

Web Writing Guide

Use Plain English

Do

- Think about who your audience are
- Write for an 8 year old reading age
- Use everyday words
- Make a note of your key points
- Write task based information

Don't

- Make assumptions
- Use council speak, technical terms or legalise
- Use text speak or kisses

Remember

- The more educated the person, the more specialist their knowledge, the greater the preference for Plain English

First and Second Person

Write as you would talk to someone if you were sat across the table.

First Person

- I, we, me, us, my, mine, our and ours

Second Person

- Pronouns – you, your, you're

Active Verbs

Use active verbs to make your writing crisp and professional.

Active Verb = subject then verb then object
Peter (subject) watched (verb) the television (object)

Passive Verb = object then verb then subject
The television (object) was watched (verb) by Peter (subject)

Keep Words Simple

Avoid long complicated words when one or more simple ones can be used.

Examples :-

- send not forward
- a year not per annum
- so not consequently
- fill in not complete
- before not prior to

Structure Content

Do

- Identify the audience and the task in one sentence at the top of the page
- Divide content up with interesting subheadings
- Use no more than two or three paragraphs under each heading
- Use no more than 15 to 20 words in a sentence
- Use no more than five sentences per paragraph
- Be punchy. Vary your writing by mixing short sentences (like the last one) with longer ones (like this one)

Meet User Need

Do

- Keep one idea in a sentence (plus one related point)
- Leave out unnecessary information

Be Direct

Don't be afraid to give your customer instructions

Use –

Return the completed form to us

Instead of –

Residents are advised to return the completed form to us

Misused Words

Be aware of common misused words such as –

Accept/ Except

- They would accept the offer
- They work every day except Sunday

Been/ Being

- She has been to the hairdressers
- He is being a monkey

License/ Licence

- They are licensed to drive
- They hold a driving licence
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Were/ Where

- We were at the shops
- They didn't know where the train station was

Style Guide

Numbers

Write numbers one to nine as words, then 10 onwards as figures.

Leave out non-essential digits in cost

Example-

£3 not £3.00

Free not 0.00p

Telephone Numbers

Always –

- Use the area code without brackets as not all customers live in one area
- Add spacing into numbers when typing them for easy screen reading (five digits, four digits, three digits)

Links

Do

- Use descriptive and meaningful key words for links to inform the user where the link is taking them
- Use access, find out more and more information instead of click, read, see or view
- Keep links in content – add them immediately after the paragraph in which the subject is mentioned

Examples –

- Find out more about ERVAS on our website
- Visit ervas.org.uk for more information on our services

Don't

- use links mid paragraph as users read them out loud in the middle of a sentence and different colours and formats cause issues for screen magnifiers

Abbreviations and Symbols

Abbreviations, acronyms and symbols cause confusion so always use –

- per cent not %
- and not &
- for example not e.g or i.e
- and so on not etc.

Dates

Do

- Type dates in this format –
Day Date Month Year
- always include the day with the date to save everyone else looking it up

Don't

- abbreviate the day or month
- use commas
- use ordinal suffixes – nd, rd, st, th

Example –

Tuesday 10 October 2017 not **Tues 10th Oct 2017**

Times

Do

- Use the 12 hour clock
- Leave out unrequired digits and spaces
- Use 12noon for midday

Example –

9am not **9 am** or **9.00am**

12noon not **12.00pm** or **12pm**

Addresses and Emails

Always

- Use **East Yorkshire** not **East Yorks**
- Use **East Riding Voluntary Action Services (ERVAS) Ltd**
- Use a generic email address online

Formatting

Use –

- Bullet-points instead of trailing lists in a long sentence as it is easier to read
- Hyphens instead of colons
- Commas instead of semi-colons
- Single quotation marks 'like this' not double quotation marks "like this"
- Bold for headings only
- Single spaces after full stops

Don't –

- Underline
- Use italics
- Overuse capital letters. Never type full words or sentences in upper case and only use capitals for proper nouns.