Write for the Reader
Making Research Accessible
Workshop Objectives

- clear writing & design
- research translation
- research summaries & posters
Accessible Research

- engages new audiences
- mobilizes knowledge
- builds capacity
What is Clear Language

Clear language is an approach to communication that puts the **reader first** and focuses on **action**.
What is Clear Language

- writing your reader knows
- information your audience needs
- design that helps understanding
Need for Clear Language

- literacy skills
- experience with English
- information overload
- readers are changing
Benefits of Clear Language

- reach larger audience
- engage people
- save time and money
- improve outcomes
Common Objections

- takes too long
- offends readers
- sophistication and precision
6-Step Process

Think → Plan → Write

Design → Test → Revise
Step 1: Thinking

- know your reader
- know your purpose
- know your impact
Step 2: Planning

- essential information
- order
- tone
- style
- format
- design
Step 3: Writing

- organization
- words
- sentences
- tone
- paragraphs
- aspects of grammar
Step 3: Writing

- put most important ideas near the beginning
- use logical order based on reader’s needs
- make the order of the material obvious
Step 3: Writing

avoid acronyms and abbreviations

- i.e. vs. e.g.

be careful with nouns made from verbs:
- decision, determination, examination
Step 3: Writing

vary the sentence length

use simple, complete sentences:
- Matthew presents this workshop
  (Subject) (Verb) (Object)

reduce noun stacks
- “micro bacteria population diversity has increased in the last three years”
Step 3: Writing

Paragraphs
- 3 – 5 sentences
- topic sentence
- introductory words, phrases, transitions, definitions, examples, commentary

Chunks
- information blocks
- one kind of meaning
- leave out what’s not relevant to this chunk
Research Summaries

- engagement
- accessibility
- capacity building
Audience / End User

- who is the audience?
- what is the purpose?
- what is the intended impact?
- so what? / what’s in it for me?
Purpose / Impact

- design, deliver programs / services
- build knowledge / expertise
- train staff
- market programs
- seek partnerships
Research Summary Template

- publisher (organization)
- researcher / author
- publication date (of summary)
- key references, citations
- Key subject words
Research Summary Template

- 500 - 1000 words maximum
- short title
- summary of summary
- where to learn more
- visual (image, chart, graphic)
Sections

- What is this research about?
- What did the researchers do?
- What did the researchers find?
- What you need to know
- How can you use this research?
- About the researchers
Research Summaries with the 6 Steps

- **Think:** who do we want to read these?
- **Plan:** what content is essential?
- **Write:** what might be potential jargon?
- **Design:** what visuals can be included?
- **Test:** does it meet the guidelines?
- **Revise:** adapt using clear writing principles
Step 4: Designing

- questions and answers
- check lists
- point form
- tables
Step 4: Designing

text type – 12 pt.

headline type – 18 pt.

slide type – 44 pt.
Step 4: Designing

Lower case letters are easier to read than capital letters. They give the reader more visual information about the characteristics of each letter.

WORDS MADE UP OF CAPITAL LETTERS ARE SEEN AS BLOCKS AND ARE HARD TO READ, ESPECIALLY IN A PASSAGE OF TEXT.
Step 4: Designing

Text that has a ragged or uneven right margin is easier to read than text that has a justified or full margin. This paragraph was typed with an uneven right margin and no hyphenation.

Text that is centred or ragged on both sides doesn’t show the reader where sentences begin and end. It looks like each line is a sentence in itself.

A justified right margin creates unequal spaces between words and hyphenates many words at the end of lines. Hyphenated words are hard to read, so turn off “hyphenation” when you use a word processor. This paragraph was typed with a full margin and hyphenation.
Step 4: Designing

- contrast

- ratio of images to words
Research Posters

- visual summary
- concise text and graphics
- illustrated abstract vs. infographic
Research Posters

Tips

- text from research summaries
- design in the printing size
- complementary colours
- columns
Research Posters

Tips

- visible from a distance
- reduce word count
- high quality photos
- graphics and charts
Research Posters

- Word, PowerPoint, Publisher
- Adobe InDesign
- Infogr.am
- Piktochart
Step 5 & 6: Testing and Revising

- Flesch-Kincaid
- Fog Index
- Fry Readability
Step 5 & 6: Testing and Revising

- read document aloud
- ask colleague to read your draft
- conduct a focus group
Applications for Clear Language

- blogs
- videos / podcasts
- presentations
- news releases
More Information

- Clear Writing and Literacy, 2nd Edition
  en.copian.ca/library/research/olc/clear/cover.htm

- On Writing Well: The Classic Guide to Writing Nonfiction
  William Zinsser

- Matthew Shulman
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