



IMPROVING READABILITY

HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS
WITH GOOD WRITING

YOUR PRESENTERS

E-Governance Board Members

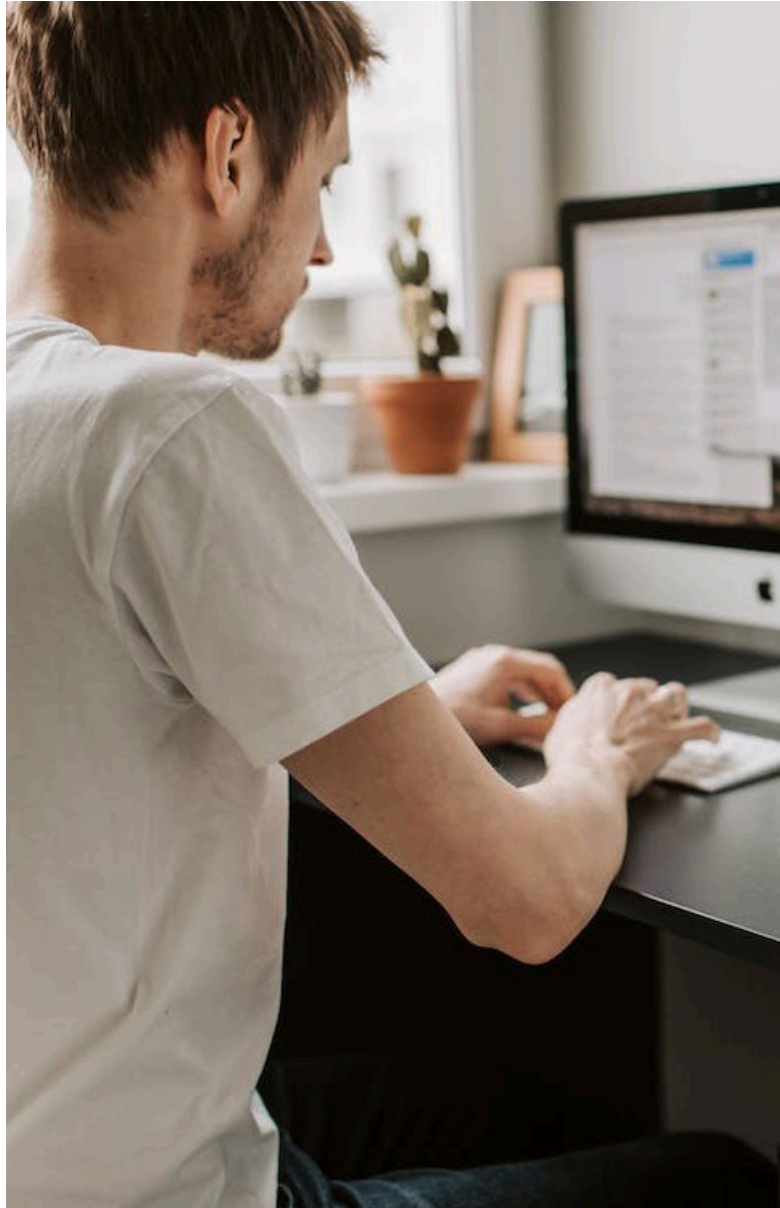
- Emma Snodgrass, SOS Information Services
- Sara Keck, DCBS Digital Communications Officer
- Sally Ridenour, ODOT Chief Content Strategist
- Ashley Massey, OSMB Public Information Officer





READABILITY: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Plain language is the law
- Increases accessibility and inclusivity
- Reduces complaints and inquiries
- Most Oregonians read at 8th grade level or lower

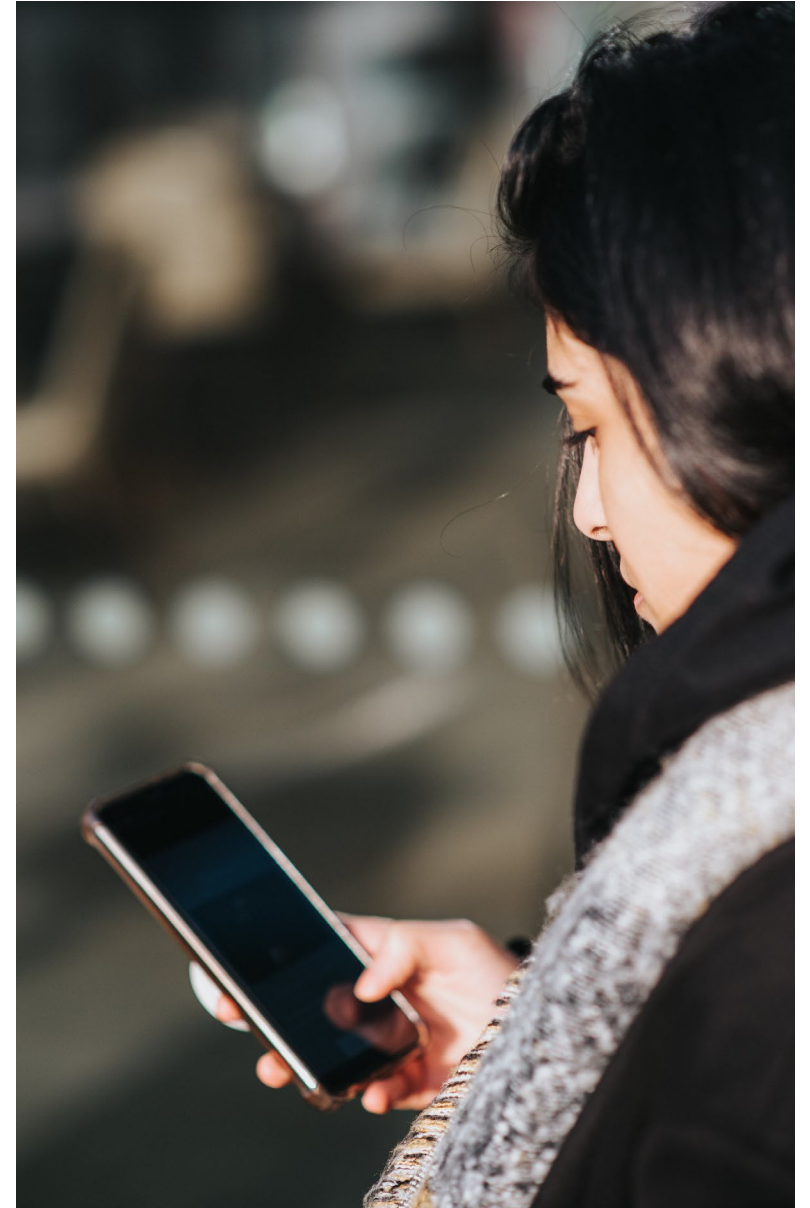


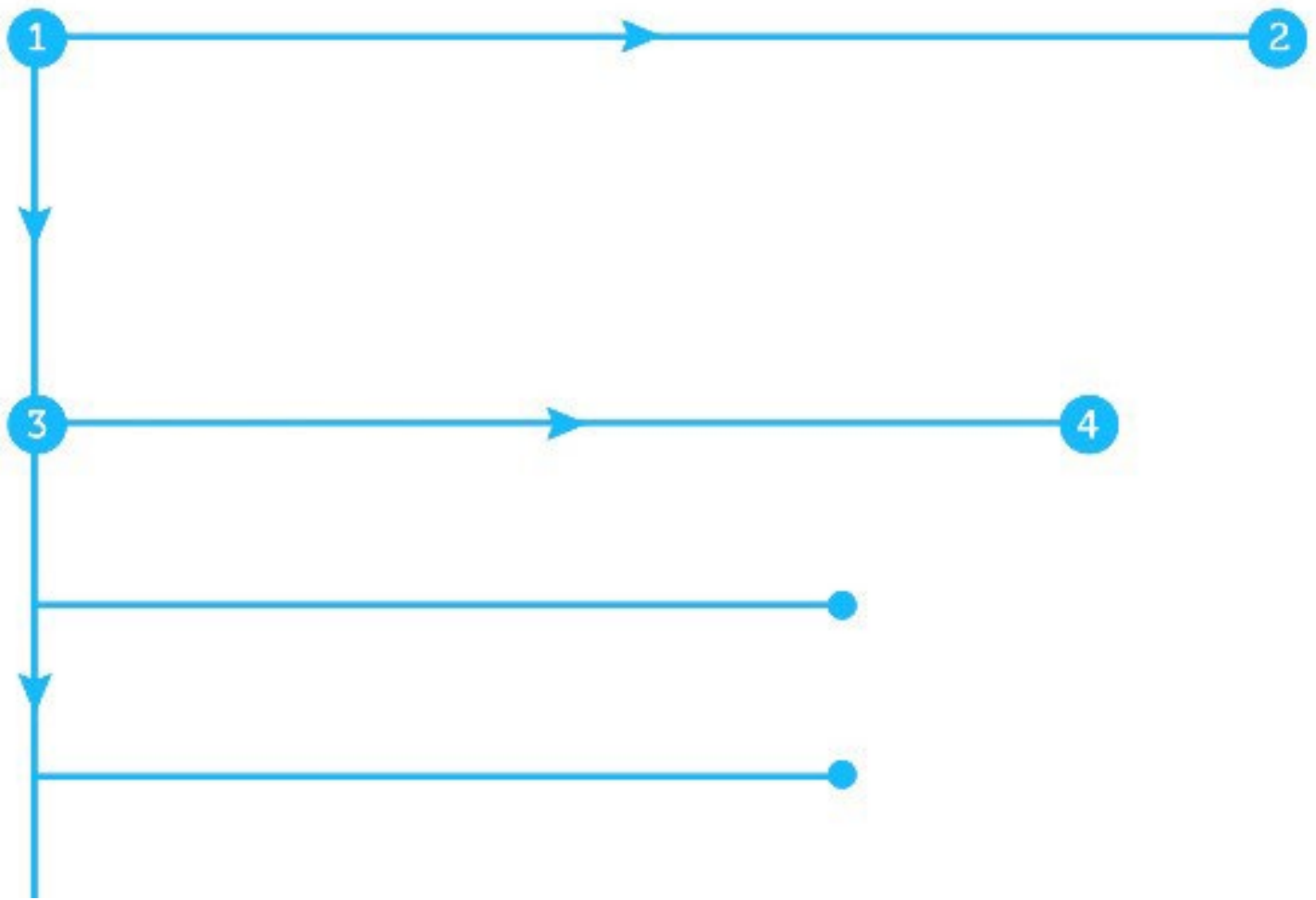
USER BEHAVIOR

Want to complete task

Scanning vs. Reading

Viewing on phone





THE F-PATTERN

- Users scan from the top left to right.
- Move vertically down page.
- If interesting, they scan horizontally.
- The lower right of the page is the almost always skipped.



IMPROVED READABILITY BENEFITS YOU



- Improves trust
- Improves search engine optimization
- Improves access on voice search

10 TIPS FOR USING PLAIN LANGUAGE TO IMPROVE READABILITY

1. Write clearly and effectively.
2. Focus the message around the facts.
3. Keep it brief. Only include relevant information.
4. Fit your writing style to the message.
5. Use short sentences and paragraphs.



10 TIPS FOR USING PLAIN LANGUAGE TO IMPROVE READABILITY



6. Use words your audience understands.
7. Use present tense and active voice.
8. Use online readability and grammar tools.
9. Format for scanning. Use white space, headings, bullets and more.
10. Test your message with your audience.



Passive: Form B must be completed by all businesses.

Active: All businesses must complete Form B.

Passive: New regulations were proposed.

Active: We proposed new regulations.

Passive: The following information must be included in the application for it to be considered complete.

Active: You must include the following information in your application.

ACTIVE VOICE – WHO DOES WHAT TO WHOM



TIME FOR A QUIZ

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PLAIN LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBILITY

There are four main guiding principles of accessibility upon which WCAG has been built. Plain language is the third.



PLAIN LANGUAGE

Plainlanguage.oregon.gov

Plain language examples from state agencies.

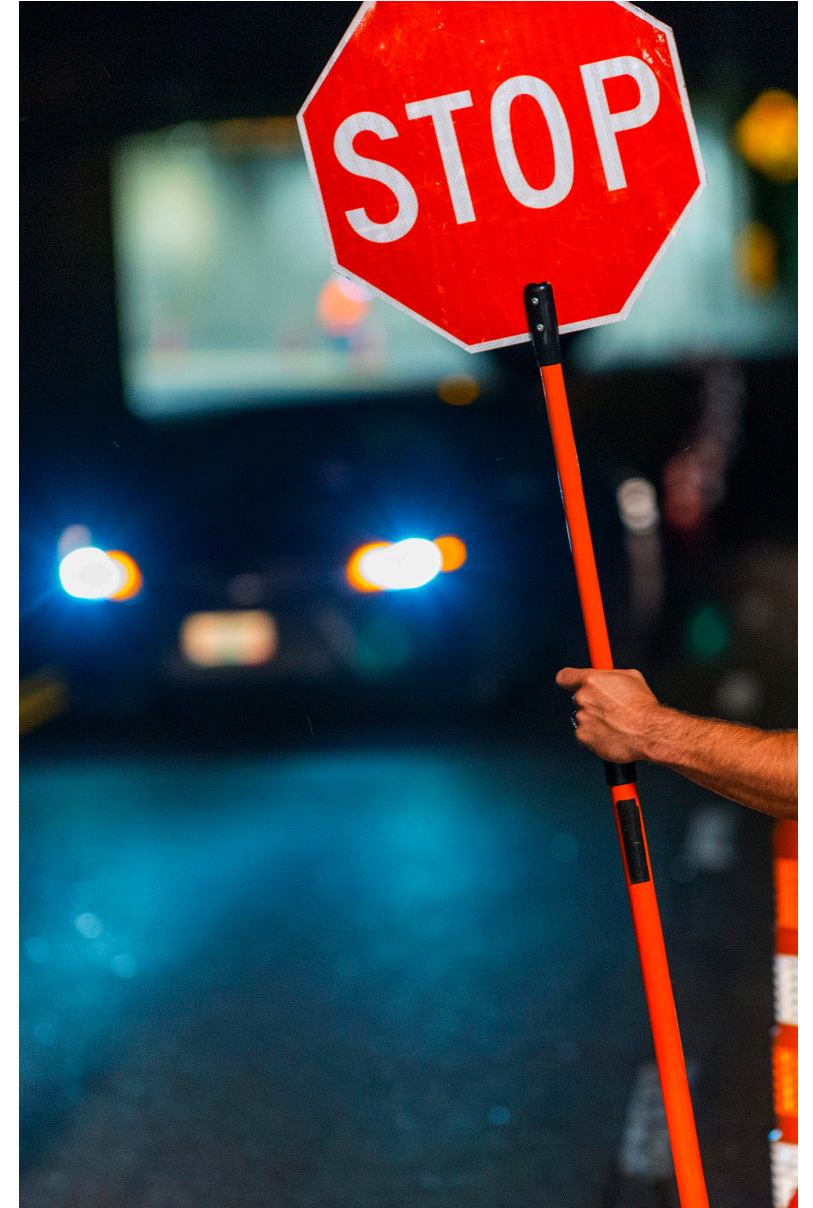
Plainlanguage.gov

More examples and tips from the federal government.



COMMON COMPLAINTS

- Too many words
- Language is too bureaucratic
- Written from the program's perspective, not the customer's





Tweet by ODOT Rose Quarter Project

Your voice, ideas & insights are needed to build an I-5 Rose Quarter Project that reflects the values of equitable engagement – helping shape the project’s design. Join our Community Advisory Committee and be heard. Applications are open through Feb. 18 at <http://i5rosequarter.org>

Reply from Twitter follower @toddlangwell

“Equitable engagement” what the hell kind euphemistic gobbledegook? You’ll get farther with plain English the people can understand rather than this PC word pudding.



**AVOID
BUREAUCRATIC
WORD
PUDDING**

Plain Language is the cure.



WHAT ARE YOU HIDING?

Thank you for your **public records request**. Pursuant to RCW 42.1.320, we are informing you it has been received and we estimate a further response to you by mail within thirty (30) days. Although we hope to complete your request number 11 _____, as soon as possible, we are making allowance for variables such as file availability, increased request demand, computer system downtime and unforeseen staff shortages. If an inspection of file information would serve your needs better than a response by mail, feel free to contact us to arrange a file inspection appointment.



SIMPLE + SHORT = TRUSTWORTHY

We received your public records request and are now searching for the materials. We will respond in 30 days to let you know:

- if the records are available;
- if any of the records will be withheld for legal reasons; and
- if copy charges will apply and, if so, the amount.



KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

What do you know about them?

What do they need from you?

WATCH OUT FOR IMPLICIT BIAS

- Gender language
- Cultural, regional bias
- Jargon/insider language.



GENDER LANGUAGE

- Chairman
- Male nurse
- The applicant must be prepared for her interview.
- Masculine words
 - Strong
 - Driven
 - Competitive
- Chair (add name)
- Nurse
- Be prepared for your interview
- Gender neutral words
 - Able, proven, exceptional
 - Passionate, inspired
 - Results-oriented

CULTURAL OR REGIONAL BIAS

- Sports metaphors
 - Touch base
 - Level the playing field
 - Tee it up
- Frontier/western terms
 - Trailblazer
 - Pan out
 - Caboodle
- What are some other examples?



AIM FOR IMPROVEMENT, NOT PERFECTION

DOCUMENTATION

- Have a game plan
- Evaluate your site and most visited pages
- Create a folder and/or use other tools for your work
- Copy/paste content into Hemingway App (free)

E-Governance Board Empowering the Web Workforce

The E-Governance Board promotes innovative, mobile enabled, usability tested websites that are both consistent and flexible throughout over 100 Oregon.gov public websites. The multi-agency board focuses on the important connection between all state agencies, boards and commissions of state government and the public we serve. Under the sponsorship of the E-Government Program, the Board meets regularly to consider and set website standards, advanced web communication techniques, provide assistance and communicate opportunities that go with maintaining the state's large presence on the web.

In this site, you'll learn about initiatives by the state's web publisher and the E-Government Program in the Office of State CIO. You'll read about actions the Board has taken to promote a consistent "look and feel" that enables users to navigate easily and find the information they need.

Spotlight

Along with Oregonians, the E-Governance Board members actively participated in the design decisions that resulted in Oregon.gov winning finalist recognition in the 2015 Best of the Web awards from the Center for Digital Government. For the second year in a row, Oregon.gov has been recognized in the Best of the Web awards. Oregon.gov underwent over 100 usability and accessibility tests with Oregon residents to make sure the state's portal design was usable for all Oregonians.

Hemingway Editor

Readability

Grade 12

OK. Aim for 9.

Words: 220

Show More ▾

3 adverbs. Aim for 2 or fewer.

1 use of passive voice, meeting the goal of 3 or fewer.

1 phrase has a simpler alternative.

1 of 13 sentences is hard to read.

6 of 13 sentences are very hard to read.

Before...

Are your job duties related to keeping up a state agency website? Whether it's website design, content creation, editing, or administration, the E-Governance Board (E-Gov) is here to help.

Learn about E-Governance [Guidance](#) for state websites and social media management. [The state's web publisher and the E-Government Program](#) in the Office of State CIO, support this [guidance](#). Read more about the [E-Gov Board](#) and its goals

The E-Gov Board promotes websites that are:

- Innovative
- Mobile-ready
- Tested for usability
- Consistent branding across the Oregon.gov enterprise
- Customizable for different agency needs
- Use design tools and eCommerce where applicable
- Meet federal and state laws for accessibility and readability
- 100+ Oregon.gov public websites

The E-Gov Board membership ranges from small boards and commissions to large state agencies. The 20+ members focus on improving how to best meet the needs of the public and create consistency through website design and function. The E-Gov Board sets website standards and provides guidelines and best practices so the public can find what they need -fast.

The E-Government Program manages the state's web publisher contract. Oregon.gov websites use the SharePoint content management system.

Hemingway
Editor

Readability

Grade 8

Good

Words: 191

Show More ▾

0 adverbs. Well done.

0 uses of passive voice.
Nice work.

0 phrases have simpler alternatives.

5 of 22 sentences are hard to read.

0 of 22 sentences are very hard to read.

After!

OUR PLAN

- Prioritize the content to improve.
- Save a copy of before and after content for comparison.
- Strategize using an image, video or accessible infographic as a better alternatives to words.
- Repeat... and strive for continual improvement.



EVALUATE RESULTS

Simple isn't easy.



SIMPLE IS NOT EASY. TAKE ONE STEP AT A TIME AND YOU'LL GET THERE.

RESOURCES

- Why plain language (video)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=32&v=bAvWIA7UiYM
- Plainlanguage.gov
<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>
- Writing clearly and simply WEBAIM
<https://webaim.org/techniques/writing/>

