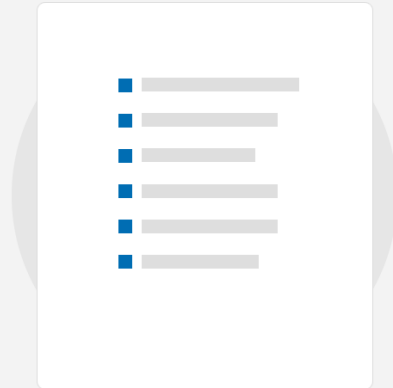# Checklist for Plain Language

- [ ] 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