

Is your English document ready?

You want readers to:

- **Read** your document
- **Understand** the main messages, and
- **Act** on the information!

Here's how!

Create an attractive, simple layout

- Use 11-14 point type. Use 14 point type if your document is for seniors or will be translated.
- Avoid ALL CAPS, excessive BOLD and underlining. When emphasis is needed, use bold, larger type or a different font.
- Use white space generously.
- Use a sans serif font for English headings.
- Use headings to chunk information, rather than one long continuous text block.
- Avoid complex tables or charts. Instead, use bullets or simple graphics.
- Use shorter lines. A two-column format is better than full-page width.
- Support text with graphics. Use one or two graphics per page.

Make your text easy to read

Make it short! Limit the text to the smallest amount of information to get the point across. Keep paragraphs short and limit the number of:

- pages
- words per page
- words per sentence
- multisyllabic words per sentence

Match the reading level to your readers' proficiency, usually 5th to 7th grade level.

Make it simple! Use conversational language and direct address (you).

Avoid jargon. Use common words, like: Relinquish = Give up Execute = Sign

Localize. Use words your readers will understand. The California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) = The State has a special computer system to keep track of restraining orders.

Field test

There are many ways to see if your readers understand:

- **Field test instrument:** Create an instrument to elicit readers' understanding of words, messages, and graphics. If you need help, let us know.
- **Cloze procedure:** Ask a typical consumer to read your document. Then give the consumer a summary of your document in which every 5th word has been left blank. Ask the consumer to fill in the missing words.
- **Free recall:** Ask a typical consumer to state all concepts they recall, without prompts. Tester notes concepts retained/missed on checklist.
- **Miscue analysis:** Consumer reads passage aloud. Tester notes mispronounced or omitted words or puzzled intonations. These are words or phrases you need to work on.

A Transcend Plain Language Tool
Download this document at
www.transcend.net/library/tools.html