
- Enhance ownership
- Test social validity
- Collect feedback - along the way

- Flag/prime attention to important information
- Build familiarity and confidence
- Reinforce good practice
- Generate curiosity and 'buy-in'

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Writing practical strategies

Would you buy this jumper?

- HAND WASH COLD
- ONLY NON-CHLORINE BLEACH WHEN NEEDED
- LINE DRY
- DO NOT IRON
- DO NOT DRYCLEAN
- PROFESSIONAL MACHINES WASH OR HAND WASH RECOMMENDED
- DO NOT WASH WITH OTHER ITEMS
- USE LIQUID WOOL/SILK DETERGENT
- DO NOT USE BLEACH AND DETERGENT WITH FLUORESCING AGENT
- RINSE WELL WITH WATER
- AVOID USING HOUSEHOLD WASHING MACHINES AND SPIN DRYERS
- DRIP DRY IN A LOCATION AWAY FROM DIRECT SUNLIGHT
- DO NOT STORE DAMP
- RUB AND STRETCH THE DOWN TO REGAIN ITS LOFT DUE TO THE NATURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FEATHERS, SOME DOWN AND FEATHERS MAY STICK OUT ALONG THE SEAMS FROM FRICTION AND STATIC ELECTRICITY. IN SUCH CASES, DO NOT PULL THE DOWN AND FEATHERS OUT. PULL THEM BACK IN FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE
- PACKAGING THE ITEM FOR A PROLONGED PERIOD OF TIME RESULTS IN WRINKLES
- STRETCH THE WRINKLES AND HANG THE ITEM UNTIL IT RETURNS TO ITS ORIGINAL SHAPE

Can you draw this owl?

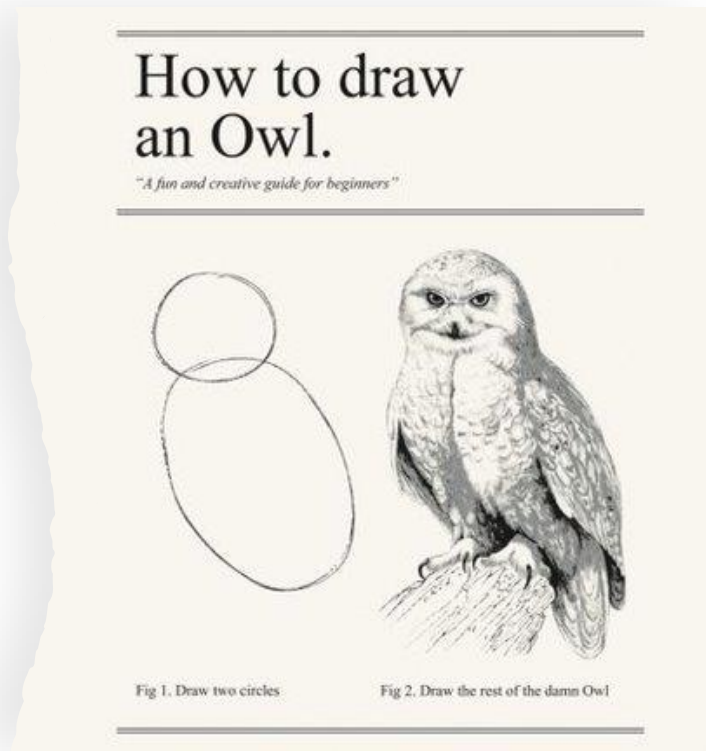How to draw an Owl.

"A fun and creative guide for beginners"

Fig 1. Draw two circles

Fig 2. Draw the rest of the damn Owl

Practical strategies self-assessment

Jessie should go out more often, but not when she's sick. Staff should always be with Jessie when in the community. Be aware of small dogs. She'll need support when she is out to feel less anxious.

Structure mealtimes for Robbie.

Use a communication system to help Lenny tell you he wants to go home, stay out or have sit down

1. Choose a strategy from the list.
2. Decide if it is an Owl, Just Right, or a Laundry list.
3. Talk about what needs to be included to make this a practical strategy.

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Writing strength-based (+Plain English) strategies

Morning Checklist

1. How to help Robbie have a great mealtime

Robbie does his best at mealtimes when:

- ❑ You invite him to **look at the menu together**
- ❑ You **invite Robbie to join meal preparation** – remember it is okay if he doesn't want to. Give Robbie a high-five if he does join in. And give specific praise. For example, "great job putting the carrots in the sink!"
- ❑ You join Robbie at the table and have a **chat about his favourite topics** – football, bridges or his pet bird.

Be aware of what we didn't cover today

Plans need to follow a thorough assessment and meet quality standards.

Good implementation will only happen through active, inclusive training and coaching.

You can use verbal and written plain language strategies in your training. This might include:

- Step-by-step procedures
- Checklists
- Video

Use Easy Read documents to support the involvement of people with disability.

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Why - Mapping to the Convention on the Rights of People with Disability

Right to accessible information - People with disability have the right to express themselves, including the freedom to give and receive information and ideas through all forms of communication, including through accessible formats and technologies…" (Article 21: Accessibility)

Reducing and eliminating the use of restrictive practices (Article 16: Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse)

Resources for plain language and practical writing

Zero Tolerance

Writing in plain language about human rights and positive behaviour support helps the message to be understood.

Zero Tolerance is an initiative led by NDS in partnership with the disability sector. Built around a national evidence-based framework, Zero Tolerance is a way for organisations to understand actions they can do to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect and violence of people with disability. Zero Tolerance - National Disability Services (nds.org.au)

Plain Language Checklists

Checklist for Plain Language | plainlanguage.gov [USA]

Publications Archive - Nala [Ireland – National Adult Literacy Agency]

Five Steps to Plain Language (centerforplainlanguage.org) [USA]

What is plain language? - Plain Language Association International (PLAIN) (plainlanguagenetwork.org)

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Resources for plain language and practical writing

Active and Passive sentences

Change Passive Voice to Active Voice (yourdictionary.com)

How to Use Active Voice in the Sciences | Writing Advice (utoronto.ca)

Australian Government's style manual for:

Inclusive language | Style Manual

Plain language and word choice | Style Manual

Voice and tone | Style Manual (tips about formality and it's compatibility with plain language)

Something for fun

Nine Easy Steps to Longer Sentences | plainlanguage.gov

A resource on accessible communication from Scope Australia
10-Steps-to-Communication-Access.pdf (scopeaust.org.au)

Resources for plain language and practical writing

Resources from the NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission

Interim behaviour support plan template

Comprehensive behaviour support plan template

Regulated Restrictive Practices Guide

Self-assessment Resource Guide for the Positive Behaviour Support Capability Framework

Easy Read development

A Brief Guide to Easy Read: Top Tips Scottish Accessible Information Service (SAIF) (saifscotland.org.uk)

South Australia Government: Easy read | Online Accessibility Toolkit

A guide to making Easy Read information - Office for Disability Issues (odi.govt.nz)

Turning on the Readability Checker in Microsoft Word

How to Test the "Readability" of Your Writing in Microsoft Word or Outlook (howtogeek.com)

National Disability Services

References

Australian government (2021) Plain language and word choice | Style Manual https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/format-writing-and-structure/clear-language-and-writing-style/plain-language-and-word-choice   Accessed at 22/02/2021

Dancer, S., Brown, A.J. & Yanase,L.R.(2017) National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale in Plain English Is Reliable for Novice Nurse Users with Minimal Training. Journal of Emergency Nursing Volume 43, Issue 3, May 2017, Pages 221-227.

Howard, S., & Johnson, B. (2004). Resilient Teachers: Resisting Stress and Burnout. Social Psychology of Education, 7, 399-420. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-004-0975-0 p399 cited in Faleki, D. (2015) Teacher Stress and Wellbeing Literature Review.

Kimble(1996-1997) Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please" Scribes Journal of Legal Writing ,6.

Oppenheimer, D.M. (2006). Consequences of erudite vernacular utilized irrespective of necessity: problems with using long words needlessly. Applied Cognitive Psychology, *20*, 139-156

Plain Language Association International (2020) What is plain language?, PLAIN website, accessed 8/02/2021.

References

Robinson, A & Miller, M. (1996) Making information accessible: developing plain English discharge instructions. Journal of Advanced Nursing **https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1996.22113.x** Accessed on 15/02/2021

Tasmanian Government Communications (2012) Plain language in communication: guide, Tasmanian Government Communications website, accessed 10/02/2021

The Onion (3 March 2010). Nation shudders at large block of uninterrupted text. Accessed at https://www.theonion.com/nation-shudders-at-large-block-of-uninterrupted-text-1819571366 on 15/02/2021.

Victorian Law Reform Commission (Oct 2017) Plain English and the Law - the 1987 report | Victorian Law Reform Commission.Accessed at on 15/02/2021

Wang, J & Du, W. (2019) Factors associated with high psychological distress in primary carers of people with disability. Australian Journal of General Practice. Volume 48, (4). doi: 10.31128/AJGP-04-18-455

Image: Chrisse Maher, 1979. Plain English Campaign from: http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/born_to_crusade.pdf
Image:The Nation Shudders slide Photo by engin akyurt on Unsplash

Thank you for watching this webinar. Wishing you a productive writing week.

Sarah Nicoll

National Practice Lead – Zero Tolerance
sarah.nicoll@nds.org.au

NDS is pleased to be able to provide the Behaviour Support Practitioner Workshops as part of a two-year grant from the **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**, for free to the sector.