

Writing & editing checklist

(A) CLARITY

OVERALL DOCUMENT



SIGNPOSTING

Is the structure logical and easy to follow for your target audience?

Are headings accurate, helpful and in a logical order?

If the document is over 4 pages long, is there a table of contents?

Is colour coding used to help readers to navigate (if appropriate)?

Are key words easy to see? Is content clearly numbered and referenced, if necessary?



LAYOUT

Is the general look and style compatible with the principles of clear English?

Does the layout help to make the content easy to understand?

Is there plenty of 'white space' so text does not look squeezed onto a page?

Is the typeface easy to read, in terms of colour and size?

Are all key terms and conditions easily visible?



VISUALS

Are charts and tables easy to understand?

Is the content also explained in words?

NEVER USE A FOREIGN PHRASE, A SCIENTIFIC WORD OR A JARGON WORD IF YOU CAN THINK OF AN EVERYDAY ENGLISH EQUIVALENT.

Are photos and images appropriate to the target audience and do they enhance the document?



TOP TIP

It's possible to be too concise. Check readers will have enough information to get the message.

PARAGRAPHS

Does each paragraph contain one main topic?

Do paragraphs look easy to read (remembering that the appropriate length depends on design and the reading age of the target audience)?

Are paragraphs in a logical order for the readers?

Do paragraphs flow smoothly (using linking words)?

CLARITY (contd)



SENTENCES

Is the average sentence length appropriate for the target audience?

Is the meaning clear for all target readers?

Do you mainly use the active voice (the 'who-does-what' structure)?

Is all the grammar correct?

Do sentences flow smoothly?



WORDS

Do you avoid jargon and unnecessary words?

Are all words appropriate for your target audience?

Do you use the best word for the job?

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(B) BREVITY

Is all content relevant to your target audience and to your objective?

Is every piece of information provided once only?
Or, if it's repeated, are you sure it's necessary?



(C) HUMANITY

Do you sound as though you are writing to real people?

Do you use an appropriate tone of voice for the target audience?

Do you use words and structures that are suitable for your target audience?

Do you use everyday words and expressions?

If you cannot avoid using technical terms (financial, legal etc), do you explain them clearly (if appropriate)?