

# Easy English

## Writing Style Guide



## **Introduction**

- **Who is This Guide for?**

People from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and people with disabilities sometimes find it hard to read complex text. This guide has been designed to assist you when preparing documents for people who have difficulty reading and understanding written information. The documents may be reports, forms, information sheets, flyers, brochures, booklets, and other written information. It is not intended for use in the development of Easy English websites.

- **How to Use This Guide**

This guide will help you write information that is easy to understand. You need to check that the information you write follows the guidelines set out below.

- **Contact Details**

**Communication Resource Centre**

Please contact us if you need extra help with the development of Easy English documents.

Address: 830 Whitehorse Road.  
Box Hill, Victoria. 3128.

Phone: (03) 9843 2000

Fax: (03) 9843 2033

Toll free: 1800 888 824

Web site: [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

Email: [crc@scopevic.org.au](mailto:crc@scopevic.org.au)

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## 1. Before You Start

Ask yourself:

- **Who is the target audience?**
- **How much information and detail are needed?**

Keep it to the minimum.

- **What type of written information is it? For example, flyer, brochure.**

- For **information sheets or flyers** use one side of the page. This makes it easy to know what to read first.
- For **brochures** use A4 or A5 size paper that opens once or twice. This makes it easy to find the information.
- For **booklets** use a ring binder or spiral bind to hold the document together. This makes it easy to turn the pages.

## **2. Title**

- Always use a title.
- Make the title clear and simple.

## **3. Contents – ‘in This Book’**

Make a list of what is in the document.

Include:

- Who the document is for.
- How to use the document.
- Where to get extra help to read the document.
- Use an index (if needed).
- Use a glossary (if needed).
- Give information about other formats and languages. Put this information inside the front cover.
- Put date and year of publication.
- Put where the original document is available.
- Put contact details on the back page. Include names, phone numbers, fax numbers, TTY numbers, email and website addresses.

## 4. Layout of the Document

- Margins

Use wide margins, at least 2.5 cm wide.

- Justify

Line up all text to the left, including headings.

### **DO NOT centre text**

- Spacing

Use extra space between lines and sentences.

Increase space between numbers. For example, ( 6 and 8 ).

- Emphasis

Use the **bold** function for important words or phrases.

Use a box to highlight information.

Use lower and upper case.

DO NOT USE UPPER CASE ONLY.

*DO NOT use Italics.*

Use the underline function for websites only. For example:

[www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

- Length

Use 50-60 characters per line.

Complete words on the line they start on.

For example, write communication not communi-  
cation.

- Finish a sentence on the page it starts on.

## 5. Inside the Document

- Use headings.
- Use dot points or numbers.
- Write only the key points.
- Present information in a sequence of clear steps.
- Sequence information from left to right.
- DO NOT use columns of type.
- Number pages using the same size font as the writing in the document.

## 6. Size of Writing

- Font

Use Arial, Verdana, Tahoma or Helvetica font.

- Font Size

Use font size 14.

For brochures, information sheets and flyers use a font size of 16 or a font size of 18.

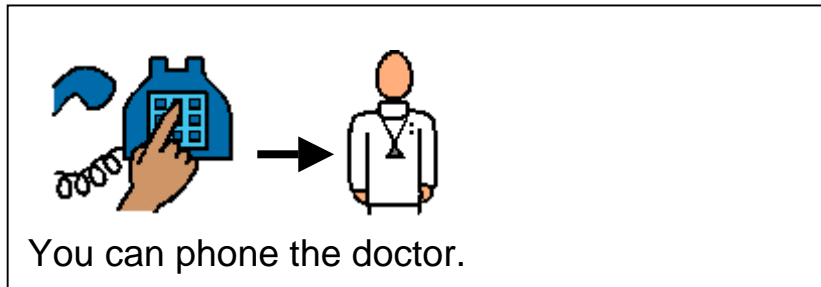
Use much larger font for posters.

Use a high contrast background, if font size is less than 14pt



## 7. Easy to Read

For example:



- Use clear, simple language. DO NOT use slang.
- Use one idea per sentence.
- Use short sentences.
- Use direct language. Address readers as 'you'.
- Use clear examples that highlight the point you are making.
- Use active rather than passive sentences. For example, 'The girl kissed the boy.', not 'The boy was kissed by the girl.'
- Name the person first, then describe them. For example, 'a person with autism', not 'an autistic person'.
- Use full names. For example, 'street' not 'st.'
- DO NOT use acronyms or contractions of words. For example, write 'it is' not 'it's'.
- Use pictures, logos or photographs to add meaning to the text.
- Use words for the numbers one to ten. Use numbers from 11 onwards.
- When starting a sentence with a number, always write the word.
- Keep punctuation marks to the minimum.

## **Check the readability of text using Microsoft Word**

To use this:

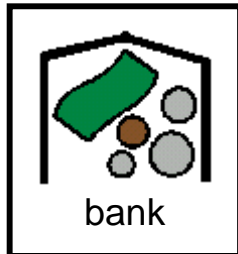
- Select 'tools'.
- Go to 'options'.
- Select 'spelling and grammar' page.
- Tick 'show readability statistics'.

Complete a spell check. The readability score will be shown at the end.

A FLESCH reading score of 85% or above means the content of the document should be relatively easy to read.

## 8. Use of Pictures or Pictographs

A pictograph is a visual image used to represent a concept or written word. For example:



- Pictures, pictographs, logos and photographs can be used to add meaning to the document.
- Pictures, pictographs, logos and photographs can also make the document interesting and attractive to the reader.
- Use pictures, pictographs and photos sparingly.

### How to Use Logos

- Use appropriate logos, if needed. For example:



- To identify your company, put the logo in the same place on all documents.

### How to Use Photographs

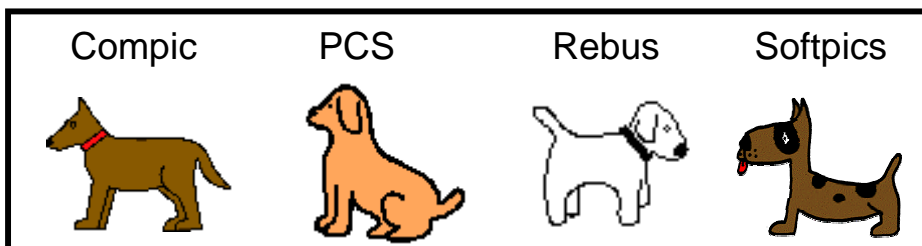
- Use clear photographs.
- Remove background and foreground clutter.
- Make the item/s in the photograph the main part of the photograph.

- Use a clear background screen when taking photographs of objects.
- Reduce glare and reflection from surfaces.



### How to Use Pictographs and Pictures

- Think about which pictograph system/s you use. There is a number of commercially available sets of pictographs, for example, Compic, PCS, and Softpics. Use clear line drawings or pictographs. For example:

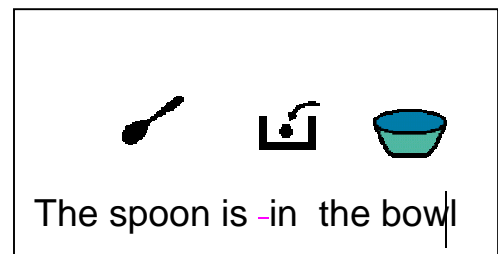


- Use pictographs for key points only.
- DO NOT use a pictograph for every word in the document.
- Use the same pictograph for the same concept throughout the document.
- Use a pictograph that looks like the idea being described for your target audience.

Example 1:



Example 2:



## **Have you chosen the best photographs, pictograph/s or pictures?**

Cover your writing.

Do the pictographs or pictures make sense visually without the writing?

Do the pictographs or pictures represent the idea or concept being discussed?

Will the person reading the document be able to relate to the pictographs or photographs from their life experiences.

- Use pictographs or photographs on the title page to represent what the document is about.
- Decide whether to use pictographs for:
  - setting the topic and headings, or
  - summarising paragraphs, or
  - reading the text (key word).
- Put a box around writing and pictograph (if needed).
- Use colour pictographs (if needed).
- Put pictographs above the writing.
- Present writing and pictographs from left to right.
- Put extra spacing between lines of writing with pictographs.
- Use a plain, solid background. **DO NOT** use 'watermark' graphics under text.

## 9. Use of Colour

- Use high contrast colours. Usually use dark colours for the writing such as:

Yellow and blue

Or

Black and white

**Make white writing big and bold. Use a dark background.**

- Highlight headings with colour.
- DO NOT **overuse** **bright** colours.
- DO NOT use a lot of different colours in the one document.

## 10. Paper

- Use heavy-weight paper, no less than 100GSM.
- Use matt paper.

## 11. References

The Easy English Writing Style Guide has been based on material from the following sources:

- Guidelines for making information accessible (August 2003). Communication Resource Centre, Scope Victoria.
- Department of Human Services writing style guide (January 2003). Victorian Government Department of Human Services, Melbourne Victoria.
- Norah Fry Research Centre. [www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry](http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/NorahFry)



## 12. Resources

- **COMPIC** is used with written permission from COMPIC, 830 Whitehorse Rd, Box Hill Victoria 3128, Australia
- **The Picture Communication Symbols**©1981, 2004 by Mayer-Johnson LLC. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used with permission.

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- **Widgit Rebus**

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124 Cambridge Science Park,

Milton Rd,

Cambridge,

CB4 0ZS,

UK

Web site: [info@widgit.com](mailto:info@widgit.com)

- **The Softpics** symbols used with permission [Bloom@tig.com.au](mailto:Bloom@tig.com.au)

- **Using the Internet**

Google is the recommended search engine for sourcing pictures.

Type in [www.google.com.au](http://www.google.com.au)

Go to 'images'.

Type the name of the image you want.

Make sure you are not breaching any copyright.