Easy Language

What is Easy Language?

How do you write Easy Language?

Hints and tricks

Easy Language looks simple.

But sometimes Easy Language is pretty difficult.

Because:
- A lot of people don't know what Easy Language is.
- And many people are not used to writing in Easy Language.

That is why we made this handout for you.

Here you will find a lot of hints or tricks for Easy Language.

When you write in Easy Language you must pay attention to the following aspects:

1. Words
2. Numbers and figures/symbols
3. Sentences
4. Texts
5. Design

In this handout we will also write about the checking of texts in Easy Language.

Our most important hint for you:
Practice writing Easy Language again, again, and again.
It is a challenge. But it is worth doing it.

Who wrote these hints and tricks?
A lot of people worked together to make these hints and tricks.
They all work in the **Network Easy Language**.

Apart from these hints and tricks there is a new dictionary for Easy Language.

It was published by

People First – Network **People First Germany Association**

1. Words

Use short words.

Bad: double decker bus
Good: bus

Use simple words.

Bad: This law applies to all people.
Good: This law is for all people

Separate long words with a hyphen.
Then you can read the words better.

Bad: dishwasher
Good: dish-washer

Use words that are well-known.
Do not use special fords and foreign words.

Bad: cemetery
Good: grave yard

Do not use abbreviations.

Bad: etc., i.e., e.g.
Good: and so on, that is, for example

Always use the same words for the same things.

> **For example:**
> You write about the contraceptive the "**pill**".
> Always use the word **pill**.
> Do not change between **pill** and **tablet**.

Explain difficult words.

Announce difficult words.
You can make a dictionary and the end of your text with the difficult words you used.

> **For example:**
> Mister miller had a bad accident.
> Now he learns to work in a different job.
> The difficult word for this is: **occupational rehabilitation**.

Use verbs.

Verbs are do-words.
Do not use (many) nouns/abstract words.

> **Bad:** The elections for the board are tomorrow.
> **Good:** Tomorrow we choose the members for the board.

Use verbs in the active voice.
Do not use verbs in the passive voice.

> **Bad:** The board will be elected tomorrow.
> **Good:** Tomorrow we choose the members for the board.

Avoid subjunctive mode.

Words such as could, should, would and might are used in this mode.

Bad:	It might rain tomorrow.
Good:	May-be it will rain tomorrow.

Use positive language.

Avoid negative language. You will recognize negative language when the word not (n't) is used.

Bad:	Peter isn't ill.
Good:	Peter is well. Peter is healthy.

Be careful with idioms, proverbs and figurative language.

Many people will get that wrong.

They take this language seriously.

> **For example:**
>
> **"It's raining cats and dogs"** is figurative
>
> language.
>
> But it does not really rain cats and dogs.
>
> Cats and dogs do not fall from the sky.
>
> Say or write: It is raining heavily.
>
> It is pouring.

2. Numbers and figures/symbols

Use Arabic numbers.

    Bad: IX
    Good: 9

Avoid big numbers and percentages.
Use comparison or unspecified information.

    Bad: 14,795 people
    Good: A lot of people

    Bad: 14%
    Good: Some or a few

Avoid historic numbers.

    Bad: 1867
    Good: A long time ago

Use numbers instead of words.
Usually numbers are more easily understood.

    OK: One orange, five women, first
    Maybe better: 1 orange, 5 women, 1.

If in doubt, ask people who are used to reading and writing Easy Language.
Find out who are these consultants in your country.

Ask your consultants about the following aspects of language.

How should you write a date?

> **For example:**
> 1. July 2014 **or** July 1, 2014 **or**
> 2014-7-1 **or** first of July this year

Ask your consultants.

How should you write times?

> **For example:**
> 11.00 o'clock **or** 11:00 o'clock **or**
> 11 o'clock **or** 11 a. m. **or**
> 11 o'clock in the morning
> 11.45 **or** 11:45 **or** a quarter to twelve 18.00 **or**
> 18:00 **or** 6 p. m. **or** 6 o'clock in the evening

Ask your consultants.

How should you write other times?

> **For example:**
> At the end of December
> On the 31st of December/ at the end of the month
> On New Year's Eve/ at the end of the year

Write telephone numbers with spaces.

> **Bad:** Phone: (0391) 739625
> **Good:** Phone number: 03 91 – 73 96 25

Avoid special signs and symbols.

For example:

" "   Inverted commas

%   percentages

…   dot, dot, dot

;   semi-colon

&   and

( )   brackets

§   article

If you have to use a symbol you should explain it:

For example:

An **article** is a part of a bill or law. The symbol for **article** is §. Every **article** has a number

You can also write the word and the symbol.

For example:

Article § 1

3. Sentences

Only make one statement per sentence.

Separate long sentences.
Write a lot of short sentences.

Bad:	If you tell me what you want I can help you.
Good:	I can help you.
	Please tell me:
	What can I do for you?

The following words can be at the beginning of a sentence.

- Or

- When

- Because

- And

- But

- And others

For example:

We go on holiday.
By car.
Or by train.

4. Texts

Address readers directly.

Use the word "you".

> **Bad:** Elections will be tomorrow.
> **Good:** You can vote tomorrow.

Be careful what language you use with adults and with children.

Avoid questions in the text.

- Some people feel patronized by questions?
- Some people think they should be taught.
- Some people think they have to answer.

But You can sometimes use questions as headlines.

Avoid references.

> Do not refer to other parts in the same text.
> Do not refer to other texts.
> The difficult word for this is **cross-reference**.

> If you have to make a cross-reference:
- Highlight it.
- Explain it precisely.

> **Bad:** Ref. p. 13
> **Good:** You can read more about that on page

You may adapt/change a text when you write in Easy Language.

But content and meaning must be correct

For example:

- You may explain for better understanding.

- You may give hints.

- You may write examples.

- You may change the order.

- You may change the design or structure.

- You may leave out parts of the text which are not relevant to the readers.

5. Design and Format of Texts

Write every sentence on a new line.

Bad: The match starts at 6 p. m. and lasts till 10
and the sports hall will be open from 4 p. m.

Good: The sports hall opens at 4 in the afternoon.
The match starts at 6.
It ends at 10.

Avoid word divisions at the end of a text.

Write all words which belong together on one line.

Bad: The last holiday on Mallorca was a
wonderful experience.

Good: The last holiday on Mallorca was a
wonderful experience.

Keep the sentence together as one piece.

When you have come to the end of the page and you have not finished the sentence write the whole sentence on the next page.

Make a lot of paragraphs.

Bad: In winter it snows a lot and it is cold.
In summer the sun shines and it is warmer.

Good: **Winter –** In winter it snows a lot.
And it is cold.

              Summer – In summer the sun shines.
Then it is warmer.

Write an address as it is written on an envelope.

So everybody can understand it better and copy it.

Bad: Mr. Thomas Pinchard, 10 Shakespeare Rd, Edinburgh EH9 2BP, Midlothian, Scotland, UK.

Good: Mr.
Thomas Pinchard
10 Shakespeare Road
Edinburgh EH9 2BP
Midlothian
Scotland
United Kingdom

Use a big type size/ font size.

Use the font size 14 or bigger.

For example:

This sentence is in font size 14.

This sentence is in font size 16.

This sentence is in font size 18.

Keep a big enough distance between the lines

Bad: This paragraph has a line spacing of 1.
You can also say single line spacing.
That is very tight.

Good: This paragraph has a line spacing of 1.5.

You can also say one and a half line spacing.

That is much better.

Use a simple font.

The font must be straight

Bad:

Times New Roman

Courier New

Good:

Arial

Lucida Sans Unicode

Tahoma

Verdana

Century Gothic

Always format left-aligned.

Do not use justified alignment.
Do not format right-aligned.
Do not use centered alignment.

For example:

This text is an example for justified alignment. That means: On the right and on the left the margin is straight. Many people can hardly read a text with justified alignment.

This text is an example for right-aligned. That means: On the right the margin is straight. Many people can hardly read a text that is right aligned.

This text is an example for centered alignment.
That means: The text is always in the centre.
Many people can hardly read a text with centered alignment.

Highlight important things.

Bad examples:
- BLOCK CAPITALS
- *Italics*

Good examples:
- Highlight a word in **bold print**
- Use bullet points
- Use a **different colour**
- Highlight a text with a **background colour.**

  Make sure the text can be read well even after photo-copying.
- Highlight a text with a frame.
- Underline as little as possible.

Use a dark colour.
And light-coloured paper.

Most people can read that best.

Use thick paper.

Use paper with a thickness of 80 grams or more.
When you use thinner paper, you can read the text which is written on the back.

Use matt paper.

Shiny paper reflects the light.
It makes reading more difficult.

Use pictures.

Pictures help to understand texts.
The photos must match the text.

Ask your consultants whether the pictures are good.

Use sharp and focused images.

Photos must be sharp and focused even after photocopying.

Do not use pictures as background.

That makes reading difficult.

Always have the text checked.

Is the text for people with learning difficulties?
Then have the text checked by these people.

People with learning difficulties are experts in understanding.
They are the examiners for Easy Language.

Do the examiners understand the text?
Then the text is good.

If there is something the examiners do not understand, the text is not good.

Please read this part:
Tips and tricks for examining.
This part is for examiners of Easy Language.

Hints and tricks for checking texts

**People with learning difficulties
are experts in understanding.
They are consultants (examiners/raters)
for Easy Language.**

**This part is for consultants
For Easy Language.**

Be brave.

If you do not understand the text, you are not stupid.

When there is something you do not understand
Then the text is not good.

Ask somebody to read the text to you.

Maybe you cannot read well.
But you can listen well.

For example:

Have somebody read the text to you.
Have the text recorded.
Use a read aloud program on your computer

Hints and tricks for checking texts

Show or tell the writer of the text.

I understood this.

I did not understand that.

For example:

Use colour dots.
Stick the dots next to the text.
Or use crayons.

Red means: You did not understand the text.
Green means: This sentence is good.

Or:

Draw a face.

A smiling face means: This sentence is good.
A sad face means: This sentence is bad.
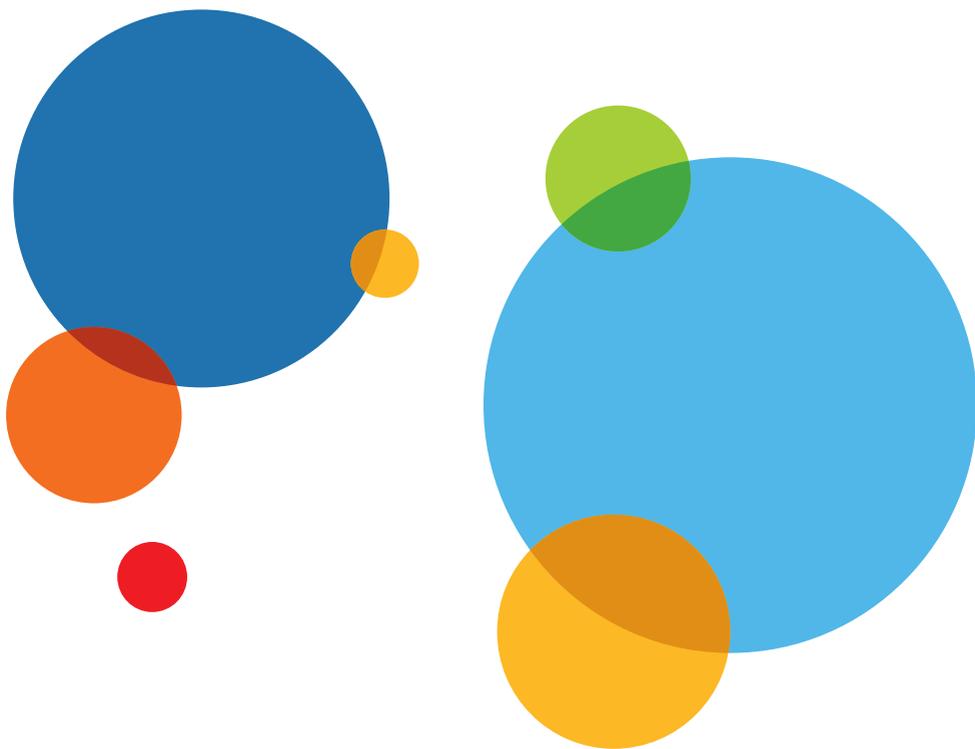
Answer questions to the text.

Somebody asks you about the text.

You can answer the question.
The text is good.

You cannot answer the question.
Then the text is too difficult.

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