

NALA Plain English Resources 2025

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Become a member of NALA

If you would like to support NALA's work, you can [become a free member of NALA](#). You'll get one email a month and a vote at our AGM.

[Read our latest factsheets on literacy and numeracy in Ireland on our website.](#)

[NALA Plain English Network on LinkedIn](#): Join a community of practice to help you promote plain English in your organisation and throughout Ireland.

We share resources, expertise and case-studies.

Training

Free online training

[90-minute Introduction to using plain language in your work](#)

Brought to you but the Adult Literacy for Life Office in collaboration with the National Adult Literacy Agency

[Two-hour e-learning about plain language in criminal justice](#)

NALA helped to develop this as part of an EU project. While intended for people who work in criminal justice, it spells out the principles of writing in plain language very well.

Free Online NALA Literacy Awareness Courses

- [Understanding adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy](#)
- [Becoming literacy friendly](#)

[Grammar Matters from the Open University](#)

Brush up on your grammar skills. What is the passive voice? Did I just dangle a participle? Learn what you need to know to be a confident writer.

Top resources

Plain English reference guides

[NALA plain English resources](#) like the [Writing and Design Tips](#) booklet and [Plain English Checklist](#).

[NDA Customer communications Toolkit for the Public Service — A Universal Design Approach](#): This is a comprehensive guide that covers writing for the web and so much more.

[EU Commission Style Guide \(PDF\)](#): Useful for report writing

[HSE Content Guide](#)

[HSE Guideline for Communicating Clearly](#)

[National Screening Service Communications toolkit \(PDF\)](#)

The [NHS Service Manual](#) is where I go to for advice about writing health information

[Nielsen Norman Groups Pages on Writing for the Web](#)

[Essential for Drafting Clear Legal Rules \(PDF\)](#): Wonderful before and after examples
[Better letters – evidence and considerations from the behavioural sciences: Behavioural and Cultural Insights policy brief series](#)

I love this guide to writing effective letters using behaviour science techniques. It has guidelines, case studies and practical advice.

ISO Plain Language Standard

You can buy the ISO Plain Language Standards.

There are now two to consider:

[Part 1: General Principles](#)

[Part 2: Plain Legal Language](#)

Background on ISO Plain Language Standards

Essential reading is this article from Christopher Balmford on putting it together. It starts on [page 7 of the 2023 Clarity Journal \(pdf\)](#). He links to a [guide to implementing the standard](#).

Another person to follow is Gael Spivak. Here is a [recent interview with her](#). Gael chairs the International Plain Language Federation's committee that is helping

people to adopt the standard in their countries. It's called the Localization and Implementation Committee.

User research

Check out the [NN/g and their guidance on user research](#)

The [HMRC in the UK built an online Accessibility Empathy Hub](#). You can see their seven personas to test user access needs. Use it to see a simulation of what navigating the web is like when you are dyslexic or have dyscalculia.

Writing for the web

General guidelines

[GOV.UK content guide](#): The gold standard of writing public information for the web

[The GOV.UK Design Principles](#). 10 points to help you create the best content.

[Readability Guidelines](#) from Content Design London. The people who developed GOV.UK started their own consultancy firm. They offer editing and training services too.

The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) is one I refer to more frequently. I think it improves on GOV.UK's content guide in some ways.

Writing links

Check out Nielsen for tips about [how to write better link labels](#).

Getting feedback from your team members

[How to run a content critique](#) from Content Design London

Generative AI

[Chat GPT](#): All about getting the prompts right!

[Microsoft Co-Pilot](#) may be accessible through your Microsoft Account

You can read the [government's resources on AI](#) including their Seven Principles for Responsible AI

The Public Relations Institute of Ireland [published guidelines on using Generative Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) and Public Relations Work](#)

You have to be a member to download but they summarise them on their webpage.

Fergal Mc Govern of Visible Thread has a blog called [The Human Factor](#) that is excellent at keeping up to date about it. Turning long docs in natural sounding AI voiced podcasts! Go for it.

I also like this blog on the COSTAR prompt framework that can help you. [How I Won Singapore's GPT-4 Prompt Engineering Competition](#)

You watch this webinar on using AI prompts in your writing from the [Plain English Foundation: Plain language: where does AI fit in? \(video\)](#)

Social media

[GOV.UK Social Media Playbook](#). Shares best practice of communicating on social media.

[Mailchimp Content Style Guide](#): Their [guidelines on writing for social media](#) are short and sweet but useful.

Inclusive language

Disability

[Guidelines for Inclusive Language, published by the Linguistic Society of America \(LSA\)](#),[External link](#):

[OHSU Inclusive Language Guide](#)

Health

[CDC Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication](#)

[NHS Inclusive language](#)

Government

[Gov.uk Language guidelines](#)

[Department of Children and Youth Affairs](#): Great glossary in an Irish context P92-100

Dyslexia

Dyslexia Association of Ireland: [Guidelines on Inclusive Communication \(PDF\)](#)

[Dyslexia friendly style guide](#) from [British Dyslexia Association](#)

Writing tools and resources

[Hemingway App](#): Checks how readable your writing is

[English Vocabulary Profile](#): Check when a language learner is expected to know a word. A1 is a beginner. C2 is fluent. Most readers are in the middle around B1/B2.

[Fraze.it](#): Corpus of sentences to check how words and phrases are used. I use it when I want to see how a word is used.

[Google Trends](#): Should I use 'Fair Deal Scheme' or 'Nursing Home Support Scheme'? Well Google Trends will tell you which one people are searching for. Check how popular your key words are

Everyday language

Check out the [A-Z of Alternative Words](#) from the [Plain English Campaign](#)

[Climate Change Jargon Buster](#) with Department of Taoiseach.

How to guides

[EU How to write clearly](#): Good short introduction to principles of writing in plain English.

[Oxford guide to Plain English by Martin Cutts](#). This is a great reference book and resource guide to writing in plain English.

Grammar books

David Crystal writes helpful books for people wanting to improve their grammar. [Rediscover Grammar](#) is a good place to start

Oldie but a goodie (where I take my plain English philosophy from)

George Orwell's Essay on ['Politics and the English Language'](#)

Design tools and tips

[Canva](#) is a great free design tool to help you create posters.

You can also get [Canva Pro free](#) if you're a charity.

You can also use [Postermywall](#) but it has a watermark!

[Butterick's Practical Typography](#). A fascinating look at how we write and design for reading online.

[Colorable](#) Check if your design passed web-accessibility standards. Need hex code or an eye for colour

[Contrastchecker.com](#)

Here you can upload an image and it will help you test it.

[Gov.uk How to design for accessibility](#)

[Webaim: Design for Accessibility](#)

[Video on how Screen Readers work and things to avoid.](#)

The [Simplification Centre](#) run by Information Design expert Rob Waller has a wealth of knowledge about designing resources that go beyond plain English to finding the best way to visually represent information. This [journal article on information design](#) gives a great overview of his work.

Wonderful guide for graphic designers on accessible design

[AccessAbility 2: A Practical Handbook on Accessible Graphic Design, Revised + Supersized Second Edition \(craft-cms-s3.s3.amazonaws.com\)](#)

[Follow the AD Professor on Twitter for inspiration](#)

Links to information and research about effectiveness of plain language

[Plain Language Association International.](#)

[The Clarity Journal](#): Research on plain language along with tips, before and after examples and much more.

[Nielsen research](#) on benefits of plain language.

Joseph Kimble: [Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please](#). Book of case studies on how plain language saves time, money and effort.

Plain Numbers

Gov.UK: [Designing for people with dyscalculia and low numeracy](#)

Also check out [Accessible Numbers](#) and their seven points

[Plain Numbers](#) in the UK offer training and consulting

The [UK Office for National Statistics](#) offer guide advice

The [NHS has a great page on numbers, measurements, dates and time](#) it in their service manual

Accessibility

WebAim.org have great practical tips on following the [Web Accessibility Standards](#).

[Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach](#)

I find the below resources from the National Disability Authority really good:

- [Universaldesign.ie | Create accessible word documents](#)
- [Universaldesign.ie | Create accessible PDFs](#)
- [Universaldesign.ie | Document design](#)

[Ahead's resource on accessibility in general](#)

Including for:

[Ahead.ie | Accessible Powerpoint presentations](#)

Writing for young people

Professor Lundy Lundy of Queen's University Belfast worked with the EU Commission on this very helpful guide to writing

[Creating child-friendly versions of written documents: A guide \(PDF\)](#)

Example of good practice

Learner Resources from Tipp ETB

- [Learner Information Guide: information you need to support a positive learning journey](#)
- [Learner Guide to Assessment: all you need to know about certified courses](#)

Law Reform Commission

[Plain English Consultation Paper](#)

Health Insurance Authority:

[Guides for member of the public](#)

Plain English Webinar Series

You can [watch our 2024 plain English webinar series on YouTube](#)

We cover topics like:

- Leading a culture of plain English
- Forms
- Print materials
- Writing for the web

Podcasts

[Wheel Podcast on Using Plain English](#)

[NALA Podcast with Literacy Students](#)

Fun resources

[Fun videos from the New Yorker on Grammar](#) Diverting introduction to grammar

[Fun posters on Grammar](#) from The Oatmeal