Plain Language Checklist

**Does document meet the readers’ needs?**

☐ Do I have a clear idea of who will read this document?

☐ Does the format match the readers’ needs?

☐ Does the content meet the readers’ needs?

☐ Does it answer the readers’ questions in the order they will ask them?

☐ Does it include only what the reader needs to know, omitting unnecessary information?

**Is the message clear?**

☐ Is the main message up front?

☐ Will the message be clear to my readers?

☐ Have I logically arranged each section?

☐ Is the document an appropriate length?

☐ Will my reader know what to do with the information?

**Are the words effective?**

☐ Does the word choice match the readers’ needs and skills?

☐ Did I use concrete and familiar words?

☐ Did I avoid jargon and other unclear words, such as concept and value words?

☐ Did I use pronouns to speak to the reader?

☐ Did I eliminate extra words and unnecessary information?

☐ Did I define all acronyms?

**Have I used headings effectively?**

☐ Does each page have at least one heading?

☐ Do the headings clearly describe the information that follows?

☐ Do the headings cover all the ideas in their section?

☐ Is the heading format consistent throughout the document?

☐ Are the headings close to the information that follows, so they don’t “float?”

**Did I use list and tables?**

☐ Can I turn any information into a bulleted list?

☐ Did I consistently punctuate my lists?

☐ Do all the items in the list follow logically from the list introduction?

☐ Can I turn any information into an “if…then” table?

**Have I checked the spelling and grammar?**

☐ Have I checked the spelling with more than Spellcheck?

☐ Have I checked to be sure it’s all grammatically correct?

☐ Have I checked the punctuation?

**Are the paragraphs effective?**

☐ Do the paragraphs begin with the main idea?

☐ Are the paragraphs the right length?

**Are the sentences effective?**

☐ Are any sentences too long or too short?

☐ Have I used active voice most of the time?

☐ Have I used concise, well-constructed sentences?

☐ Have I kept the subject, verb, and object together?

☐ Have I used action verbs instead of nouns made out of verbs?

☐ Have I used a conversational tone and the reader’s words?

☐ Have I defined words when necessary?

**Does it look easy to read?**

☐ Have I used enough white space to make it look uncluttered and inviting?

☐ Have I used effective emphasis techniques – such as bold and colors NOT ALL CAPS?

☐ Have I added graphics where they will illustrate the message?

☐ Is the font at least 12 points?

☐ Is the text both upper and lower case –?

☐ Is there enough contrast between font color and background color?