

Get to the Point: Write for Immediate Understanding

This tip sheet summarizes what you learned in Module 2 of the Clear Communication Online Training Series. Refer back to it when you're writing.

Keep your writing focused and concise.

- » Use short sentences and paragraphs.
- » Include only 1 topic in each paragraph.
- » Remember that less is more — consumers are less likely to read something that's long or detailed.

Use clear, direct language.

- » Always use the active voice — the passive voice is less clear.
- » Watch out for hidden verbs.

Stick to words your reader knows.

- » If you must use a technical word, define it clearly.
- » Remember that readers will skip over jargon and words they don't know.

Go beyond readability formulas.

- » Don't rely on readability formulas too much — they can lead you to simplify in the wrong way, leaving out essential concepts and terms.
- » Use the NCEH/ATSDR Clear Writing Checklist and the CDC Clear Communication Index as alternatives to readability formulas.

When you're finished writing, always ask yourself:
Will my readers understand what I wrote the first time
when they read it?

