



PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMIT

Overheads for Plain Language Introduction Breakout



PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMIT

**AN INTRODUCTION TO
PLAIN LANGUAGE
A WAY TO EXPRESS YOUR IDEAS
CLEARLY**

OH-1



PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMIT

A well-written document is:

- **Reader-centered**
- **Written the way we speak (within limits)**
- **Logically organized**
- **Visually appealing**



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What's The Message?

- **As with the progenitor of the scion, in such similar manner it may occur with the scion.**
- **Pulchritude does not penetrate below the dermal plane.**
- **Lithodial fragments ought not to be forcibly projected by the inhabitants of vitreous abodes**



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(Answers):

- Like father, like son.
- Beauty is only skin deep.
- People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.

OH-3A



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If the applicant requests the consent of the authorized officer to accomplish the required exploratory program by any other means, at his own expense, he shall at the time of making his request for such consent, file a plan of operations to carry out any required exploratory program for approval by the authorized officer. Such plan of operations shall be sufficient to provide the resource and economic data needed to aid to determine the fair market value of the Federal mineral interest to be conveyed. Said resource and economic data shall include, where appropriate, but not be limited to, geologic maps, geologic cross-sections, tables and descriptive information encompassing lithologic, geochemical, and geophysical data, assays of sample drill logs and outcrop sections, which aid in establishing the location, nature, quantity, and grade, and which aid in determining the fair market value of the Federal mineral interests in the land



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(CONTINUED)

covered by the application. The plan of operations shall conform to the laws, regulations and ordinances of all governmental bodies having jurisdiction over the lands covered by the application. The authorized officer shall decide within 90 days of receipt of said request whether he shall not give his consent. The authorized officer shall not give his consent if he determines that the plan of operations is not adequate to supply the resource and economic data needed to aid him in determining the fair market value of the Federal mineral interests to be conveyed. If the authorized officer, in his discretion, approves the applicant's plan of operations, the applicant may proceed to execute the plan of operations, subject to the supervision of the authorized officer. If the authorized officer does not give his consent to the applicant's request, the applicant may, within 60 days of such refusal, avail himself of the provisions of paragraph (d) of this section.

OH-4 (continued)



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NATURAL EXPRESSION means using:

- **Simple, everyday words**
- **Short sentences and paragraphs**
- **Personal pronouns**
- **Active voice**

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Word Exercise

Bureaucratic Word Better Choice

- **Advise**
- **Assist**
- **Commence**
- **Endeavor**
- **Implement**
- **Submit**
- **Ascertain**
- **Utilize**
- **At the present time**
- **Prioritize**



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Word Exercise ANSWERS

Bureaucratic Word Better Choice

- **Tell**
- **Help**
- **Begin/Start**
- **Try**
- **Do**
- **Send**
- **Find Out**
- **Use**
- **Now**
- **Rank**

OH-6A



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Word Exercise

Use **SHORT SENTENCES** to deliver a clear message.

Before:

If the State agency finds that an individual has received a payment to which the individual was not entitled, whether or not the payment was due to the individual's fault or misrepresentation, the individual shall be liable to repay to the State the total sum of the payment to which the individual was entitled.

After:

If the State agency finds that you received a payment that you weren't entitled to, you must pay the entire sum back.



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HERE'S THE SECRET TO SENTENCES: DON'T START THEM FUZZILY, AND DON'T DRIBBLE OFF AT THE END. AVOID BORING BEGINNINGS AND WIMPISH CONCLUSIONS.

-- William Safire

OH-8



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Use **TOPIC SENTENCES** in paragraphs.

Which is the topic sentence in this paragraph?

Mobil routinely requests approval to exceed 50 percent of the sales value of CO2 when deducting transportation allowances from royalties due. Calculating actual costs is a requirement to arrive at an amount to exceed 50 percent of the value of CO2 transported. Mobil's argument concerning the administrative burden of calculating actual costs is without merit.

(Answer: the last sentence is the topic sentence. It should be moved to the top).



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Use **PRONOUNS**. They:

- **Make it easier to avoid the passive voice**
- **Contribute to a more natural way of writing**
- **Make instructions user-friendly**
- **Show more interest in your reader**



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Use the ACTIVE Voice.

The difference between active voice and passive voice is the difference between:

Karen read the report.

The report was read by Karen.

The active voice is a verb form in which the subject is doing the action. An active voice sentence has a "who-does-what" order.“

The passive voice is less direct and natural than the active voice. The subject isn't doing the action. And sometimes, the "doer" isn't defined.

The banana peel was slipped on by me.

Your proposal will be reviewed.



ORGANIZE your writing by:

Opening with the main point

- **Arranging your ideas in a logical, reader-centered way**
- **Using clear, visual signals (headings, lists, bullets)**

Your summary statement (main point) should appear at the beginning of your document. Your supporting information, background data, and details follow.



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Positive VISUAL IMPACT means using:

Informative headings (in the form of questions, if appropriate)

- Lists**
- If/then tables**
- Lots of white space**



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May An Agency Submit A Machine-Readable Document?

You may submit a machine-readable document if it meets:

- GPO specifications**
- Certain other conditions**

GPO may discount your printing fee if you:

- Submit everything fully encoded for typesetting**
- Make prior arrangements with GPO**



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What Deductions Will BIA Withhold?

IF . . . THEN the percentage is . . .

The tribe requests waived.

and we approve a waiver



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WHAT I HEAR, I FORGET . . .
WHAT I SEE, I REMEMBER . . .
BUT WHAT I DO,
I UNDERSTAND.

Confucius, 451 B.C.