# People understand plain language

Information in plain language is easier and cheaper to translate into alternate formats.

* + Know your audience.
	+ Use everyday language readers are familiar with.
	+ Use short, clear sentences (15–20 words).
	+ One idea in a sentence is best.
	+ Keep paragraphs short with one subject in one paragraph.
	+ Avoid using a multi-syllable word when a shorter one will do.
	+ Avoid jargon, acronyms, technical words and details. If you must use an acronym, always provide a full version the first time you mention it.
	+ Use active rather than passive verbs, e.g. “All government agencies signed the Charter “rather than “the Charter was signed by all government agencies”.
	+ Use “you” and “we”.
	+ Give straightforward instructions, e.g. “please sign this Charter”.
	+ Be helpful, human and polite.
	+ It’s okay to use bulleted lists.

# Use clear print principles

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## Fonts

* + Make body size 12 point type the minimum size recommended for a general audience and 16 point the minimum size recommended for people with vision impairment/low vision, or people with learning disability.
	+ Use a strong sans-serif font, such as Arial.
	+ Avoid highly stylised or simulated handwriting and typefaces.
	+ Typefaces are available in different weights. Avoid light options because there is less contrast between paper and text.
	+ Avoid italics, which can make text difficult to read for some people.
	+ Bold type can be used to emphasise text.
	+ Avoid using all capital letters in words. The human eye reads by recognising the shape of words and a word in all capitals interferes with this recognition.

## Other design characteristics

* + Be consistent with numbering, generally small numbers (1–10) should be written as words and larger numbers (over 10) should be written numerically.
	+ Use a typeface that makes numerals distinct.
	+ Avoid underlining.
	+ Line length should be about 60 characters.
	+ Align text to the left-hand margin and avoid right-justified text.
	+ The space between lines should be 1.5 and twice the space between words.
	+ Words should be evenly spaced.
	+ Make sure there is a strong contrast between the text and the background.
	+ Use plenty of white space around text and images and separate the different elements of the page.
	+ Avoid using text over images or patterned backgrounds.
	+ Avoid using colour shading and screens that reduce the contrast between text and background.
	+ To accentuate pieces of text, use white spaces or boxes.
	+ Leave a space between paragraphs for ease of reading.
	+ Avoid fitting text around images if this means lines of text start in different places and are difficult to find.
	+ Avoid using watermarks in the background of content, such as “draft” and “confidential”. Instead, signal these clearly on the front page and include them in the running header or footer.
	+ Allow extra space/widely spaced lines on forms for people to write on or for signatures.
	+ Consistency is important, for example make sure page numbers are in the same place on each page.

## Paper

* + Use matt or satin paper rather than glossy paper.
	+ Use paper of enough weight so the print does not show through on the other side.

## Binding

* + Print documents should open flat.
1. Round Table on Information Access for People with Print Disabilities Inc:
<http://printdisability.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/round_table_-clear_print_guidelines-PDF.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-1)