Some Plain Language References

FAA Plain Language Order (Writing Standards)

http://tinyurl.com/6qzldy

Plain Language handbook for FAA writers

http://tinyurl.com/yelapgf

Plain Language: A Handbook for Writers in the U.S. Federal Government:

http://tinyurl.com/68jgs8

Plain Language Guidelines for the Federal Government:

http://tinyurl.com/6qg99k

Making Regulations Readable:

The Federal Register

http://tinyurl.com/68oskv

Answering the Critics of Plain Language:

http://tinyurl.com/6hmcn5

Writing Effective Letters:

http://tinyurl.com/5agjs7

Writing for the Web:

http://www.usability.gov

http://www.usa.gov/webcontent

General Plain Language Websites:

http://www.plainlanguage.gov

http://www.centerforplainlanguage.org

http://execsec.od.nih.gov/plainlang/index.html



FAA Plain Language Program Office

Bruce.Corsino@faa.gov



PLAIN LANGUAGE Tool Kit

part of the FAA Plain Language course

BEFORE YOU WRITE

- Know your audience and your purpose
- Write to each audience separately
- Write for your reader, not for everyone
- Think clearly, then write plainly

Your Reader Says

- Tell me what I need to know
- Write to me, not to a group
- Anticipate my questions
- Don't confuse me

Your Goals

Help your readers:

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find the **FIRST** time
- Use what they find

Your Values

- Challenge every word
- Simple and less are better
- Make it readable and understandable
- Don't dumb "down:" clear "up"

FORMAT TOOLS

Short Sentences: average 15-20 words **Headings:** question, topic, or statement **Tables:** columns and rows of information Relevant Illustrations: "can be worth a

thousand words"

Short Paragraphs: less than 7 lines Layout: "Question and Answer" or

"If—Then" formats

Vertical Lists: use chunks for long lists Blank Space: as important as words

WORD TOOLS



Everyday Words:

Due to the fact = Because In the event of = If

Pronouns:

I, we, you, they, their, etc.

Active Voice:

NO = The candle was jumped over by Jack.

YES = Jack jumped over the candle.

NO = The tank was checked by the pilot.

YES = The pilot checked the tank.

Active Verbs:

Conduct an analysis = analyze Provide assistance with = assist Give consideration to = consider

Present Tense:

The cost is \$10,

not.

The cost shall be \$10

Contractions:

we've, you'll, etc.

⊠ AVOID

Acronyms/Abbreviations:

The #1 reader complaint

Modifiers: "totally" unrealistic, "completely" dead

Doublets: "null and void," "rules and regulations"

Noun Strings: "contract fee level test procedure"

Jargon:

Obtain assistance consistent with your requirements = get the help you need (explain technical terms)

Shall:

("shall" imposes no legal obligation on the reader) instead of "shall," use:

Must = mandatory Must not = prohibited May = optional Should = recommended

PLAIN LANGUAGE

Gives you more

- comprehension and compliance
- customer satisfaction
- time and money for customers and staff

Does not give you

- Correct spelling and grammar
- Success as a web page
- The right emotional tone