1.1 What is the purpose of this chapter? This chapter provides information to Service employees about how to write using plain language.

1.2 What is the objective of this chapter? By using the techniques described in this chapter, Service employees will write documents that are easier to understand.

1.3 What are the authorities for this chapter?

A. Executive memorandum, June 1, 1998, subject: Plain Language in Government Writing.

B. Parts 011 and 318 of the Departmental Manual (DM).

1.4 What is plain language? Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.

1.5 What are the writing techniques for plain language?

A. Organize the content of documents in a logical way. Ask yourself who will read the document and why. Put your document in the order that makes the most sense for the reader:

(1) Chronological,

(2) Most important to least important,

,
(3) By technical topic, procedurally, or

(4) Some other order.

B. Use active voice. When you use active voice, the person or organization responsible for taking the action is the subject of the sentence. It is easier for the reader to tell who should do what.

(1) Examples of active voice:	**(2) Examples of the same sentences in passive voice (makes statements ambiguous):**
(a) The refuge manager assigns tasks to the equipment operator at the beginning of each work day.	**(a)** The equipment operator is assigned tasks at the beginning of each work day.
(b) The Deputy Division Chief approves timesheets on Thursdays.	**(b)** Timesheets are approved on Thursdays.
(c) The Assistant Director – National Wildlife Refuge System reviews the scope of work and either approves or declines to approve it. The Division of Contracting and Facilities Management then advertises it on the Government's procurement web site.	**(c)** The scope of work is reviewed and approved before it is advertised on the Government's procurement web site.

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
INFORMATION AND EXPRESSION

Information and Expression   Part 116 Plain Language Principles in All Communications
Chapter 1 Plain Language in Fish and Wildlife Service Documents   116 FW 1

C. Use short sentences that are easy to understand. Break up long, complicated, or run-on sentences into multiple sentences.

D. Keep your language simple. Many Government documents are full of stilted, formal language that the reader cannot comprehend.

(1) Use "we" or "our" instead of "the Service."

(2) Use "must", "should," or "will" instead of "shall."

(3) Speak directly to the reader.

(4) Use common, every-day words.

(5) If you are writing about regulations and laws, do not present text from the regulation or law verbatim. Instead, paraphrase so your reader can understand the meaning.

E. Avoid jargon. Avoid technical and legal jargon whenever possible. When you must use technical terms that only certain people will recognize, be sure to define them.

F. Minimize the use of acronyms. When you must use acronyms, spell them out the first time you use them.

G. Use vertical lists to make it easier for the reader to scan the document. Exhibit 1 is an example of how much easier it is to read a vertical list than a large block of text.

H. Use tables and charts to present complex information. Tables and charts make it easy for the reader to locate information and to make comparisons.

I. Use examples to illustrate explanations. Sometimes a short, concrete example helps the reader to understand a complex idea. When appropriate, use examples instead of long blocks of text.

1.6 Why should authors use plain language? We serve the public. We want to present information to the public in a clear way so that they can understand it.

1.7 Where can I find more information about plain language?

A. The Government's Plain Language Action and Information Network sponsors a web site with a lot of information on using plain language.

B. Contact our Division of Policy and Directives Management (PDM). The PDM employees who help with regulations, directives, information collection, and forms can help you with plain language principles.

Acting
DIRECTOR

Date: **JAN 2 4 2006**