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>> Good afternoon, this is Janet [Indiscernible last name] with Web Manager University. We will be starting the webinar shortly. If you need any technical assistance, please e-mail us at webmanageruniversity@gsa.gov, or call us at 202-208-0668.

>> hello, this is Janet [Indiscernible last name] with Web Manager University again. Don't you know that today's webinar is going to be an interactive webinar. So, to participate and provide feedback, please click on the race and icon, and using audio option to unmute. If you don't have that option, you can participate by writing feedback or comments in the chat box. With that said, I am going to introduce Catherine [Indiscernible last name] who will give the introduction.

>> Good afternoon. Tran5 John Strylowski is a -- he has even more experience as a victim of poorly written and baffling material. For these reasons, John is a longtime member of the plain language action and information network. Plain language talk of, -- plainlanguage.gov.

>> Since the 1990s, he has conducted -- for writers in the state of New Jersey, and the province of Ontario. He also has collaborated on handbooks and directives for government writers. Some of his recent projects include completely revising the Department of the Interior's freedom of information act regulation, and we ordered missing regulations for the National Park Service. John has a BA from the University of Wisconsin, and an MA from the Catholic University of America. After leaving undergraduate school, he spent two years as a Peace Corps in Brazil. He has done his -- and regulatory analyst.

>> He has also served a term as an elected advisory neighborhood commissioner and the District of Columbia. And, he has been giving a version of this presentation for the last 12 years at Tulane University's international legislative drafting Institute, where attendees include legislators, jurors, and attorneys from all over the world. We are very happy to have you here today, John.

>> Thank you, I am really happy to be here today, and I'm very gratified to see that we've got several of hundreds of attendees. This is really exciting. A great chance to reach a very wide and diverse audience. Let me start off with a word from our sponsors. I am here, thanks to my supervisors here at the Department of the Interior who have been very supportive of plain language. And I'm also here, as you heard, as a member of the plain language action and information network. We are a group of mid-level federal employees to prepare strongly plain language, and are doing everything we can to make it the standard for writing traffic -- throughout the federal government. We have been doing this since the 1990s, and one of the things we do is going to federal agencies, free of charge, and make recent patients of the chart I am going to make today.

>> If you're interested in having this training in person at your agency, please get in touch with us by going to our website at plainlanguage.gov, and there is a link on there where you can trust -- for questioning. They usually last three hours include a lot of material similar to what I'm going over with you today. They also include exercises, so that you have a chance to practice material.

>> So, that is a further resource for you. And I want to encourage you out, -- I want to include you, as well, to go to the plainlanguage.gov website. There are a lot of resources. Among them are the plain language federal guidelines which are coming to direct. They are significant because they are related to the plain writing act of 2010. You are all probably familiar with the act which became effective on October 13, and it requires all of us in the federal government to write much everything that we produce for public consumption in plain language.

>> The act says that those guidelines are the standards we already use. If you are familiar with act at all, and you may be, that may be one reason you're on the call today, but he will be aware that the act specifically excludes regulations. Not because they do not need to plain language, but because basically, that was the price of getting the act fast. I'll share with you today some other mandates that we all have for writing regulations in plain language. So, we are under that mandate. I hope you'll keep that in mind as we go through the presentation today.

>> I do have on my first flight here, my e-mail address, and I also invite you to contact me if you have any questions about any of the material we were not able to answer today. More importantly, I hope you will feel free to speak up if you have any questions as we go along. We will pause at several points and ask for input.

>> Now, I have been giving this presentation, as I said in the introduction, since the 1990s and I have gone to many different kinds of agencies and spoken to many kinds of audiences. Of course, everyone I talk to is already a good writer, as I am sure each of you on. So, I would suggest to people a couple of attitudes as we approach this material.

>> One is that we are all public servants. And I think that writing more clearly, writing in the way that speaks, not just to us in our politics, but most importantly, it addresses and speaks directly to the audience is the biggest thing that we can do as public servants in many cases, to do our job better, and to provide better service to the people who pay our salaries.

>> Believe me, I constantly keep this in mind and it is a powerful motivator for being as enthused as I am about plain men which.

>> The second attitude I suggest is to regard writing of a journey. A journey where you never really arrive at the end. So there is always something to learn, always a way to improve. And I hope that you will keep those two things in mind as we go to the presentation today. What I'm going to do is to share with you just a few of the ideas of Plain Language. There are many were things I could talk about, even in the hour and a half I have today. But, I have selected the six topics we are going to go over and grill down in a little bit of depth, and talk about them and discuss why they are important, we can apply them when writing regulations.

>> I am going to try to make you as comfortable as I can with material, by citing experts in the field who offers -- experts in the field who have written books about this and legal drafters to increase your comfort level with this. I will say, if you are concerned about precedent, many federal agencies are already practicing the techniques we will talk about today, and specifically, my department, the Department of Indian trader -- the Department of the Interior, this is how your actions. Are they much better than they --

>> Let me share a bit of a quote with you here. I think this is very interesting because it kind of indicates very nicely with a lot of people think about the way that we federal employees right, and specifically writing regulations. This comes from a book by Rudolph Flesch, published back in 1946, called The Art of Plain Talk. In the book, he cites several obscurely written regulations and track the material from the Federal Register. After he goes through them, you can imagine how hard they are to read. This is what he says.

>> "Slowly, we begin to understand. Government writing is not supposed to be read at all. It simply prints things so that someday, somewhere, some government official can say, 'yes, but it says in the federal government -- but it says in the Federal Register ', all of this government stuff, in other words, it's not reading matter, but prefabricated parts of quarrels." I think that is what a lot of people think. We are not writing to each other, we are providing in Spanish and -- we are providing ammunition for future quarrels.

>> I think one thing we regularly forget if it is agreed, we are writing instructions. We are trying to instruct members of the public and other audiences and help to comply, how to do things that we want them to do. Sometimes we forget that very, very basic and, as our minds are cluttered up with things that we are copying. Bad examples, or whatever. I start off with this quote to put us back on track a little bit.

>> On the next screen, I have a sample here of the enemy. This is not plain writing. It is actually not federal regulatory plain writing. It is very unclean. But I want you to look at this, read it through, and then I'm going to ask you to tell me what you think this is and what it came from. So, take a second to read that over and I'll ask for input.

>> I am actually going to come and probably before you had a chance to read that. Basically because I am a nice guy and I don't believe in torturing people unnecessarily. Can we open the phones now and ask for somebody to tell us what you think that is that you are looking at there?

>> well, John, while we are reading, and please remember if you cannot raise your hand, you can also type your comments in the chat box. I had somebody ask to talk about whether it is a credit card agreement.

>> Oh, very close. Very close indeed. It is actually part of the loan agreement that you used to sign for Citibank. Very good. I was going to ask what people thought of it, but maybe you all have your own thoughts and I bet they're all pretty identical. So, we'll kind of cross over that. I like to put this up because it comes from what I call, the real world outside of the federal government.

>> It is the kind of thing that many of us have been exposed to, which is another reason I like to use it. And I also like to use it because it is something that most of us find baffling. One of the things I like to do in these presentations, especially when I have exercises, is to produce and use the feeling of bafflement and bewilderment, frustration, anger that you get by reading poorly written material.

>> What we have here is a very small part of the loan agreement that Citibank used to require folks to sign when they borrowed money from the bank. And, there is a wonderful story behind this, which is another reason I use it. Back in the late 1970s, they were concerned about the large number of defaults they were having. People who are borrowing money, signing this agreement, and not paying it. They wanted to cut that said they would decrease expenses and so on and so forth. So, they decided as part of their looks, they decided to look at the loan program, and is part of that, they looked at the agreement. What I have given you is only a small part of it, which would you actually get when he signed the agreement was a legal sized sheet of paper that was dense with gray matter, and the gray matter with material, just like this. This is again, just a small sample. You signed it and we're agreeing to certain things.

>> When they looked at the program, they said, could it possibly be one reason we are having a problem with people paying? Could it be that the loan agreement itself is a problem? Maybe people aren't understanding what they are agreeing to. So, to their credit, they decided that yes, maybe this is part of the problem and they would look at this and revise it and radically revise it, in fact. What they came up with was the first widespread store that I know of, of applying these principles of plain language to a document that many people that you see.

>> By the way, I will tell you, what you have here is actually two sentences from the loan agreement. If you look at the first sentence, it starts online one and goes until 94. That is bad enough. The second starts online 4, and it keeps on going. I have never counted the number of words in it, but I'm sure it is an overwhelming number of words. And I'm sure that most of us in one reading could not tell what they are talking about. And that many of us after several readings still would not be sure what they're talking about.

>> Let me show you know, I told you that they radically revise it. On the next screen here, I am showing you the text that premature replace those two sentences that you saw on the preceding screen. I am hoping that you are gasping with amazement and just dumbfounded by how much is your end better this is three. Take a second and look at that.

>> And I'm sure you'll agree, it is radically different from what we saw in the previous screen there. What a to-do is now open up the phones again. There are some very specific ways that this revised text is different from the text that you saw in the previous screen. And I would like to ask you to tell me some of these specific ways that this is different. Can we get people to raise their hand and volunteer that for us?

>> Please remember that you can type in the chat box as well. However, we do have a couple of volunteers.

>> Take it away.

>> We are actually going to go to [Indiscernible name].

>> [Indiscernible name], are you out there?

>> Okay, we are going to try giving it to Walton Stallings.

>> Hey, Walton. Go ahead, please.

>> [Pause] schema --

>> Maybe we need to move on.

>> Let's see. No, we actually have a few. Kathy Fisher, are you on? Well, we have a lot of comments coming in, John.

>> Okay. Are there some that you can read?

>> Yes, I can. The first one I have is, the sentence is radically decrease.

>> Excellent, very good. Much shorter. Okay, what else?

>> It is directed at the audience and the second person.

>> Good, okay, we use pronouns. Very good.
>> The person seemed to get rid of legal [Indiscernible].
>> Beautiful, that is exactly right. And they replaced that with accessible everyday words that you and I would be more likely to encounter in our everyday conversations. What else?
>> They used regular work instead of jargon.
>> Okay, good. Same idea.
>> This sentence was active rather than passive.
>> Beautiful. Big price to that person. If you don't know what we mean by active rather than passive, don't worry because I promise that you will by the end of the presentation.
>> Use of a more positive tone.
>> Positive tone, very nice.
>> And, do you want to try to see if we can bring up the lines again?
>> I don't think there is a need. Maybe we'll try it again later. You have gotten most of the points. Very good. One that did not come up in the answers but probably somebody was trying to call him -- call in with, we do have a having which we did not have before. Those very specific techniques are what contributed to making this revised loan agreement much, much more readable. And, you will not be suppressed, I am sure, when I stated that Citibank implemented this revised form and what they found was that the number of defaults that they had went down, pretty significantly. More people were paying.
>> When you think about it, it is not hard to understand why. You had people actually reading the agreement, whereas the old agreement, I think most people would be very unlikely to have read. Going back to the old agreement, if they read that, I think they would have been very unlikely to understand it correctly, whereas this new or revised version, they can read it, more than likely will be able to understand it, and that puts them in a position where they can do what we really wanted. Remember, we are really writing instructions here. It puts them in a position to pay the money. And the way that we wanted, when we need it, and so forth. This is successful publication, facilitated very nicely by plain language. You go back to the first one. I will say that sometimes, I have done this with many ion -- kind of audiences and sometimes they get an astute observer who will go back to this earlier side and say, well, you must shade of meaning that was captured in this particular phrase or that particular phrase. That is one of the points of this. We are not talking about taking an existing document that is in legalese, and translating as if it were in French and your 22 word for word translation.
>> We are talking about completely rethinking a document. Completely revising it and pulling it down. Along with principles of plain language. What do I mean by plain language? Very simply, written communication that your readers can understand the first time they waited. Not that you can understand the first time you read it, but your readers. And you'll have a course for every kind of document you write. You are going to have a different kind of audience. Regulations. We are usually writing to a broad spectrum of readers. We have to take consideration of the entire spectrum into mind. Excuse me, keep those needs in mind and write the document in a way that will be understandable to people across the spectrum. So, if we do this successfully, epidemic which document is going to meet three criteria. Our readers are going to be able to find what they need, so it will be organized to meet their needs, rather than ours. So they will understand what they find. We will clearly address them in everyday language. And then they will be able to use what they find to meet their needs. Unlike you saw in this Citibank before and after, the after one contained much less material. So, we will rethink our documents, leaving out what is unnecessary. Leaving out material that may be nice to know, or that maybe we think is needed for this or that reason, preparing it down to the bare essentials.
>> Now, bear in mind, when Citibank revised platform, you can imagine who's in favor of the old form and can imagine who was against the revision.
>> Those people had good reasons for their attitude. They had good reasons for being afraid of taking that leap into the future into clearly written material. Among those reasons were probably things that they would use to imitating poorly written and -- Britain presidents. They were trained to rely upon what had worked, based upon lawsuits that have been heard in the past. What we are saying here is, we think these ideas. We are saying that when we were -- rewrite them into plainly put, we would use techniques that did not come out of my mind or people sitting in a table,

these are research tested techniques that rely upon the way we read and understand written material.

>> They are also more importantly for purposes of regulatory writing. The techniques advocated by the preeminent experts in legal drafting today. And I'm going to be mentioning some of them as we go along. But I will introduce them right now. The first one is Brian A. Garner, the editor of [Indiscernible name], he is the author of many books, many, many wonderful books. One of them I am looking at here that he has written recently is called Legal Writing in Plain English, a text with exercises. He has his own idea of modern legal usage and a bunch of other things. He is very much behind these techniques, doing all he can to ensure that they become the standards of legal writing.

>> Another expert is Richard C. [Indiscernible last name], now a professor of law at the University of California at Davis. He has a wonderful book. These will come back when I recommend books at the end. It is called plain language for lawyers. I will cite other graphic experts as we go along.

>> So, I recognize that we are going a little bit beyond what some people may have been comfortable with in the past. Some of those things you may have been taught in the past. But, maybe it will comfort you to know that the book, plain English for lawyers, is a textbook in many law schools around the country. As a deal with young attorneys here, many are familiar with this book because they have had it as a text.

>> So, with that little introduction and look at what plain language doesn't look like, and what plain language does look like, let me introduce the six main elements we will be covering in the remainder of the presentation. We are going to talk about organizing documents to meet the readers needs, as we just covered in a previous overhead. We will talk about you and other pronouns to address the audience directly. And yes, this works in regulations. We have plenty of regulations on the books where we do this. We will talk operating in the active voice, rather than the passive. We will talk about using common, everyday words, rather than Mrs. Dash unnecessary conflict of sandwich.

>> We are never advocating leaving out necessary technical terms, they always have to be there. It is the other ceramic unnecessarily complicated word that we want to get rid of. We are going to write source said Mrs., sort paragraph, -- we are going to write short sentences, short paragraphs, because brevity is the best way to comedic it. There is a school of thought out there I call it, -- I am here to tell you, that simply is not accurate. You can split of complex ideas into several sentences and they work just as well. In fact, experience shows they work a lot better.

>> Lastly, we will talk about using lists and tables as powerful visual tools to help your reader navigate through the material, and help them kind of diagram through the ideas. To help people quickly pick up the points you are trying to make.

>> Now, this list that I am sharing with you here is important, for what it is, of course. But also important for where it comes from. Back in 1998, June 1, 1998, the president of the United States signed a memorandum of requiring all federal employees to write everything we send out to the public in plainly with. That specifically did include regulations.

>> That memo is still on the books. It has never been revoked. And, if you go to our website, you'll find a link to it by clicking around. It is on there. And, this list I am sharing with you here comes privilege were forward from the presidential memo. So, this is part of our mandate, too.

>> So, we will go over these. As I said, this does not cover the whole gamut of plain language, but these are the perfect -- principal techniques. And we will only two other things as we go along. First, I want to cover some extra points. Let's move on to the first one. A lot of people, when they come to my presentations or ask about plain language, a lot of times you see negative feeling out there because people have misconceptions about what plain language is. They think it somehow means writing less precisely. Not at all.

>> I want to say. Clearly, that the choice between writing a technically and legal document in writing a clear and understandable document is a false choice. It does not have to be either or. You can have your cake and eat it too, in this case. Now, is it right -- harder to write a legal document in plain language? Absolutely. But, it is a challenge that gets me excited about plain language, frankly, and makes me

eager to come to work every day. Because it is a real intellectual challenge to try to take this complex material and put it into everyday terms so that we can communicate successfully with a wide spectrum of people.

>> Similarly, we are not talking about being too elementary or too silly. All kinds of very sophisticated documents are in this plain language style and they work very well. Again, it is not easy to do, but the time and effort you take is going to be worthwhile. I think we will see more about that in a minute. We are definitely not talking about writing to a certain grade level.

>> I go to agencies and they say to write everything at a seventh grade level or fifth grade level or what have you. There are certain assumptions behind this grade level thing, and they don't always work. What we are advocating is following these six points I will talk with you about today. You will just naturally have written a perfectly for your audience, and of course, we have audiences of all different levels and sophistication, but a clearly written document is going to appeal and be successful across that spectrum.

>> Once again, we are never advocating leaving out technical terms, either. On the next flight, we don't often think about this, but we save money by writing clearly. Writing in plain language. And I want to go down a list here of costs in a standing order, because every time we do produce a clearly written document, it costs us, whether we stop to think about it or not. If we have a clearly written document, you may have to -- you have to answer calls for people to figure out what you're kind of them. Of course, every phone call you take his time away from your job and your not doing what you're supposed to be doing. When you are not doing whatever your job is. That is time you have had to take if you had taken them initially to write whatever document it is clearly in the first place.

>> I will mention, I like to mention as many examples as I can here. The Department of Veterans Affairs has really embraced plain language and taken it to heart. Right now, we're not talking about their regulations. They are trying in regulations, but their particular success design for my width has been in letters. If you can imagine, Veterans Affairs has a lot of letters they sent out to veterans benefits, when they are eligible for them, how they qualify, and so forth. They were getting large numbers of phone calls about these letters, because they were poorly written in a pure graphic style, and -- in a bureaucratic style, and we would get them and not understand them and call.

>> They have embraced plain language, rewritten letters, and found that the number of calls have decreased dramatically. Again, dramatic cost savings.

>> I have another story about that comes from the world of regulations. Way back, in the 1970s, the Federal Communications Commission broke the first plain language regulation. It followed all of the principles we're going to talk about today. Pronounced, active voice, questions, a very big success. So big, in fact, this was a regulation that they had about using citizen band radios. After they rewrote the regulation in plain which, well, before they did it, they have five people who answer phone calls all day long for people with questions about what they could and could not do with their radio.

>> When they publish the revised regulation, they were able to reassign all of those people because the number of phone calls declined dramatically. There is a very real concrete cost savings as a result of putting things into plain language.

>> Similarly, the next step up the chain, if people can't or are not inclined to call you, they are going to write an e-mail, send you a letter, and every letter and enough and you get that you have to take extra time to answer, more time taken away from your job, and other costs.

>> I like to remind people that in all of these instances, we are talking not only about cost in terms of money, we are talking about a cost in terms of public relations. Because, if you are a veteran, you get the letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs that you cannot understand, you call them, you're not going to be charitably disposed toward them when you pick up the phone to call them.

>> You may even be a little angry. I know you would be surprised here, there are negative feeling out there about the federal government. A lot of it is based upon written material people get from us. So, every time that we can send folks is something that is written more clearly, I think we are doing just a bit more to improve the reputation of the federal government and federal employees.

>> Sometimes, if you have a fairly and clearly written doctrine, you'll have to make an explanatory document. We have an example of that right here in the Department of

the Interior. The National Park Service has a regulation, the Cape Cod national seashore, telling people when and how they can use off-road vehicles. This came to power off a few years ago. They had rewritten it and revise it. But, it was not in plain language and was a werewolf rules. What we found out is that -- it was a horrible rule. We found out is that folks in the park actually agreed that it was a werewolf.

>> Being that it was oriented toward -- they produce a publication in the park, a little brochure, that told people what they could and could not do in the park. Very commendable, I think. But, think about that. That was an expense when they were producing a brochure, they were not out there, and they were doing other duties as Rangers. Another problem you could possibly have as a result of that is maybe those well-intentioned Rangers up there in the park misinterpreted the regulation. Quite possible. So, if they are handing out a brochure and somebody is ticketed for a violation that isn't covered in the brochure, but is covered in the regulation, you can imagine the feeling in the park service.

>> So, a potential problem, and certainly a case of unnecessary expense. That story has a happy ending. Because, we rewrote the regulation for them in plainly which. And, they were very pleased with it. When it came to meet with us about it, to our surprise, the first thing we said if they were very pleased with it. The second thing is that most significantly worse than now we can do away with the brochure. We can give people a copy of the regulation. It is that much clearer. That is our ultimate goal. To do away with explanatory documents.

>> Finally, the worst cost or result they even have is that you can end up in court. Now, believe me, this does not happen often enough to suit me, but you should know that it does happen. One case that I can share with you coming in to get this information from the national public radio program marketplace, the Baltimore gas and electric Company had a legal document that contained a single sentence in it that was 400 words long. The sentence took up an entire page in the document. Baltimore gas and electric was sued, they specifically on this 400 word sentence. When they went to court, the judge called the sentence a wounded dog. Attorneys in the case tied to diagram the sentence to help the judge figure out, I would like to have seen a diagram. They were not too successful because they lost the case and believe me, they are now writing their documents in plain language. So, you can end up in court, and I do have another case here on the next flight that hit the little close to home.

>> It involves the old immigration and naturalization service. You can see the details there on the screen, but basically, they were hauled into court over a requirement that a regulation that required people to complete certain forms. They contended in their lawsuit that it was not clear. Reading tool, you could not see that you have to fill out forms. Guess what? The judge agreed with them. With the result that you see on the screen. So, here is an example that -- not only in cost of terms of money, not only in cost of public affairs, but Ashley national -- actually, national service appears -- we have a spectrum of cost and it is important to remember that it can't cost us money -- that it can cost us money.

>> As I promised, I promised to share with you the mandates that require us to write regulations in plain language. There are three executive orders, and they won't bore you with reading the particulars. But, there are three executive orders that do require a severe specifically to write out documents in plain language to make them simple and easy to understand.

>> So, we are under that mandate. Unfortunately, we have been lobbying for a plain language firing squad, but it has not been established yet. It is important to know that those mandates are out there. Another question I like to address up front. Many people ask, or judge is going to do that plain language? Well, Joe Campbell, another legal drafting expert and professor at the law school out of Michigan decided to test that. Joe is a good friend and colleague, and a longtime advocate of plain language. He decides to test this idea that plain language would not be acceptable in a court.

>> He came up with separate examples of legal documents and broke each one and traditional legalese, and then had a plain language version. He sent them out to judges and lawyers in four different states and ask them, which would you prefer? He did not call them good and bad, not plain and unplayed, just A and B.

>> The reason I'm sharing with this -- ranging in this -- Randy from 80 to 86%, respondents prefer plain language version. So, this looks very good and if -- in a

legal context. Sometimes I have people ask me, has this language been litigated? No, it hasn't, and I think that is very significant. That reminds me, the very first plain language course I took was taught by an attorney. He said, when you base your writing upon legal precedent, upon them which has been litigated, what are you doing? What you're really doing, if you're copying language that was poor enough to have been litigated in the first place. So, you are copying back models that are perpetuating. I am asking you to take that leap of faith here. Write clearly, and then surprise, you'll find that you have probably done a good job and don't have any legal worries.

>> So, that takes care of some of the preparatory material. Let's talk about ready for your audience. Basically, think about why they need to report document. Write to the victim of readers that I mentioned, all the way from beginners to advanced people. And he will cover everyone's needs we do that. So, here are some of the attitude they need to have in mind. Don't think about what you want to say. Think about what your audience needs to hear. Don't think about protecting your interests. Think about serving the readers interest. Don't write to impress. Write to communicate. If you keep those attitudes in mind, you're going to be writing very differently. I cannot emphasize this enough. Focusing on the reader, emphasizing the reader, figuring out why they need and what they need to get out of the material you are writing. Think about questions they are likely to have about the material.

>> Organize your material to answer those questions in the order that readers will ask them. The best way to go straight this principle for you, I think is with an example. I have got here a small part of the table of contents of a document. I would like you to look through the table of contents, and then we will ask for participation from the audience here. I would like you to see if you can tell me what this document will be hard to do. Because in fact, this is instructions. Again, it is only part of the table of contents, but see if you can tell me what that told me to do.

>> Please remember, you can type your comments in the chat box, or you can raise your hand. If you raise or hand, it is important to be calling in with the telephone. Or you, you can use audio options.

>> Anybody have a guess?

>> They are not typing in yet. Okay, we had one that came in. The first is business guidelines.

>> What kind of guidelines?

>> Business guidelines.

>> They are a type of business guidelines, sure.

>> Public government report?

>> You are getting very close.

>> Writing statutes?

>> Very close indeed. This is actually part of the handbook that we have in our office telling you how to write federal regulations. So, you actually did some very good guesses. I tried this with many different audiences and people have trouble guessing.

>> We have a few more.

>> I'm sorry, do I want to do what?

>> Do you want to see if someone is closer?

>> Let's hear a couple more. It would be interesting to hear what people thought.

>> Clearance and publication for something. Policy statements and guidelines.

>> Again, pretty close. Pretty astute audience. That is good.

>> [Laughing]

>> A lot of people struggle with this, though. And the reason, I would submit, is that you have general or generic headings here that really aren't terribly descriptive and don't give a very clear idea of what you do. Another problem I have with the way this is organized, we talk about headings. Not being -- the important material is not upfront. It is kind of all over the place. This was written for the author, not for the user. We, as I said, this is a document reproduced in my office. We rethought it using principles that we are advocating today. This is part of the table of contents that replace what you saw on the previous screen.

>> Now, there is not a level of headings that I'm giving you here that was missing on the previous screen. But, I'm sure you'll see the difference. We don't beat around the bush. We actually talk specifically about what it is we are doing. Instead of these general things, preparation and content review for memory and uses,

how to publish a rule. Regulatory planning. And then, underneath that, headings for each individual section. We actually have in the form of questions. We are very strong advocates of question and answer format, even for regulations? This particular drug is not a regulation but we have many of the books in this question and answer format. That is our model in the Department of the Interior. Almost all are in question and answer format.

>> If that is not working for you for whatever reason, no problem, as long as you have a more informative heading. Turn those questions around and make them into statements. Looking at questions we have here, if you cannot say what is a rule, you could say definition of a rule. How do I publish a rule could become how to publish a rule. Number 1.3 could become the difference between a proposed and final rules. You get the idea.

>> So, I'm going to suggest to close for good organization. The first is to use more informative headings. I am sure that you saw between those two examples, one or two were having forces were reader and work a lot harder. We do think that question headings are better, because they really kind of duplicate without process. They show the reader that you are identifying with them. I am sure you will agree with me that there is a dramatic sign that this is a different kind of document. Because most of us are not accustomed to picking up a federal regulation and seeing it in the form of a question and answer period it catches your attention right away.

>> So, it is a sign that it is a dramatically different kind of document. People are used to seeing this because we are all familiar now with Brickley asked questions. -- we are all familiar with frequently asked questions that we see on websites. Again, if it doesn't work for you, turn the question around and make a statement. If you are concerned about precedent, as I said, we have many regulations on the books. And a lot of documents of other kinds, insurance possible -- insurance policies. Many of them use question and answer format. A very powerful tool. Do be careful, any technique can be abused. We have actually seen this in some regulations were they just work that heading to death. So, you have a heading, am I eligible for benefits if I'm right [Indiscernible] the text is, yes.

>> You have put the cart before the horse. You want a more informative heading, but don't put the answer in the heading. Just say, when am I eligible for benefits? Put the details in the answer. The second tool for good organization. Make sure the important material is upfront. Now, most of us in the way that we are accustomed to writing, whether they are reports, preamble to regulations, regulations themselves, any kind of writing at all. Even an e-mail. We violate this principle all over the place. Probably you are going to turn the organization -- start with general and go to specific. Start with a summary, don't end with it. And then detailed the process. If you're making a request, but upfront. If you're writing anymore, don't say, we have five new employees, they all work eight hour shifts, they are all working full-time, we don't have anybody on flextime, we have only got four computers, we need a new computer. Start off by saying, we need a new computer. And for the reasons afterwards.

>> Similarly, don't build up your conclusions in any kind of a document. Especially a regulation. We are not writing novels. Give away the plot ending right up front. Tell the people the conclusion right up front, and then set out the analysis. The idea is that we are writing the news. Putting a summary of front in the first paragraph and first section where people can wrap their mind around the entire idea, and then developing it later on in the following material.

>> So, that is organizing to surf your reader. This is a good point to pause for a first questions if anybody has any questions or thoughts about what we have covered in the Citibank before and after, about organizing to your reader, about how you do that, what goes up front, etc. Any questions?

>> Hello, John. We do have a few. The first question, why does it say, you can't accept payment? wouldn't the applicant be making payments instead of accepting them?

>> That is a very astute question, and one that I don't get too often. That has to do, in the Citibank example, you are a good observer to have asked that question. It has to do with the nature of the instrument. Think of it this way. If I go into for money from Citibank, if I did not have that agreement there, they would want me to write them basically a letter saying, I am borrowing \$500 for you -- from you, excuse me, I will pay it back in three months. I will pay you a monthly installments of a certain amount of dollars. If I might go to this, if I may, I will do that. And

if I don't do it, you can send me to jail.

>> It is because of the nature of the instrument. Even the Citibank were performing get people to sign, the idea is, it is an agreement that I., the bar work, and making. So the eye refers to the power, and you refers to the bank. We are going to talk about using pronouns in a minute, but in a reservation, you can refer to the agency as we at the public as you.

>> Does plain language regulation open a government agency up to adverse legal action or using -- losing administrative law cases?

>> Though, and planning which does that. Plain language does just the opposite. Reduces litigation. And, the example that I shared with you about Baltimore gas and electric are wonderful examples. The INS is wonderful examples. Those were not plain language documents. I would contend, and other experts would back me up on this, that what loses the case is poorly written, excessively legal documents. To me, in the Baltimore gas case, I prefer the electorate as people wanted a 400 word sentence with any document into what the motives were for putting it there. Of course the answer is, it was probably in there to protect the company from legal liability. It had absolutely the opposite effect.

>> Another participant wanted to know, how do you feel about [Indiscernible name]'s book?

>> I don't have any feelings at all, I'm afraid. Because I have not read it. So sorry if you're out there. But I will read your book and I'm sure I will love it. I think she has written a book about plain language, but it is not one I am familiar with.

>> Okay and then I have a comment.. My favorite bad question heading is, what will occur 540 days after the effective date of these regulations?

>> [Laughing]

>> Okay. This is a good point to say that you can write about regulation using these techniques. Absolutely. I think it is a lot harder to write a bad regulation using these techniques, but that heading that you quoted is one of them that is poorly thought out. I don't have an alternative to suggest right away but I'm sure there is one -- a better way for that to be written.

>> Would you like one more?

>> Sure, go ahead.

>> Job, someone wanted to know, could you provide references for some of the regulations that DOI growth in plain language?

>> Absolutely, the best way to get them is go to the website where we have in terror regulations, but others written in plain language. You can also send me an e-mail. My address is on the first slide. I would be very happy to give you examples. If you wanted to on your own go to 25 CFR or 30 CFR, you'll find a lot of material in there. Can I guarantee that those are all perfect regulations? No. But they are better. Should we forge ahead?

>> Sure. We have one more comment if you're up to it.

>> Sure, go ahead.

>> Okay, the regulations governing the CFR required part headings relate to the subject matter of the revelation and are not descriptive. One CFR 21.19.

>> Okay, that is an interesting comment. I have had similar comments. Sometimes I will go to audiences and people say that the heading is not part of the regulation. Other people say that the heading is part of the regulation. Those are related to this concern. You should know that the legal stuff in the Federal Register is completely on board with plain language and are very supportive of these techniques and have approved all of these question and answer format ones that we have done.

>> what is actually not descriptive of a text is a heading like applications, were in fact you cover things like, who is eligible to apply, what goes into your application, what the difference are for submission. When you use the question and answer format and more specific headings, you'll have a more descriptive heading that much better meet the Federal Register criteria. I would like to move ahead. Not because I could actually spend all day answering questions, but save them for the end. I want to be sure that we don't pop -- bump up against the end. We are actually moving slowly.

>> We have covered our first point of logical organization. Let's spend some minutes talking about using pronouns. I am sure you won't be surprised to hear that familiar words increase readability. They make it easy for people to understand. No words are more familiar than pronouns. We use them every day and there is no reason not to

address people directly. When we do it, we are going to eliminate lots of work, as you will see in just a minute. The way to do it, I have referred to already, you see, us, and our two refer to the agency. Two refer to the reader, use you in the text were used -- or use I in headings. The idea is that the reader is asking you, the agency a question. So, your heading would be, how do I apply for benefits under this part? The answer, you would say, to apply for benefits, you must send us the following information.

>> A heading would become a word within the application? The response would be, you must send your application to one of our field offices at one of the following addresses. Things like that. Now, if you are afraid that there might be doubt about who you mean by we would you, you can define them in the regulations section. And you have -- there is examples that you can find by going to plainlanguage.gov .

>> I have a brief bit of text, both with and without pronouns. What I have done is taken the text and translated it, -- excuse me, I have not completely transformed it. I made exactly one change and I've just plugged in a program where I can. The reason I have not touched anything else isn't wanting to see the dramatic difference that you can make in the readability of material, simply by using a pronouns.

>> So, we go from the applicant will be the primary source of an admission regarding his eligibility. You will be the primary source of information regarding your eligibility. If the secretary needs to secure information from other sources, etc., if we need to secure information from other sources. You can see at a glance, the text becomes a lot shorter, simply by plugging in the pronouns.

>> You'll also note other things. On the before example on the left-hand side there, you will see that the first sentence contains the word hits. Of course, we strive to write in a general -- gender-neutral fashion. Because our audience is composed of males and females. One of the beauties of using you as, of course, it is gender-neutral. The problem of gender disappears. Also, you'll note in the second sector and, if the secretary needs to secure information, does the Secretary. of the Interior pick up the phone and ask you for more information if you needed? Of course not. Go to the definitions section of the regulation and what does it say? The secretary means the Secretary. of the Interior or a designated employee, which gets you down seven levels to the person who actually does pick up the phone . What could be simpler? Go to the definitions section. We means the Secretary. of the interior or a designated employee, and you have a permit to be defined. It means the same thing.

>> In each case, we plug in a pronouns, of course, you're decreasing the number of words. So, the applicant becomes you. Huge -- be replaced to work with one. In other cases, you replace even more words. So that if you have a document as let's say, two or 300 pages long, if you go through and only plug in pronouns wherever you can, you'll find by the time you get to the end of this document, you literally save two or three pages of text.

>> So, you will have cut out lots of words. By doing this single change, to make the document a lot easier to understand. Believe me, I've been writing with pronouns for years, I'm still conscious as I write. They are so much easier to read when to get into the habit of using pronouns. It is a very effective and powerful tool. There are plenty of precedents for it. I will dodge that occasionally, pronouns don't work. Sometimes, in a document, you are addressing several audiences. Perhaps borrowers or lenders, and other people as well.

>> Now, one way you can approach that is to divide your document into two sections. And have one such addressing borrowers, and one section addressing lenders. So, in the first section, I would say, if you are a borrower, this section applies to you. And then you all the way through. In the second section, if you are a lender, this section applies to you. And then you defined you to mean the lender in the second section. That would work. If for some reason the two are mixed up, then you are referring back and forth, obviously, you would create more confusion by using a pronoun in that case, then you with salt.

>> So, you wouldn't use it, that is all. But, in most cases, it is going to work.

>> Similarly, sometimes on the other end, rather than referring to -- referring readers to your agency as a whole, you might refer them to office A for one thing, office B, for another thing. In that case, you would not be able to use 32 refer to your agency, even though you might be a refer to you as your audience. Be practical, but please do not reject this technique out of hand just because you've not done before.

>> This is a powerful for the making documents easy to understand. Be careful. This

applies mostly to letters, but I will mention it here. You don't want to seem to say accusatory by using pronouns. Similarly, I recently did some work for a federal agency and this was a letter that went out to people. If they did not do such and such a thing, but fisheries were going to be closed. They would not have made sense to say or politic to say, we will close the fishery in such and such a case. Because that makes it easier for people to think of the agency as the big, bad door of evil. So in that case, you would probably want to use a pronoun. In most cases, they will work for you and work nicely. Any thoughts or questions about using pronouns before we go on to the next point?

>> We just have a verification from one of the comments that came on. And we do have a sample about the pronouns. I will give you the sample first. Someone said to use, when mixed as an applicant, you must, as a cosigner, you would use you accept.

>> I am not sure what the point is there, I'm sorry.

>> That is okay. We will forward its user you can read it as well.

>> Okay, I apologize. Sometimes I'm a little slow on the intake.

>> We had a clarification about the CFR 1 20.19. They said day apologize, they hit send too quickly. It requires descriptive part headings. Headings that don't tell the readers the subject matter of the regulations are put -- forbidding. Agencies can't use headings like, regulations governing or rules applicable to.

>> Very good. I really strengthened our point very nicely. Thank you for that. Let's move ahead to the active voice. This is really exciting stuff, friends. So, let's first talk about how we are going to write in the active voice. We're going to spend most of our time talking about the evil opposite of the active voice, which is the passive voice. What we are going to do when you talk about the passive voice is that you have to recognize that in these very specific reasons for avoiding it in almost every instance. Now, this is worth spending some time on because interestingly, I mentioned Brian Garner, the legal drafting expert, one of his essays he says that when he goes out to talk to audiences of attorneys, he will give people frequently a simple test. Asking them to identify things in the passive voice. He says, pleaded or not, about 80% of the audience gets it wrong. So, it is important to learn to recognize the passive voice. But even more important to understand why we want to avoid it. Because there are some very specific reasons. So, with that little intro, I will tell you to write in the active forces. It is really quite simple. Tell your audience who does what. If you tell them those three things, in that order, you're going to be writing in the active voice and don't need to be writing about it. What could be simpler. I have a few examples. The trick is, the passive voice, again, well, here is a schema, an overview of the passive voice. The difference between them. In the active force, the subject is the acting. So, we have warned that the fire, been to build the wall. The subject is acted upon. So, we said, the fire was lit by warning -- by Warren.

>> So, it is acted upon by somebody else. The other example, the wall with both by Linda. -- The wall was built by Linda. Again, the subject is not actually do anything. So why do we care?

>> We have hinted at a difference. Let's say specifically how you identify it. I apologize for mentioning grammar. I don't think the grammar -- grammar is important, no doubt about it, but I don't think it is the route planning. I don't spend a lot of time talking about it because I know that the blues audiences that way. We will mention grammar here briefly. We'll talk about some of Stanford. So, in a passive sentence, the person doing the action usually follows the verb. I have an example here. Arlene was planted by her boss. I have highlighted the verb in yellow. You see that you posted the promoting. It comes after the verb.

>> So, as we said in the previous slide, the subject is acted upon. I mean, is getting promoted. She is not doing anything herself.

>> So, in other foolproof way to recognize it, the passive voice is always a form of the verb to be. And the past participle of another verb. Now, the past participle usually, but does not always, and in ed. So, behalf here, the house was leased by friend. The past participle, -- now, Fred had more money and bought the house. We would say that the house was bought by Fred. That is a past participle as well. That is passive. It just happens to be an irregular verb for the past participle does not end in ed, and a impudent dismissal because they have not tripped over the word per visible much.

>> Why do we care? We do care for some very specific reasons. The first one is when we use the passive voice, we can disguise who does what. We have here that the memo

was written yesterday. What the memo? Well, we don't know. Because when you write in the passive, you can leave it to wear out, and this is the big problem with a passive voice. Turn it around, make it active, the director mode -- world to the memo today.

>> Try as you may. You cannot get rid of that to her. He said they cannot read him or her out.

>> Again, a big problem. Again, in a simple short sentence like this, the memo was written yesterday, is it a big problem that we don't know the doer? Probably not. Now, in a 404 long sentence in the middle of a legal document by the Baltimore gas and electric company, is it a problem? Yes, it could be a very serious problem. Certainly, you can from the context there are several possibilities for who does something. So, if we're talking about five or six different people interested the memo was written yesterday, we have no indication with one of them wrote it. That is the first reason for avoiding it.

>> Second reason. The passive voice is awkward. It is not the way that we normally talk. To the extent that we write, even just a little differently from the normal way people are expecting to hear things, it is just a little harder for them to understand.

>> So, remember active voice. Who does what. We switched the order around. So, I have a sentence here. Consultation from responses was obtained to determine estimated burden. I did not make that sentence up. It came out of the preamble to regulation. Let's turn around and make it active, more natural. A little bit easier or livelier on the air.

>> I like to use common, everyday examples to make things more vivid. I always ask people, when was the last time you said, your invitation to the party has been received and your party will be attended by me? I am sure you have never spoken like that. If you have, you may not be surprised that you're not going to a lot of parties. It is not the way we normally talk. It is unnatural.

>> Another reason we don't like it. It tends to be wordier. Not always. Tend to use more words. A final reason. The passive force majeure writing tracking these very simple example showed nicely. The piece of writing is slowed by passive voice versus passive voice slows the pace of your writing.

>> Again, when somebody is doing something, to the extent that we can convey action and leave you with a concrete image in their mind of something actually being done by someone, we have successfully communicated. Made our writing a little peppier, just a little bit easier to understand.

>> I will concede that sometimes, the passive voice is going to be the appropriate choice and we have some examples here. You can go down and look at the list from your self. Sometimes you don't know the doer is. Sometimes it does not matter who the doer is. Sometimes you don't want to sound like you are attacking someone. It doesn't come up in the regulation. But, these are examples of reasons why you would want to be for the passive voice.

>> I talked earlier about a letter I did for a federal agency were basically the gist of the letter was if you, the operators of fishing vessels don't do this or that, we will close the fishery. And not allow you to fish there. Well, this is a case where you probably want the passive voice, because again, you don't want to emphasize the big federal agency. So, if you, the operators of fishing vessels don't do this, don't do this, don't do this. Then, the fishery must be closed for the entire season. That way, you know, it is passive because he wanted to emphasize the doer.

>> I will concede that sometimes you want to do that. But, in most cases, you are going to want to prefer the active voice. You're going to want to avoid the passive for those very specific reasons that I just gave you. That list that we just went down. Very important reason for avoiding it. In one case, the verb appears after the door, well, just take the doer and move it around to make that an active sentence. You have made that just a little bit stronger.

>> Again, that is assumed that the doer is there. As you become aware of active voice and try to eliminate it, you will sometimes find in certain things that you are rewriting, that you actually don't know who the doer is because it is unclear. I have found this. And you'll have to go back and maybe get additional information from the author of the document.

>> So, that is a big powerful illustration of why you want to avoid it. You can avoid the passive by dropping part of the birth. We have an example there. You can

avoid it by changing the verb. Just come up with a different verb altogether. So, we have talked about the passive voice. We talked about how we want to avoid it. Very specific reasons. We have acknowledged that sometimes it is the appropriate choice. What I want you to beware of these just that. Be aware of using the passive voice. Guess what. You will find a cropping up all the time in your writing. I find it all the time in mind. So, be aware, to the extent that you can get rid of it, your writing will be more stronger, more muscular, more active, you'll communicate successfully and to eliminate those pitfalls as very specific reasons for avoiding the passive.

>> That is the passive active. Before we move on to our next point, does anybody have questions or thoughts about passive voice?

>> We do have a question. And that is, do you have to define we and you in the deposition section if you put pronouns in the regulation?

>> Yes. I would definitely advocate that. I think it is a good thing to do. And, even if you did not have to, it provides you with a sort of certainty and assurance that the terms were crystal clear for your readers.

>> Also, we got a clarification about the mixing pronouns. And that was. The point is that you can frame individual sentences in the context of rules and still use you, even when the appropriately next, you almost never need to abandon you.

>> Oh, wonderful. Okay. I apologize for not understanding that print from your original example. We will have -- well, we do have, I think, a regulatory document that I have looked at, in the summary for Federal Register documents, many of our pure was full start off by saying we, the office of surface Mining are revising the following regulation. So they have defined it right there in the sentence appeared or read -- that is another way you could do it.

>> But, putting into the definition section, absolutely. I am glad that particular comment has found how easy it is to use programs -- pronouns and how it contributes to Verdi.

>> Another comment.

>> When informing people of issues that affect the whole population, it makes it tough to switch to second person. Example. Most people who see the doctor for a sore throat and not need antibiotics. Don't worry if Dr. does not prescribe antibiotics.

>> Okay. That is to me like a clear and appropriate use of the word you. But, the point there probably is just be certain when you're using you that it is absolutely clear to your audience who you are referring to. Generally, that is going to be done by the larger context. But having of that particular -- by the heading of that particular section of text or whatever.

>> Thinking in the medical context does not apply to regulations but if you are a patient with symptoms, you need to do the following. If you are the relative of a patient with symptoms, Heaney to the following. You have defined you in each part of the particular document.

>> Let's forge ahead. Our next point is preferring common everyday words. The first point I will make is to eliminate the "s" words. I am -- from Bryan Garner. I heard him give a talk and a plain language conference and he listed in their several -- three or four of what he felt were the main problems in mental driving today. In limiting the "s" words. Shell, set, such, and same. He is talking about them as a replacement for this, these, that, those, depending on the context. Those last three words are really archaic. They are out of date, used in that way. There is absolutely no reason to be using them, excuse me.

>> Now, some people say that when you say such instead of, or such instead of that, that you are gaining a degree of precision. But, that simply is not true. There is nothing more precise about that word. Now, I have saved the best one, even though it is at the top of the list, for last. I will give it a little bit more discussion. The worst of the words is a shell. They don't like it because it can have several meanings. Using it can create legal problems. So, what you should do, the appropriate thing to you -- do is use must. When people have to do something. Must that when they are prohibited. May for a discretionary asks him, or should for a recommendation. I would never ask you to take something this important and earth shattering just on my little authority. Let me read to you a little bit of what [Indiscernible name] says in his book, plain English for lawyers. He has a section in there that he calls used worth of authority with care.

>> Here is what he has to say. The biggest troublemaker is shall, sometimes lawyers use it to impose a duty. The defendant shall file an answer within 30 days. Other

times users use it to express a future action. Police shall terminate. Or even an entitlement. The landlord shall have the right to inspect. Drafting experts have identified several additional shades of meaning that shall can carry. He goes on to say the legislative backers -- Drs. in some jurisdictions tried to tame shall by using it only in its command sense. Shall imposes a duty to do something. In recent years, however, many US drafting authorities have come around to the British Commonwealth you. Don't use shall for any purpose. It is simply too unreliable.

>> So, there is a wonderful authority on plain language saying that. But, I don't want you to take even just his word for it, because I have here from Bryan Garner's recent book, legal writing in plain English. He also has a section on shall. And in there, he quotes about seven or eight different interpretations that the Supreme Court has given to the word shall in different cases.

>> Now, I could not do them all on one site here and have it be anything readable. So I have just extracted a couple of the different definitions that he identified there. As they say in the book, he has a list of about seven or eight.

>> So, these two examples together tell me that shall is a very unreliable choice. To using drafting regulations. And, you really should prefer the alternatives that we have, previous flight -- alternatives that we had on the previous flight. Don't take my word for this, but conduct your own simple test. It is very easy to do.

>> Get a regulation that is dense with shall, put it into Microsoft Word, go through and do a substitution and replaced shall with last.replace shall with must.

>> Do a substitution where every time it asks you if you want to do it in as you go through the document, you will find as surely as I am sitting here that must is not the appropriate substitution in each case. In some cases it will, in some cases it will be should, etc. I would like to wrap this up by saying that using must is insurance that you can buy very cheaply.

>> And, I encourage you to do it. I will pass on this one thought which is, as you know, I am not an attorney. But, I have been in the reg trade long enough that I have credibility with our attorneys here and generally they will be purchasing of using must.

>> I had a case recently where they said, we will give it to a most cases, but not here, not here, and that here. Of course, I defer to them because they are the experts put the rush now with this. They said, we don't have anything against the word must, but we are not comfortable with making the interpretation in these instances that the law investment must, so we are going to stick with shall, which is what was in the law.

>> Somebody pointed out to me that you're kicking the can down the road. We have not made the interpretation for the poor guys and gals in the field that have to enforce the reg have the interpretation. If that is the route you want to go down, that is fine, but be aware.

>> Let's move ahead. Some things to avoid. Avoid verbs disguised as now -- disguised as nouns. This is very easy to do. Verbs express action. To the extent that we have more action in our writing, it is more act of, if not passive, and we are moving ahead more force -- forcefully. It is very easy to read. Unpack those examples there and make those nouns into verbs, the way they should be.

>> Things to avoid. Abbreviations and acronyms. Oh, these have their place, they can be useful, but believe me, we tend to overuse them. So, use them sparingly. Be sure that you define them each time you use them. I have some examples. LOL, TMI, you know, most of us think they are commonly understood, but you are talking to someone who for years thought that LOL meant lots of luck. I heard somebody tell me that his dad -- that that LOL meant lots of love. So he would send e-mails & it LOL.

>> So, don't use them, no matter how common it may be. Use them sparingly. Do be sure to define them. Believe me, if you have a document where you use a term, and abbreviated term or acronym only two or three times, just tried it out each time, you have not paid for self-consciousness using the abbreviation or -- you have not saved your self much by using the abbreviation.

>> Don't use two different terms for the same thing. Don't get a word and a secure meeting. By that, we mean, one that conflicts with its definition in the dictionary.

>> The next flight I tried to be humorous. Prevent AAFS, abbreviation and acronym of fatigue syndrome. I have part of the summary of a federal registry document, and you see how it is dense with those horrible abbreviations and acronyms. Very intimidating to the reader. You will notice as you go through them, many of them

like FY, which to most of us would mean fiscal year, actually means fishing year. So it can be misleading as well.

>> Be alert to them. Minimize them. More things to avoid. Technical terms have to be there. But, the other obscure pretentious language, circumlocutions, talking in circles, unnecessary long words. We want to avoid that. The difference between saying he has acquired the requisite skill sets necessary to facilitate successful interaction with his peer group on a contingent basis and then, he plays well with others. Don't stray nouns together. Avoid the word. I am not saying never use the word of, I am single for it. It is -- basically, what it means usually is you have turned verbs into nouns. So the creation should be creating. The investigation should be investigation. Etc.

>> We are speeding up because I see we are bumping up against the end of our time. In this next flight here, I have got seven wordy phrases that we all use all the time and they just want you to be aware of them, in each case, there is a shorter way of saying the same thing. Now, if it they both use any single one of these phrases? No, of course not. But what I am saying is, be alert to these. Go to these with the specific goal of writing -- throwing out unnecessary words. You'll find substitutions and you may be writing just a little bit easier to understand.

>> So, with wartime, I like to quote -- with wartime, I like to go through this exercise, but I see, we have 10 minutes left, is that right?

>> That's correct.

>> So I'm going to be talking a little bit faster here. But what I do with this overhead as I take common everyday things and convert them into pure genius -- I convert them into bureaucracies. I wonder if you become with the common saying is that because this -- we are pressed for time, I will leave that on your own. I will do that the first one is like father like son. The point of doing this exercise is to show how we start out with a simple phrase, easy to understand, but then we say to itself, things like, well, this isn't impressive enough. This does not, government writing. This does not have that air and dignity that I'm striving for. So, you come up with this kind of thing. But I am here to tell you that you are okay to use that common easily communicated idea and you don't have to target up like that.

>> Be alert of work placements. And basically, words that are next to each other. Our little minds think of them as going together. When words are out of place or phrases are out of place, when they appear next to things that don't belong with, it confuses us. Let me give you a simple example of that. Take a very presented, I punched my boss in the nose. Rewrite the sentence in every time you do, stick in the world only in a different place. So you say, I only punched my boss in the nose. I punched only my boss in the nose. I punched my only boss in the nose. You see that every time you put in that word only, you have dramatically changed the meaning of the sentence.

>> And so, the alert to that. Make sure that, again, words that belong together are in fact get bashed together and are not separate.

>> Be alert of the audience and the meanings they understand. Be aware that they don't always understand words in the same way that you do. Here is a little example of misunderstanding. Things that you and I probably would not think about. By being more in touch with our audience, we become aware of. The Internal Revenue Service is getting a lot of calls from people saying, I have got to misdirected mail. I have gotten a letter for this guy named Levi. My name is on the back, it is Smith. Why are you sending me this? Here is what they sent people. They send a notice to levy, but a lot of people aren't aware of that.

>> Another thing is it true article about jury instructions. They found out when they survey jurors, in the same place or bid, about 40% of the jurors, over 40% of the jurors, excuse me, understood when they heard the phrase, you have to consider a preponderance of the evidence. They understood that to mean that you have to carefully ponder the evidence.

>> Not the meaning we want to convey at all. Another example that I am familiar with with writing the FOIA regulations, the freedom of information act regulations, and some of the documents, they talk about polling. They say, if such and such happened, it will toll the response period. Now, what that means, it is a perfectly valid legal term, but what that means is that they will suspend the deadline for the agency responding. But, I tested that out on a number of people in our plain language group, almost all of them thought that it meant not that it would suspend it, but

cause it to start. There is an example of a perfectly valid legal term that is not a good choice if you're trying to communicate with a wider audience. So, be alert to your audience to the extent that you can. Try, if at all possible, and they know we cannot do this too often with regulations. But, if you can test it on your intended audience, you are ahead of the game. If you can't do that, you can take it down the hall. Have somebody else read it. Even better, take it home and have somebody at home read it. I do this myself. I don't take an entire revelation but if I have a sentence or paragraph, I'll take it home to my wife and say, two examples, which do you prefer? Fortunately, so far when she's had a preference, it has always been for the rewritten one. Sometimes you will shake the -- she will say, well, I don't know, neither. I have work to do.

>> Don't start a sentence with a long exception or condition. Here's an example of what not to do. If you go down about four lines toward the end, you'll see the word facile. That should in fact be the will -- be the first word of the sentence. Because that is where the idea starts. Don't put that long exception of the beginning. Put it at the end.

>> Does work placements make a difference? I have some humorous examples here. Yesterday a man stopped at five men and women in the South end. I am sure you could see that there is more than one way that could be read. What you want to say it's yesterday in the South end, a man stopped at five men and women.

>> Here is one from a federal right, we will publish a list of properties that called for relief under this subpart H. October. I asked people what was going to be on the list. One possible reading of that would be that you're going to publish a list of properties that qualified in October for release. That is not what he meant, of course. What they meant is every October the publish a list of all properties that are qualified to route the year. That is not really what they said.

>> You can be sure if I'm alone or -- if I'm in for it is to my advantage to content that must only contain qualifying properties in October, that is what I'm going to say when I go to court.

>> Here is one I can't defend. I pulled this from actual document. This rule proposes the spring summer subsistence harvest revelations in Alaska for migratory birds that expire on August 31, This rule proposes the spring summer subsistence harvest revelations in Alaska for migratory birds that expire on August 31, 2003. Bury him. Thinking that. That has to be rewritten. And we need more information to figure out what they were trying to say. Just a very poor example of bad thinking, leading to bad writing.

>> I have an example here of a sentence which were not going to be able to cover. But this is a long sentence. It is 61 words long and contains several ideas in it. In the next five, you will see that I went through and underlined the main work and ideas and I want you to notice how far apart they are.

>> In between those words are other words, so they have found several ideas, mix them together and it is hard to figure out what we are saying.

>> Here is a rewrite of it. A possible rewrite that it makes it a lot clearer. I wonder if I see that it has taken much longer than it had to get through this material. But that is because of the good discussion. We want to stop here and ask for questions or have we want to handle this? Can you help me out please?

>> Yes, we do have a few. And we can go over a couple of minutes but we don't want to hold people to love. If you want to stop.

>> What do we stop and take questions with a big apology for not having time to cover all of the material. But an invitation to go to the website where you can find the version of this website and presentation. Of course, this is available online and am very happy to answer questions you want to send me my e-mail. Go ahead and went to rehab.

>> We have going on the phone. We like to ask her question?

>> If any of you want to send me anymore, I will be happy to -- if any of you want to send me an e-mail, I will be happy to --

>> The next person, they started off with a comment. Couple of questions. So, they are learning to write grants. They observed that their coworkers recently stripped out all pronouns and restructure their responses in passive voice. Wouldn't plain language be appropriate for grant writing, also?

>> I cannot think of anything that plain language does not work for. I stated that negatively.. plain language works for any kind of document. The problem could be, as may be that question writer has experienced, if you're not very high up in

the seniority chain, it can be very difficult to write documents like this, and not have them replaced.

>> I just urge you to stick with it. Spread the word about planning which.gov, -- plainlanguage.gov. Senator. to her agency, and that is how you make the change.

>> All right. Since it is not feasible to rewrite many of the current regulations, how would you suggest that we reach the public with plain language? Education and outreach materials to see Mike they can open an agency up to increase litigation. If they don't cover every detail of the regulation. Your thoughts?

>> That is a really perceptive question, a very good one. Well, we are trying to turn him -- turned an ocean liner around and it will turn slowly. All regulations, for revision periodically, and that is when you can begin to make progress in paying -- plain language.

>> In the explanatory documents, I would urge you to use plain language, but I would urge you to concede to be careful not to misinterpret. The problem is that when a two-minute legalistic style, there can frequently be several interpretations. I wish you luck with that. But, bear in mind, regulations, at least in the world here at Interior, they are revised almost nonstop. And so, even if you have a big regulation that is written entirely in legalese and you're revising a single sentence, you may not be able to use pronouns. But you most certainly will be able to use active voice and clear language. We did not get a chance to talk about introducing lists, but you could probably do all of those things and still have it fit into the context of that were traditionally written regulation.

>> That would be one way to start. But I concede, yes, it will take care to rewrite the materials to go out to the public and explain the good. But what you can bear in mind is, those things actually are covered by the plain writing act of 2010. So that may give you a little bit of leverage. If you needed with management, say, books, be required to write in a different style.

>> Well, thank you, John. We do need to wrap up. So, any questions that were not answered, we can send them to you and send them back out so they can get address if you would like.

>> I would love that and I'm sorry we did not have time for everything but we had good discussion on what we have.

>> That is fantastic. I want to thank everyone for attending the webinar this afternoon and I want to thank you, John, for a fantastic and their interactive webinar. It was very cool.

>> Thanks.

>> [Laughing]

>> We also want to take the time to say that we are going to provide a survey to today's webinar in two ways. We will put the link in the chat box so you can take the survey right at the end, or you can receive the survey via an e-mail within an hour of the presentation. We also have a great webinar coming up on October 31. And it is going to be on back to the basics, the essentials of Facebook and twitter. It'll be from 11 PM -- 11 AM to 12 PM Eastern standard Time. And we will have [Indiscernible name] from IBM, representatives from state departments. If you want further information, you can visit us. -- You can visit our website.

>> If you read -- missed any workers, you can check them out on training on demand. Thank you and have a good afternoon.

>> [Event Concluded]