

# Access Health and Community

## Health literacy guidelines for written communication

Access Health and Community wants to make it easier for our community to navigate, understand and use information and services to take care of their health and wellbeing. Use the following health literacy guidelines when developing your written communication.

### Readability - guidelines

Font	Minimum size is 12 font. Use only one font.
Line spacing	Line spacing must be set at minimum 1.2.
Dot points	Aim to not have more than six dot points in a single list. <b>Tip - Keep each dot point around one line long.</b>
Headings and subheadings	Make sure the headings clearly describe the information that follows. When appropriate, use subheadings to break up information. <i>See headings and subheadings in the style guide.</i>
Justification	Use left flush justification – this should be the default setting in Microsoft Word.
Relevant images	Use images that are related to the information. If necessary, ensure images are labelled or captioned.
Culturally appropriate pictures and images	Ensure images and pictures reflect our community and/or the community you are targeting.

### Plain language – guidelines

Clear message	Make the most important message first. <i>See writing tips in the style guide.</i>
Short sentences	Avoid over-use of commas. Break long sentences into shorter sentences. <b>Tip - Aim to use 10 – 15 words per sentence.</b>
Active voice	Write sentence in active voice. Active voice describes a sentence where the subject (person/organisation) performs the action stated by the verb. For example: ✓ You can make appointments daily. ✗ Appointments can be made daily. <i>See writing and using plain English in the style guide.</i>
Simple language	Use language that will be understood by the community. Write to a grade three to four level. <b>Tip - Use words that are no more than three syllables.</b> <i>To check readability see Instructions for checking the reading level of your document.</i>
Avoid jargon	Jargon is not understood by the community. Try and use alternative words. If jargon is necessary, define it. <i>See our language in the style guide.</i>
Tense	Don't switch between tense: past, present and future. Documents should be written in present tense. Avoid writing in the future tense, for example: ✓ Press <enter> to display the next screen ✗ Press <enter> and the computer will display the next screen <i>See writing and using plain English in the style guide.</i>
Inclusive Language	Use inclusive language to appeal to your reader. Example: use 'you' instead of 'the client' or 'we/us' instead of 'Access Health and Community.' <i>See our language in the style guide.</i>
Abbreviations and Acronyms	Where possible, avoid using abbreviations and acronyms in your communications. They make it hard for the community to follow. <i>For appropriate use of acronyms see Abbreviations in the style guide.</i>

# Instructions for checking the reading level of your document

## How to set up the function

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1. Open a word document.
2. Click on the Review Tab
3. Click on Spelling and Grammar
4. Click on the Options tag (bottom left corner)
5. In the 3rd section, the heading should read 'When correcting spelling and grammar in Word'.
6. The last option is Show readability statistics. Make sure that you check (click on) the box so that there is a tick in it.
7. Click on OK.

## How to use the function

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From now on when you do a Spelling and Grammar check in Word, you will get a box that appears at the end of the check called the 'Readability Statistics'. The third section of this box is title 'Readability'.

## Flesch Reading Ease

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This number indicates the readability of a document. Higher scores indicate that the material is easier to read. Lower numbers mean that the material is more difficult to read.

Scores:

*90 - 100*

Easily understandable by an average 11 year old student (grade four or five student)

**For health literacy, your document should be between 90-100.**

*60 - 70*

Easily understandable by an average 13-15 year old student (grade 7-9)

*0 - 30*

Best understood by a University graduate

The length and number of syllables in the words do affect this score.

## Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level

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Whatever number is in this, can be matched to that grade at school for example three would be grade three primary school, nine would be year nine in secondary school, 13 and over. University level for example 14 - 2nd year Uni, 16 a Uni graduate, 18 a post graduate.

**For health literacy, your document should be a 3 or 4.**

If your document is greater than a grade 3 or 4 level, use the health literacy guidelines to re-write/design your written communication.