

Handout: Use everyday words

Using familiar, common words makes it easier for people to follow what we're asking them to do. The list below shows common words we use in formal, academic writing and some examples of plain-language alternatives.

Single-word alternatives

Professional/academic/medical	Everyday
Utilize	Use
Administer	Give
Provide	Give
Obtain	Get
Determine	Decide
Establish	Set up
Evaluate	Review
Identify	Find
Locate	Find
Interpret	Explain
Implement	Carry out
Initiate	Start
Commence	Start
Adequate	Enough
Required	Needed
Excessive	Too much
Alternate	Other option
Designated	Chosen, assigned
Maintain	Keep
Assessment	Check
Monitor	Check, Keep track of
Consumption	Using, eating
Individuals	People
Insufficient	Not Enough
Reimbursement	Pay back
Verification	Proof
Documentation	Papers, paperwork

Professional/academic/medical	Everyday
Contextualize	Explain
Systematize	Arrange, organize
Incentivize	Encourage, boost, motivate
Facilitate	Guide, make easier
Collaborate	Work together
Complicated	Hard
Appropriate	Right, correct, suitable
Perceive	See, notice
Beneficial	Helpful
Proceed	Go ahead
Report	Tell
Notify	Tell
Request	Ask
Subsequent	Next
Frequently	Often
Adequate	Enough
Substantially	A lot
Obligated	Required, must, have to
Household	People you live with
Incentivize	Encourage
Initiate	Start
Adequate	Enough
Individuals	People
Insufficient	Not enough
Document (verb)	Write down

Phrase alternatives

Professional/academic/medical	Everyday
Prior to	Before
At this time	Now
In the near future	Soon
In a timely manner	On time
Due to the fact that	Because
In order to	To
Provide assistance	Help