



Plain Writing Guidelines

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Instructions

As an acquisition professional and leader, it is important that you write clearly and effectively. Further, everything you write in your official capacity needs to comply with the Plain Writing Act as directed by DoDI 5025.13. Use the following guidance to assess your written communications against these common writing mistakes.

Criteria	Used	Preferred
Use simple everyday words, rather than very formal or "bureaucratic" words	Erroneous Cognizant of Antithesis In as much Attributable Aforementioned	Wrong Aware of Opposite Because Due These/the
Use words with few syllables, for example	Illumination Transgression Utilize	Light Mistake Use
Don't expect readers to guess who you are writing about, for example	There are two people who can make the decision	Only (name and name) can make the decision (Name and name) can make the decision
Eliminate redundant words, for example:	Terrible tragedy New innovation Future projections Consensus of opinion Large in size	Tragedy Innovation Projections Consensus Large
Replace wordy phrases with single words	A number of At the present time Attention is invited to Close proximity Due to the fact that Each and every Forwarded under separate cover In accordance with In addition to In an effort to In conjunction with	Many or several Now Note Near Because, or due to Each Forwarded Complying, or under Also To With So

Criteria	Used	Preferred
	In order that In the course of In the event that In the recent past Not later than Pertaining to Provided that At this point in time With reference to Until such time as	During If Yesterday, or earlier By About If Now About, or regarding Until
The document is gender neutral	His/her Man hours One-man operation Congressman (to) man Policeman Watchman Chairman Men and girls Males and ladies Miss or Mrs.	Their Hours of work Run by one person Member of Congress Staff Police officer Security officer Chairperson Men and women Males and females Ms.
Omit words that will not change the meaning	Actually Basically Generally	Eliminate these words
Eliminate unnecessary phrases at the start of the sentence, for example	In my opinion With regard to	Eliminate these words
Use positive statements that make a strong and concise recommendation, for example	It appears as if we should	We recommend... The results prove/show
If an acronym is used, define it the first time first time, for example:	DUSD	Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (DUSD)

Criteria	Used	Preferred
Use strong verbs rather than weak verbs, for example	Bring to a resolution Bring to an end Give a promotion to Give a response to Have a tendency to Have an ability to Hold a meeting Make a decision Make a recommendation Take into consideration Take action	Resolve End Promote Respond Tend Can, or able Meet Decide Recommend Consider Act
The subject and verb must agree in number, for example	They was	They were
Words ending in -body, -one or -thing are singular	Everyone are Everything are	Everyone is Everything is
Say what you mean rather than using the "/" symbol. Say and, or, or and/or as appropriate	Reading/writing	Reading and writing Reading or writing Reading and/or writing
Use pronouns to prevent the overuse of nouns, for example	Ms. Lord briefed the Secretary of Defense and Ms. Lord answered questions.	Ms. Lord briefed the Secretary of Defense and she answered questions.
Collective nouns may include many people but are singular	The organization are The team are DoD are Congress are	The organization is The team is DoD is Congress is
Some nouns may sound like they should be single but are many	Data is	Data are



Review the document

- Print the document and look for errors. You may not spot all the errors on a computer screen.
- You may also want to have someone else read it. Sometimes others can find errors that you can't because you are too familiar with the material.
- Paragraphs or bullets need topic sentences or a main point.
- Use attachments for details if necessary.
- When you finish your review, update the final version by making the corrections.
- Professional documents use proper mechanics including:
 - No spelling errors
 - No capitalization errors
 - No grammar errors
- And, when appropriate, use correct classification markings

DoD 5110, *DoD Manual for Written Material*, is another great resource to understand DoD guidance regarding font, spacing, capitalization, salutations, etc.