



# Writing for Your Readers

## Introduction

The Widening Access for Adult Literacies project ran in northeast Edmonton, Alberta, from 2006 to 2009.<sup>1</sup> The main intention of the project was to find ways to make it easier for adults with literacy challenges to access literacy programs and other community resources. Using clear language was a key way to widen access for agency participants. Clear language includes written communication, signage and website information. It also includes spoken communication between staff and with community members.<sup>2</sup>

## Workshop intentions

- Identify clear language principles and practices
- Use MS Word readability tool
- Practice a range of clear language writing and rewriting exercises

## Resources

- PowerPoint Presentation\*
- Computers with internet access
- Whiteboard and markers
- Sample newsletters, brochures, flyers, pamphlets etc.
- Learning Connections Newsletter Handout\* and copies of a newsletter that is not particularly clear
- Evaluation form (p. 4)

Invite participants to bring electronic copies of their agency newsletters. Include the following on a CD for each participant:

- Copy of PowerPoint Presentation\*
- Clear Writing Checklist Handout\*
- Clear Writing Policy Template Handout\*
- Clear Writing Exercise File. Prepare a selection of excerpts from newsletters, brochures, etc. for rewriting practice.

\* Available on the Widening Access for Adult Literacies website.

Time: 3 hours

Developed by  
Michael Wallace,  
2008.

Widening Access for  
Adult Literacies  
Project.

<http://www.wideningaccessforliteracies.ca>



<sup>1</sup> The project was sponsored by The Learning Centre Literacy Association and The Candora Society of Edmonton. The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, Human Resources Development Canada, provided funding.

<sup>2</sup> "Community members" may refer to agency clients, participants or customers.

## Workshop Plan

PP Slide	Activity/Points to review	Time/ Resources
1	<p>Introductions of self and participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What experience do you have of clear language?</li> <li>• What are your expectations for the workshop?</li> </ul>	
2	Review the questions.	
3-4	Review statistics.	
5	<p>Comparing newsletters</p> <p>Ask participants to form small groups. Give each group copies of the newsletters.</p> <p>Ask the groups to review and compare the newsletters for readability.</p> <p>Debrief the exercise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What helps readability?</li> <li>• What hinders readability?</li> </ul>	<p>Learning Connections Newsletter Handout</p> <p>Another school or agency newsletter</p>
6	Ask participants to name what they see as the benefits of clear writing.	
7	Introduce the five readability points.	
8-13	<p>Review the concept of readability levels and introduce the MS Word Readability Tool. Demonstrate and ask participants to set up the readability tool on their computer. Participants can select an excerpt from the writing exercise file and do a readability check.</p>	Writing Exercise File
14-24	Itemize various steps that can be taken to increase the readability of a word document.	

25-28	Review the examples of clear language rewrites. Discuss the changes made and elicit participant comments on changes.	
29	Exercise for participants to change jargon phrases into clear writing phrases. Allow 5 minutes for exercise then go through each example and ask the group to share responses. Make the point that some jargon phrases can be almost impossible to decipher.	
30	Exercise for participants to change passive sentences into active sentences. Allow 5 minutes for exercise then go through each example and ask the group to share responses. Make the point that the focus here is on changing passive to active and that often this means putting a subject into the sentence where one is missing.	
31	Participants practice rewriting materials, using clear writing principles. Provide support and assistance to individual participants as necessary.  Debrief exercise to elicit participants' thoughts and feelings about the rewriting process. Emphasize that clear writing is a skill that requires practice, patience and perseverance.	Writing Exercise File  Participants' newsletters
32	Introduce layout and design principles. Provide a range of examples of 'good' and 'not so good' examples from flyers, brochures, newsletters etc.	
33-43	Go through each item of layout and design. Give examples and discuss participants' own document materials where these are available.	
43	Review checklist participants can use to check how well their documents meet clear language principles.	Clear Writing Checklist Handout
44	Refer participants to resources. Review Clear Language Policy Template.  Evaluation.	Clear Language Policy Template

## Writing for Your Readers - Workshop Evaluation

What drew your attention to attend this workshop? What did you hope to gain from attending?

What key things did you learn in this workshop?

How do you plan to apply what you learned to design and write your print-based materials?

What particular information, approaches or elements of the workshop did you find most effective in getting the ideas across?

Which elements did you find least effective?

What other information would you find helpful?

Thank you for attending and for providing feedback.