

# Plain Language - The Guidelines

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Interreg Financial Management Camp  
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 @InteractEU

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## 3 stages to consider

### **Stage 1 – Before writing**

- Who is my reader?
- What does he/she need to know?
- What do I want my reader to do?
- What do I want to do – inform? influence? persuade?
- How can I make my information obvious to my reader?
- How can I best lead my reader through the information (logical flow)?
- How can I avoid losing him/her mid-text?
- Does my reader need a glossary?



## **Stage 2 – While writing**

- Be short
- Be straightforward
- Be personal
- Be active
- Be polite

## **Stage 3 – When you think you have finished writing**

- Read your text aloud for yourself – check for the 5 Bs from stage 2, for logic, for jargon, for buzz words
- Make your changes then read it for someone else
- Make more changes (if needed)



# Be short

- Write shorter sentences than you usually do
- Make only one main point per sentence
- Get to the point of your text early on – to “hook” your reader
- Make your introduction text summarize what is to come – the “who, what, why, where, when and how?”



# Be straightforward

- Use everyday words
- Avoid jargon ...
- ... but keep your professional terms
- Don't use buzzwords and phrases
- Abbreviations and acronyms - use sparingly



# Be personal

- Use “I, me, we, you, us, our, your” and so on to bring the reader closer to the information
- For example, change “Applications should be submitted by the end of November” into ???
- Avoid group nouns – again, to create better connection between you and your reader
- For example, instead of writing “The finance officers can offer the applicants 2 options” write ???



# Be active

- Swap out passive forms (based on **what** is being done) with active forms (based on **who** is doing it)
- So, instead of writing “Simplified Cost Options” have been found to be a great advantage” write ???



## Be polite

- If you feel your text is too direct now that you have used fewer and simpler words, increase the “polite rating” by adding words such as “please” and “kindly”.
- “Please deliver your report by Monday” sounds better than “You must deliver your report by Monday”.





# Cooperation works

All materials will be available on:

**[www.interact-eu.net](http://www.interact-eu.net)**

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