Checklist for Plain Language



- [ ] written for the average reader
- [ ] organized to serve the reader's needs
- [ ] has useful headings
- [ ] uses "you" and other pronouns to speak to the reader
- [ ] uses active voice
- [ ] uses short sections and short sentences
- [ ] uses the simplest tense possible—simple present is best
- [ ] uses base verbs, not hidden verbs
- [ ] omits excess words
- [ ] uses concrete, familiar words
- [ ] uses "must" to express requirements; avoids the ambiguous word "shall"
- [ ] places words carefully (avoids large gaps between the subject, the verb and the object; puts exceptions last; places modifiers correctly)
- [ ] uses lists and tables to simplify complex material
- [ ] uses no more than two or three subordinate levels

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