# What *is* plain language?

Plain language is simply using words your audience can understand.

It:

* Covers only 3 to 5 points per section.
* Organizes information clearly.
* Uses short words & sentences.
* Uses common words - not jargon!
* Uses graphics, point form, bold type and underlining to highlight the most important points.
* Gives people useful information

– what they **WANT** and **NEED** to know.

# **Top 10** plain language tips

1. Use the active voice.

1. Use common words rather than technical jargon.

3. Use a positive tone wherever possible.

4. Write directly to your reader.

5. Use short words and short sentences.

6. Write instructions in the order that you want them carried out.

7. List important points separate from the text.

8. Don’t change verbs into nouns.

9. List items in a parallel (the same grammatical) form.

10. Test what you write.

# **5** clear design tips

1. Choose left flush justification.

2. Choose type that is clear and easy to read.

3. Use serif fonts because they are easier to read.

4. Pay attention to how the text looks on the page.

5. Use illustrations and graphics effectively.

# **Readability tests**

## Assessing your text

Readability tests are one way of assessing your text. However, the results should be taken only as a rough estimate of how difficult your written material is, because a test cannot tell you if:

· The material is written clearly

· The ideas are complex

· The information is accurate

· The content is in logical order

· The material makes sense

· The vocabulary is appropriate for the audience

· The grammar is correct

· There is gender, class or cultural bias

· The design is attractive and helps or hinders the reader