



2023 Risk Management Conference

Mitigating Today, Ensuring Tomorrow:
Discover the Path to Resilience



Funny, and not

- What I need is a list of unknown problems we are likely to encounter.
- Email is not to be used to pass on data or information, only company business.
- We know that communication is a problem, but the company is not going to discuss it with employees. **AT&T**





Sigh...



Who needs access?



Everyone!

Agenda

1. What is plain language?
2. Why do we need plain language?
3. What are the issues?
4. What are plain language strategies?
5. How do people benefit?



What is plain language?

Plain language is the use of proven writing and design strategies that make it easy for your intended audience to **find, understand,** and **use** your content.



Clear | Concise | Credible

Writer-based Reader-based



Why do we need plain language?

Problems

- Average U.S. adult reads at the 8th grade level.
- 54% of U.S. adults are below the 6th grade level
- Writers think readers know what they know (words)
- Wasted time re applications, following rules, call-ins

Solutions

- Avoids confusion, discouragement, anxiety
- Provides access to critical information
- Saves time and money
- Builds trust
- Is more efficient





Why do we need plain language? Regulations

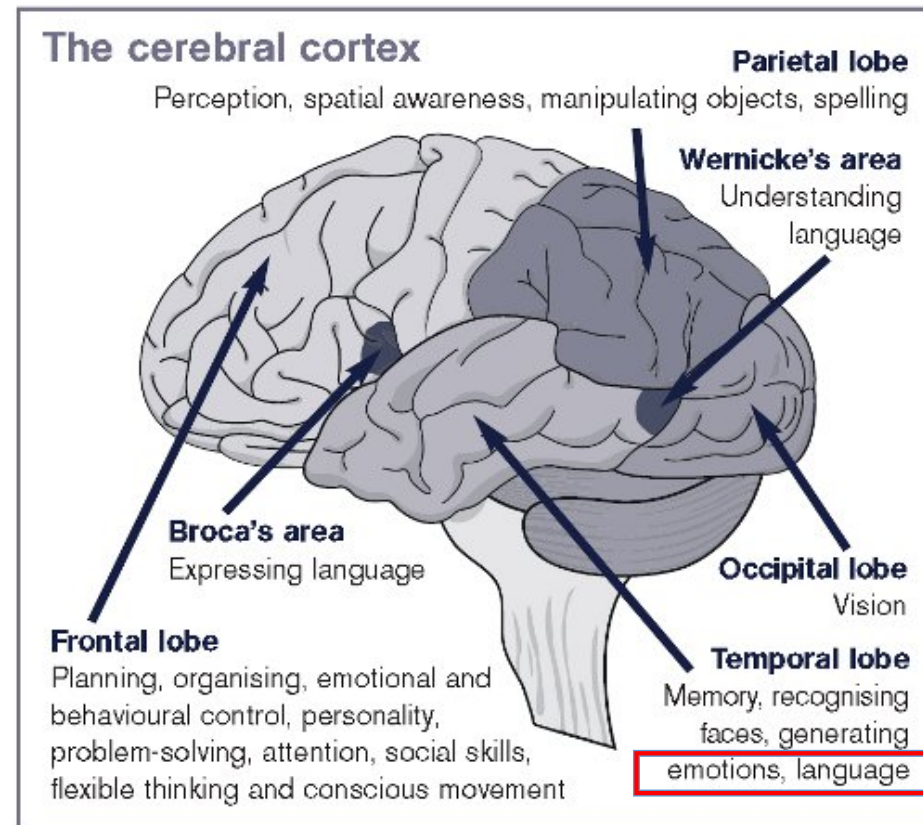
- Section 2522.5. Lease agreements, 9 NY ADC 2522.5
- New York Consolidated Laws, General Obligations Law - GOB § 5-702. Requirements for use of plain language in consumer transactions
 - Every written agreement entered into after November first, nineteen hundred seventy-eight, for the lease of space to be occupied for residential purposes, for the lease of personal property to be used primarily for personal, family or household purposes or to which a consumer is a party and the money, property or service which is the subject of the transaction is primarily for personal, family or household purposes must be:
 1. Written in a clear and coherent manner using words with common and everyday meanings;
 2. Appropriately divided and captioned by its various sections.

What are the issues? Emotions

“A single word has the power to influence the expression of genes that regulate physical and emotional stress.”

– Dr. Andrew Newberg and Mark Robert Waldman

Words Can Change Your Brain



What are the issues? Context



Oh, no



What are plain language strategies?

1. Consider your audience
2. Understand your purpose
3. Be conversational | human
4. Use pronouns
5. Use verbs, not nouns
6. Use common words
7. Use the active voice
8. Use positive language
9. Avoid jargon | define
10. Be concise
11. Use visuals



What are plain language strategies?

Six Tips to Get You Started

1. Sentences: **15-20** words maximum
2. Paragraphs: **3-5** sentences
3. Headings: **3-5** per page (screen)
4. Use columns online
5. List information when possible
6. Answer reader's questions



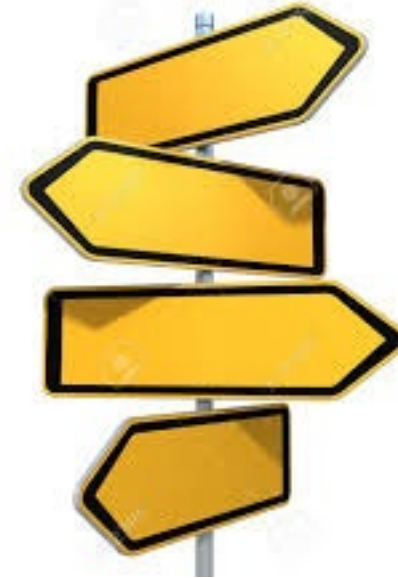
Consider your audience

- Read 28% slower online
- Use documents | websites to answer their questions
- Read “just in time”
- Interpret and create meaning
- Skim, scan, rarely read
- Phone if confused
- May have to explain to others



Consider your purpose

- Explain the purpose(s).
- Make it clear what's included.
- Set the context.
- Give main point first.
- Focus on outcomes
- Explain action.



Use the active voice

Active Voice

- Who did what to whom/what?
- SUBJECT-VERB-OBJECT
- Deborah prepared this presentation.



Passive Voice

- What was done to what (by whom)?
- OBJECT-VERB-SUBJECT
- This presentation was prepared by Deborah.
- This presentation was prepared.



Use the active voice

Passive: The responsibility for the implementation of this new process will be done by the Personnel Department.

16 words

Active: The Personnel Department is responsible for implementing this new process. 10 words

Passive: A determination must be made about our ability to hire more employees.

12 words

Active: We must determine if we can hire more employees. 9 words



BEFORE Inspection Reminder

Name
Address
City

Dear City Housing Resident:

On January 17th the interior and exterior of your property will be inspected by a representative from our insurance company and a City Housing Authority employee. Entry will be made whether you are home or not.

Please cure the following lease violations immediately.

EXTERIOR OF YOUR HOME

The following items must be removed from the exterior of your home immediately.

1. **Trash and Debris:** includes your front porch area
2. **Leaves and overgrown shrubs / vegetation**
3. **Firepits**
4. **Trampolines**
5. **Grills**
6. **Tires**
7. **Playground Sets / Playset / Set including basketball hoops**
8. **Anything else considered a lease violation**

Vehicles: must be parked on your driveway or road. Vehicles cannot be parked on your lawn.

Lawn. Trim back overgrown shrubs/vegetation and/or remove any growing into homes

INTERIOR OF YOUR HOME

You must report any maintenance issues by calling in a work order.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 111-111-1111 or email me at Deborah@cityhousing.com

Thank you for your cooperation.



AFTER Inspection Reminder

Name
Address
City

Dear City Housing Resident:

On January 17th, someone from our insurance company and a City Housing employee will inspect the inside and outside of your home. We will enter your home even if you're not there. Before we arrive, please do the following:

INSIDE YOUR HOME

Report any maintenance issues by calling in a work order.

OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

The following items must be removed immediately.

1. **Trash and Debris:** includes your front porch area
2. **Leaves and overgrown shrubs / vegetation**
3. **Firepits**
4. **Trampolines**
5. **Grills**
6. **Tires**
7. **Playground Sets / Playset / Set including basketball hoops**
8. **Anything else considered a lease violation**

Vehicles: You need to park on your driveway or the road. You may not park on your lawn.

Lawn: Be sure to trim overgrown bushes or plants. You also need to remove any growing into homes.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 111-111-1111 or email me at Deborah@cityhousing.org.

Thank you for your cooperation.

[REDACTED]

Dear Resident

You are invited to a resident meeting to talk about [REDACTED] rity's, plans to
co [REDACTED] street from the public housing program to Section 8
rental assistance under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). The meeting information is:

[REDACTED]

**This letter describes your rights under RAD and explains how a RAD conversion might affect you.
Whether we participate in RAD or not, you will still get rental assistance.**

Your Right to Information

With this letter, we have included "Attachment #1," which is a description of our current plans for the property. At the meeting, we will describe the RAD program and our current ideas in more detail. We will have a follow-up meeting to provide more information and answer any questions that have come up for you. We will notify you of additional meetings to provide updates. If we submit an application to HUD and are accepted into the program, we will have at least two (2) additional meetings with you about our plans. You have the right to hear about major changes in the plans for the project, and we will invite you to additional meetings if key features of the plans change. You also have a right to organize and to form a resident council to serve as your voice and to help you become well informed about the RAD plans.

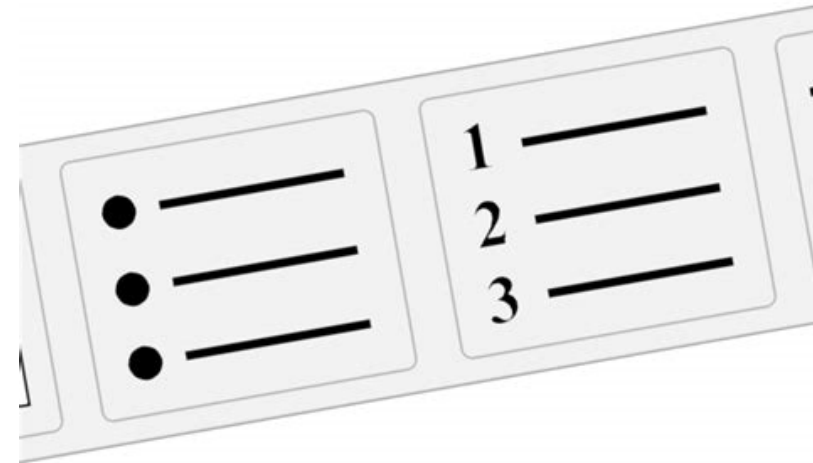
Your Right to Rental Assistance

Our decision to participate in RAD does not affect your rental assistance eligibility. You are not subject to new eligibility screening. If we satisfy all HUD requirements and the property is placed under a Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contract, you have a right to ongoing rental assistance as long as you comply with the requirements of your lease. **In most cases, your rent will**

[REDACTED]

Use lists

- **Bullets**
 - All items equal
- **Numbers**
 - Chronology
 - Steps
 - Hierarchy of importance





Before

Your Right to Information

With this letter, we have included "Attachment #1," which is a description of our current plans for the property. At the meeting, we will describe the RAD program and our current ideas in more detail. We will have a follow-up meeting to provide more information and answer any questions that have come up for you. We will notify you of additional meetings to provide updates. If we submit an application to HUD and are accepted into the program, we will have at least two (2) additional meetings with you about our plans. You have the right to hear about major changes in the plans for the project, and we will invite you to additional meetings if key features of the plans change. You also have a right to organize and to form a resident council to serve as your voice and to help you become well informed about the RAD plans.



After

Your Right to Information

With this letter, we have included "Attachment #1," which describes our current plans for the property. At the meeting, we will describe the RAD program and our current ideas in more detail. Then we will

- have a follow-up meeting to give you more information and answer your questions, and
- notify you of additional meetings to provide updates.

If we submit an application to HUD and are accepted into the program, we will have at least two (2) more meetings with you about our plans. You have the right to

- hear about major changes in the plans for the project,
- be invited to additional meetings if key features of the plans change, and
- organize and form a resident council to serve as your voice and help you become well





Before

Your Right to Return

If you need to move temporarily for repairs, you have a right to return to an assisted unit once any construction work is done.

However, we may need to move you during construction and your post construction home may be a different unit than your current home. If the plans involve the transfer of the rental assistance to a different site, you may need to move to the new site to keep your rental assistance (provided that it is within a reasonable distance of your current home), but you still have a right to an assisted unit.

After

Your Right to Return

If your unit or your building need repairs, you may need to move temporarily. You have the right to return to an assisted unit once the repairs are done.

However, you may have to move back into a different apartment. You also may need to move to a new site to keep your rental assistance if the new unit is within XX distance from your current home. Whether you come back to your old unit or a new one, you are still able to have an assisted rental unit.

Comparison

	BEFORE	AFTER
# of words	98.00	88.00
# of sentences	4.00	5.00
Ave. words per sentence	24.50	17.60
Grade level	12.39	9.40
Reading ease	49.89	60.15

Be concise

- Use the active voice
- Only include what's important to renter (unless law requires more)
- Get to the point
- Ask yourself: do I have to include that?

-30%



Before

- If the plans involve the transfer of the rental assistance to a different site, you may need to move to the new site to keep your rental assistance (provided that it is within a reasonable distance of your current home), but you still have a right to an assisted unit.

1 sentence; 50 WORDS

After

- If plans mean your rental assistance is transferred to a different site, you may need to move to that site. To keep your rental assistance, your new site must be a reasonable distance from your current home.

2 SENTENCES:

1ST = 20 WORDS, 2ND = 17

Comparison

No. Words:
1,130
Language:
EN

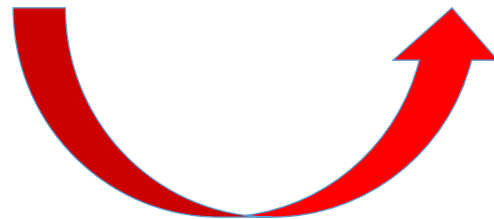
Long Sentences 44.44% 
28 Sentences 
 Learn More

Passive Voice 17.46% 
11 Sentences 
 Learn More

	BEFORE	AFTER
# of sentences	1.00	2.00
Ave. words per sentence	50.00	18.50
Grade level	12.50	8.85
Reading ease	52.30	63.68

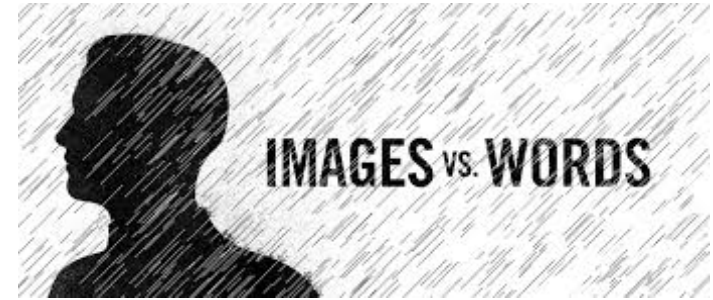
Use verbs

Nouns	Verbs
Determination	Determine
Recommendation	Recommend
Implementation	Implement (maybe “Begin”
Evaluation	Evaluate
Communication	Communicate
Consideration	Consider
Negotiation	Negotiate



Use more visuals

- 43% more likely to be persuaded
- 25 - 40% less time
- 60,000 times faster (processing)
- 38% better retention
- Satisfies two modes of information processing
- Keep visuals simple





DON'T LOSE YOUR MEDICAID

New York State has started recertifying
Medicaid, CHIP and EP Enrollees.

Enrollees have not had to recertify since 2020.
Follow these steps to make sure you don't lose
health insurance.



NYS of Health

Find health
insurance navigator



1.855.355.5777

Onondaga County Medicaid

(315) 435-2928

RESIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES (RSS)

(315) 470-4375

Update Your Contact Information

Make sure NY State of Health or
Onondaga County Medicaid has
your current address, phone
number and e-mail address.



Sign Up For Updates

Sign up to receive SMS/MMS
text alerts from NYS of Health
to not miss important updates.
Text START to 1-866-988-0327



Check Your Mail

Keep an eye out for your
recertification
paperwork in the mail.



Complete & Send Back

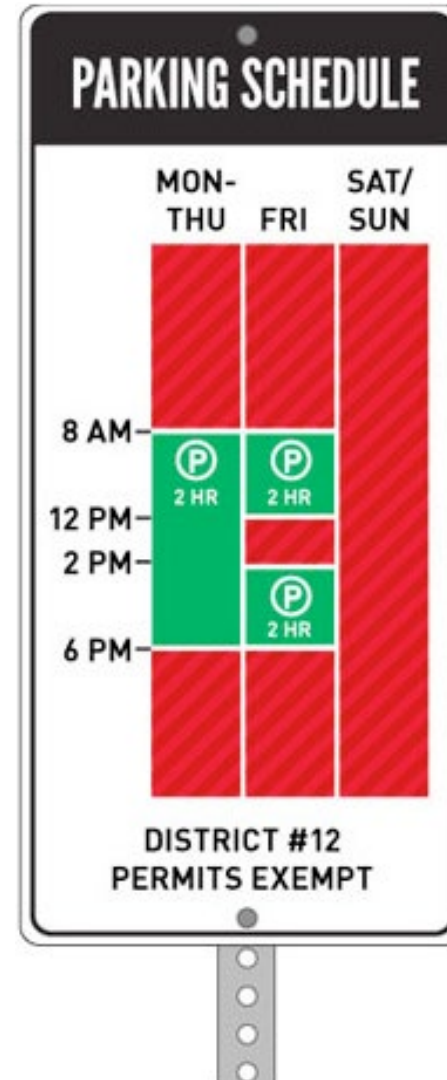
You will have only **30 days**
to complete and return.

Need Help? Call RSS!



1. Where do your eyes land?
2. How many steps do you have to take?
3. What's the point of info on the left?

YAY!



Feel free to ask me: call, email, text



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