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Office of FOIA and Privacy  
27130 Telegraph Rd.  
Quantico, VA 22134  
Fax: 571-305-6931, (address to Leslie Blake)  
Email: [Leslie.Blake@dss.mil](mailto:Leslie.Blake@dss.mil)

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DEFENSE SECURITY SERVICE  
27130 TELEGRAPH ROAD  
QUANTICO, VA 22134

JUN 23 2014

**RE: FOIA/PA# 477-34**

This is in response to your e-mail dated June 20, 2014 requesting, pursuant to the Freedom of Information and Privacy Act's (FOIA/PA), "Defense Security Service Style Manual".

Enclosed (76 pages) is a copy of all DSS records related your request. It includes memorandum for Defense Security Service Personnel establishing the DSS Plain Language Program. We have included the DoD Instruction 5025.13 DOD Plain Language Program as well as a PowerPoint presentation "Principles of Plain Language".

We appreciate having been able to assist you in this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my office at email [mark.nokeley@dss.mil](mailto:mark.nokeley@dss.mil). In any such contact with this office, please reference your assigned FOIA/PA case # **477-34**.

Sincerely,



MARK D. NOKELEY  
FOIA/PA Specialist  
Office of General Counsel

Enclosure as stated



**DEFENSE SECURITY SERVICE**  
27130 TELEGRAPH ROAD  
QUANTICO, VA 22134-2253

April 13, 2014

MEMORANDUM FOR DEFENSE SECURITY SERVICE PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: DSS Plain Language Program

Reference: DoD Instruction 5025.13, "[DoD Plain Language Program](#)," April 11, 2013

The reference requires DoD personnel to follow the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#) when preparing new or substantially revised documents. Contracts for services that include delivery of written products for agency use must include a provision requiring contractor personnel to use plain language when preparing those products.

DSS employees who regularly write or edit documents must complete plain language training. To fulfill this requirement, you can take an online course available through our [Administrative Resource Center](#) or attend a DSS plain writing workshop (schedule attached). Although the training is a one-time requirement, supervisors may require their employees to take refresher training as needed. Contractor personnel are not required to take plain language training but are welcome to participate with their employer's approval.

I ask for the commitment and support of all DSS leaders to incorporate plain writing principles in agency documents. Ms. Anita Gallé is the DSS plain language representative. To sign up for a workshop or request additional information, please contact her at (571) 305-6081 or [anita.galle@dss.mil](mailto:anita.galle@dss.mil).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stanley L. Sims", is positioned above the printed name and title.

Stanley L. Sims  
Director

Attachment:  
As stated



## DSS Plain Writing Workshop 2014 Schedule

March 11  
March 25  
April 16 (Mill Road)  
April 29 (CDSE)  
May 27  
June 24 (Mill Road)  
July 29  
August 26 (CDSE)  
September 30  
October 28  
November 25

Workshops are held from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. in the Russell-Knox Building classroom T2132 unless otherwise noted.

### Workshop agenda:

11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Principles of Plain Language, Part 1
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 – 1:50 p.m.	Principles of Plain Language, Part 2
1:50 – 2:00 p.m.	Break
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Applying Plain Language Principles



# Department of Defense INSTRUCTION

NUMBER 5025.13

April 11, 2013

*Incorporating Change 2, Effective June 9, 2014*

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DA&M

SUBJECT: DoD Plain Language Program

References: See Enclosure 1

1. PURPOSE. This instruction:

a. Establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for the DoD Plain Language Program in accordance with the authority in DoD Directive 5105.53 (Reference (a)) and pursuant to Public Law 111-274 (Reference (b)) (also known as the "Plain Writing Act of 2010," and referred to in this instruction as the "Plain Writing Act") and Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum (Reference (c)).

b. Promotes DoD use of clear, concise, and well-organized language in documents (as defined in this instruction) to effectively communicate with intended audiences. This is in accordance with the guidance in Presidential Memorandum (Reference (d)), Office of Management and Budget Memorandum (Reference (e)), and Director of Administration and Management (DA&M) Memorandum (Reference (f)).

c. Establishes the DoD Plain Language Committee.

2. APPLICABILITY. This instruction applies to OSD, the Military Departments, the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Staff, the Combatant Commands, the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, the Defense Agencies, the DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities within the DoD (referred to in this instruction collectively as the "DoD Components").

3. POLICY. It is DoD policy that:

a. The DoD:

(1) Maintains a DoD Plain Language program.

(2) Requires DoD personnel to use plain language concepts in new or substantially revised documents prepared after the date of this instruction. Documents requiring technical or specialized language should be as clear and concise as possible.

(3) Maintains the DoD Plain Language Website (referred to in this instruction as “the Website”) at <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/plainlanguage.html> as the official DoD source for Plain Writing Act requirements, training, and compliance information.

(4) Offers, on the Website, a chance for users outside DoD to provide feedback and identify unclear DoD communications in documents defined in this instruction as “covered.”

(5) Offers a chance for DoD users to provide feedback on and identify unclear DoD communications in documents.

(6) Publishes an annual report on the Website describing DoD Component plain language compliance efforts for covered documents in accordance with References (b), (d), and (e).

b. All DoD personnel who regularly write or edit documents must take plain language training, either via the Website or as described in Enclosure 3. All other DoD personnel are encouraged to take plain language training.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES. See Enclosure 2.

5. PROCEDURES. See Enclosure 3.

6. INFORMATION COLLECTION REQUIREMENTS. The DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report and DD Form 2960, “DoD Plain Language Compliance,” referred to in section 2 of Enclosure 2 and section 5 of Enclosure 3 of this instruction, have been assigned report control symbol DD-D&M(A)2523. This is in accordance with the procedures in Directive-type Memorandum 12-004 (Reference (g)) and DoD 8910.1-M (Reference (h)).

7. RELEASABILITY. ~~Unlimited.~~ *Cleared for public release.* This instruction is ~~approved for public release and is~~ available on the Internet from the DoD Issuances Website at <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives>.



8. EFFECTIVE DATE. This instruction:

a. Is effective April 11, 2013.

~~b. Must be reissued, cancelled, or certified current within 5 years of its publication to be considered current in accordance with DoD Instruction 5025.01 (Reference (i)).~~

*eb.* Will expire effective April 11, 2023 ~~and be removed from the DoD Issuances Website~~ if it hasn't been reissued or cancelled *before this date* in accordance with *DoD Instruction 5025.01* (Reference (i)).



Michael L. Rhodes  
Director of Administration and Management

Enclosures

1. References
2. Responsibilities
3. Procedures

Glossary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ENCLOSURE 1: REFERENCES.....5

ENCLOSURE 2: RESPONSIBILITIES.....6

    DA&M.....6

    DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES (WHS).....6

    DoD AND OSD COMPONENT HEADS .....6

ENCLOSURE 3: PROCEDURES.....8

    USING PLAIN LANGUAGE .....8

    TRAINING .....11

    DoD AND OSD COMPONENT PLAIN LANGUAGE CONTACTS .....11

    DoD PLAIN LANGUAGE COMMITTEE.....11

    COMPLIANCE REPORTING .....12

GLOSSARY .....13

    PART I: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS .....13

    PART II: DEFINITIONS.....13

TABLE

    Plain Language Concepts.....8

FIGURES

    1. Procedures for Review of Covered Documents by Users Outside DoD .....9

    2. Procedures for Review of All Documents (DoD Personnel Only).....10



ENCLOSURE 1

REFERENCES

- (a) DoD Directive 5105.53, "Director of Administration and Management (DA&M)," February 26, 2008
- (b) Public Law 111-274, "Plain Writing Act of 2010," October 13, 2010
- (c) Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Implementation of Public Law 111-274, the 'Plain Writing Act of 2010,' in the DoD," September 13, 2011
- (d) Presidential Memorandum, "Transparency and Open Government," January 21, 2009
- (e) Office of Management and Budget Memorandum, "Final Guidance on Implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010," April 13, 2011
- (f) Director of Administration and Management Memorandum, "Requirements and Initial Implementation of Public Law 111-274, 'Plain Writing Act of 2010,' (the Act) in the Department of Defense (DoD)," November 22, 2011
- (g) Directive-type Memorandum 12-004, "DoD Internal Information Collections," April 24, 2012, *as amended*
- (h) DoD 8910.1-M, "Department of Defense Procedures for Management of Information Requirements," June 30, 1998
- (i) DoD Instruction 5025.01, "DoD *Directives Issuances* Program," ~~September 26, 2012~~, *as amended June 6, 2014*

ENCLOSURE 2

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. DA&M. Pursuant to Reference (c), the DA&M:

a. Serves as the Senior Official for Plain Language to oversee DoD Component implementation of the Plain Writing Act.

b. Establishes DoD policy, standards, and procedures for implementation and compliance with the Plain Writing Act through the DoD Plain Language Program.

2. DIRECTOR, WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICES (WHS). Under the authority, direction, and control of the DA&M and through the Directives Division, Executive Services Directorate, the Director, WHS:

a. Manages and administers the DoD Plain Language Program.

b. Develops and maintains DoD-specific policy and procedural information.

c. Communicates Plain Writing Act requirements to the DoD and OSD Components and offers training options on the Website.

d. Maintains the Website to:

(1) Post Plain Writing Act requirements, training, and compliance information.

(2) Collect amendment requests on DoD covered documents.

(3) Publish the DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report.

e. Compiles implementation data for the DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report.

f. Monitors amendment requests on DoD covered documents submitted through the Website. Reviews requests received to determine their legitimacy and, if warranted, routes amendment requests to the appropriate DoD or OSD Component for further action.

g. Chairs the DoD Plain Language Committee.

3. DoD AND OSD COMPONENT HEADS. DoD and OSD Component heads:

a. Communicate Plain Writing Act requirements throughout their Component and oversee compliance.

b. Require Component personnel who regularly write documents to complete plain language training in accordance with this instruction.

(1) Component heads or personnel supervisors may direct personnel to repeat plain language training, if needed.

(2) Components using contractors to help write documents will ensure that relevant contracts entered into after the effective date of this instruction include a requirement that employees of the contractor use plain language when preparing those documents.

c. Designate a Component plain language contact who will serve as a representative on the Plain Language Committee and be responsible for overseeing Component implementation efforts and compliance with the Plain Writing Act.

d. Encourage Component personnel to seek clarification from within their organization before submitting an amendment request on the Website.

e. Require the use of plain language concepts in all new or substantially revised documents.

ENCLOSURE 3

PROCEDURES

1. USING PLAIN LANGUAGE

a. When drafting new documents or revising existing ones, DoD personnel will follow the Federal Plain Language Guidelines available at <http://www.plainlanguage.gov>, as appropriate. Specialized language may be required depending on the intended audience, but language and document organization should be as clear as possible.

b. Key concepts of plain language to keep in mind are noted in the Table.

Table. Plain Language Concepts

<p>Be Clear</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use plain language whenever possible; avoid jargon</li> <li>• Avoid overuse of acronyms (if used, make certain they are established upon first use)</li> <li>• Use the active voice</li> <li>• Organize and filter information with readers' needs in mind</li> <li>• Format your document so that it's easy to read and understand</li> <li>• Use tables or figures if that's the best way to show information</li> </ul>
<p>Be Concise</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove unnecessary words</li> <li>• Write sentences with 20 words or fewer and that contain a single thought, action, etc.</li> <li>• Use seven sentences or fewer per paragraph</li> </ul>
<p>Be Specific</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include only information that the reader must know</li> <li>• Use words with precise meaning</li> <li>• Include details that are directly relevant to the main point</li> </ul>

c. Procedures for users outside DoD to request amendment of covered documents are in Figure 1. Procedures for DoD personnel to request amendment of all documents (including covered) are in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Procedures for Review of Covered Documents by Users Outside DoD

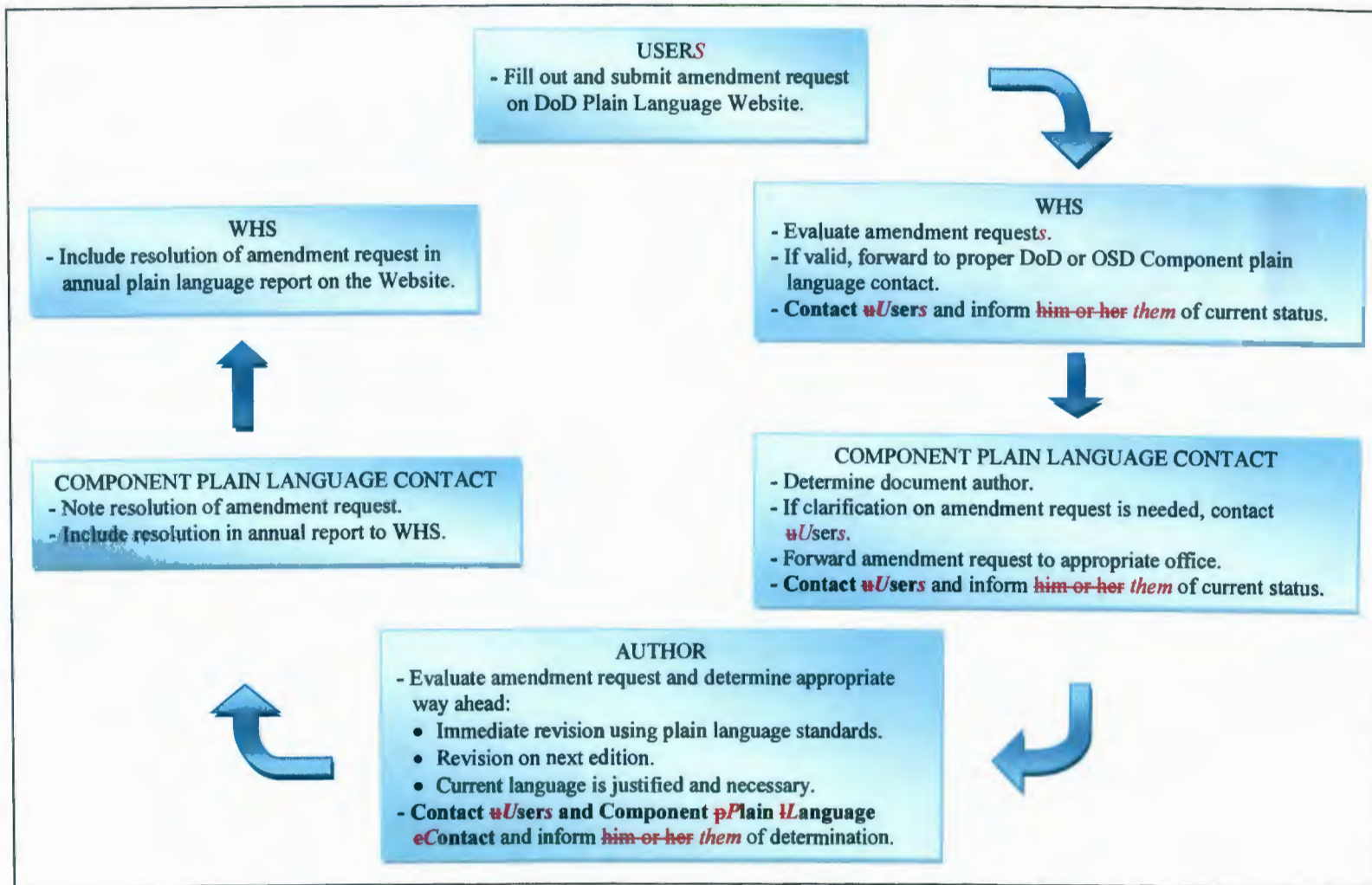
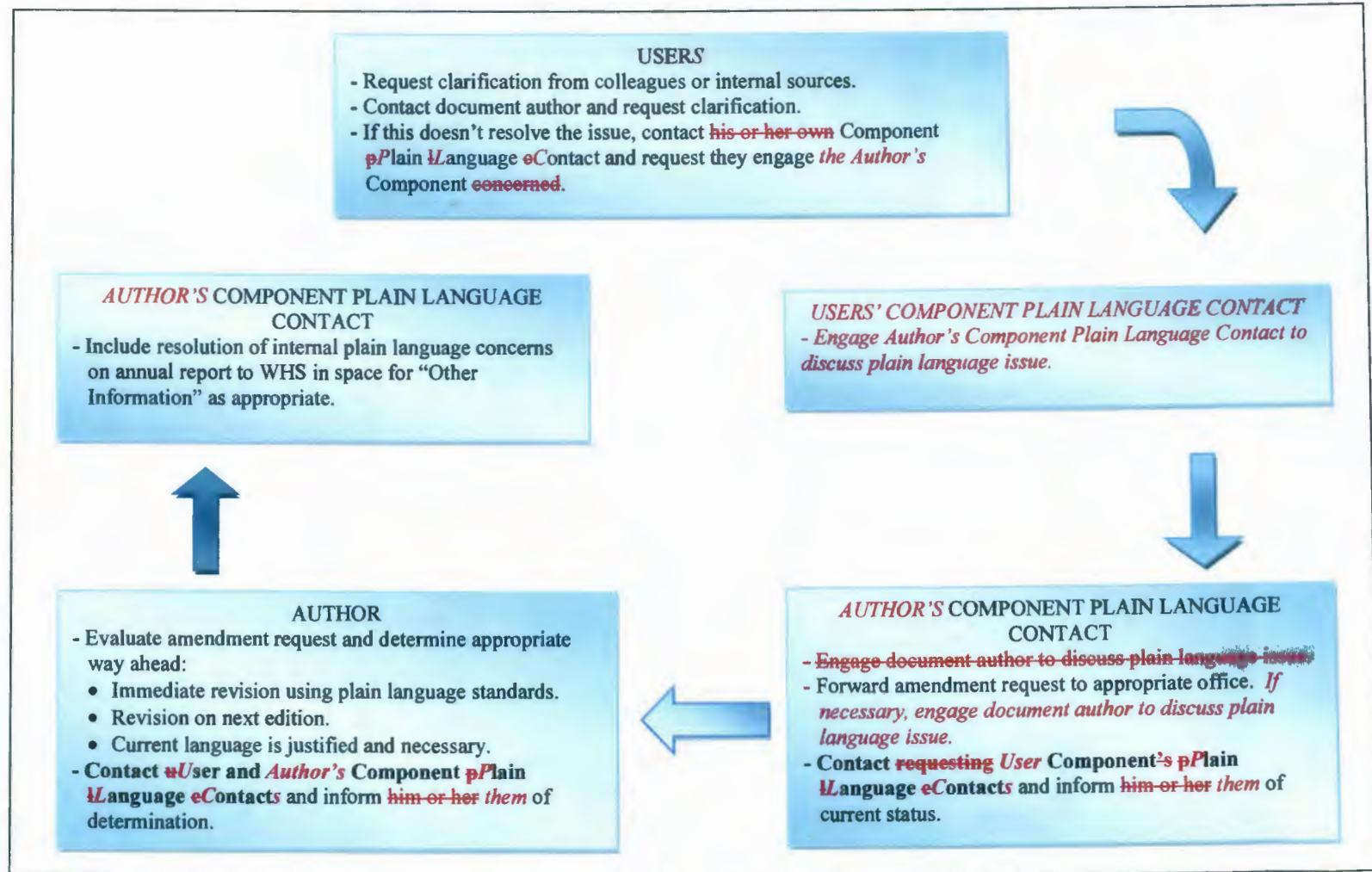


Figure 2. Procedures for Review of All Documents (DoD Personnel Only)





## 2. TRAINING

a. DoD and OSD Components are responsible for training their personnel and may use training already available to their Component if it addresses aspects of plain language. Training information must address the concepts listed in the Table.

b. DoD personnel who regularly write and edit documents must take plain language training. All other DoD personnel are encouraged to take plain language training.

c. New DoD personnel should receive plain language training either alone or as part of their orientation training.

## 3. DoD AND OSD COMPONENT PLAIN LANGUAGE CONTACTS. DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts:

a. Help Component personnel understand and follow the policy and procedures of the DoD Plain Language Program as stated in this instruction.

b. Identify Component personnel who regularly write or edit documents and ensure they receive training on plain language guidelines.

c. Oversee requested review of the Component's documents (including covered).

(1) Review amendment requests forwarded from WHS and received from other Component plain language contacts.

(2) Decide how best to handle amendment requests, in coordination with appropriate parties.

(3) Work with the document author to respond to the user or Component plain language contact concerned as quickly as possible with the Component's decision.

d. Collaborate with users to further enhance their Component's implementation efforts.

e. Approve and submit annually required information as described in section 5 of this enclosure.

f. Serve as a representative on the DoD Plain Language Committee.

## 4. DoD PLAIN LANGUAGE COMMITTEE

a. The Committee is chaired by the Director, WHS or a representative.

b. Committee membership includes DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts and other administrative staff carrying out plain language efforts who are full-time or permanent part-time government employees or military members.

c. The Committee will meet twice yearly or as needed to:

- (1) Help revise policy and guidance.
- (2) Monitor DoD compliance with the Plain Writing Act.
- (3) Share plain language best practices and resources.

## 5. COMPLIANCE REPORTING

a. DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts must prepare annual compliance information (defined in the Glossary) using the DD Form 2960 available on the Website.

b. Examples of information to be reported include:

(1) For covered documents:

(a) Number of amendment requests received.

*(b) Number of amendment requests resolved.*

*(bc)* Number of amendment requests denied and the justification for those denials.

*(ed)* Status and number of amendment requests still outstanding.

(2) Verification that the OSD or DoD Component is in compliance with training requirements in accordance with paragraph 3b of Enclosure 2 of this instruction.

c. DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts must submit DD Form 2960 no later than ~~February~~ *March* 1 of each year to [whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil](mailto:whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil). DD Form 2960 will record compliance information gathered from the prior calendar year (January through December).

d. WHS will compile and publish the DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report on the Website. It will be published annually by April 13 in accordance with Reference (e).

## GLOSSARY

### PART I. ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

DA&M Director of Administration and Management

WHS Washington Headquarters Services

### PART II. DEFINITIONS

These terms and their definitions are for the purposes of this instruction.

amendment request. Any inquiry from a user requesting that a covered document be changed or revised using plain language.

DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. A comprehensive report, required by the Plain Writing Act, that is annually posted to the Website. It documents DoD compliance information and ongoing implementation efforts.

DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts. Individuals selected by their Component head to be responsible for overseeing Component implementation efforts and compliance with the Plain Writing Act and to serve as the Component's Plain Language Committee representative.

DoD personnel. All DoD civilian employees and members of the Military Services.

compliance information. Any information demonstrating efforts towards implementation and compliance of the Plain Writing Act. May include, but is not limited to, the number of personnel who have completed training; operational process changes to promote using plain language; and documentation of amendment requests and responses.

covered document. Any document that is necessary for obtaining any federal government benefit or service, provides information about any federal government benefit or service, or explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the federal government administers or enforces. Does not include a regulation.

documents. All written documents, including websites and official communications, created by DoD personnel that require user(s) to understand and ~~or~~ implement the information they contain.

OSD Component. One of the offices that compose OSD whose principal reports directly to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Defense.

plain language. Language that is clear, concise, well-organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. Such language avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity.

user. Any reader of a document or covered document who needs information in the document or covered document to perform their work duties, obtain a federal government benefit or service, obtain information about a federal government benefit or service, or comply with a requirement the federal government administers or enforces.

# Principles of Plain Language



# Overview

- Definition of plain language
- Plain language techniques
- Examples





# What is plain language?

Communication your audience or readers can understand the **first time** they hear or read it.



# What are the main elements of plain language?

- Logical organization
- No unnecessary information
- Active voice
- Common, everyday words
- Short sentences and paragraphs
- “You” and other pronouns
- Lists and tables
- Easy-to-read design features

# Plain language is:

- Clear
- Concise
- Effective

# Plain Language Myths

## Plain Language is NOT:

- “Talking down” to your reader, or an attempt to be folksy, playful, or politically correct
- Writing to eliminate complex/technical information
- Imprecise
- Easy

# Why use plain language?

- We're all busy people – including our senior leaders!
- We don't want to waste a lot of time trying to interpret difficult, wordy documents.
- We all want to use our time more efficiently.

# Why use plain language?

**To get what we want done as  
efficiently as possible.**



# Why use plain language?

## Plain language:

- Shows customer focus
- Communicates effectively
- Eliminates barriers
- Reduces time spent explaining the document later
- Improves compliance and reduces errors

# What happens when readers don't understand?

You may have to:

- Answer repetitive questions
- Write interpretative letters (e.g., Industrial Security Letters) or other explanatory documents
- Handle complaints or even litigation

# Actual State Department Question

Have you ever been refused admission to the U.S., or been the subject of a deportation hearing or sought to obtain or assist others to obtain a visa, entry into the U.S., or any other U.S. immigration benefit by fraud or willful misrepresentation or other unlawful means? Have you attended a U.S. public elementary school on student (F) status or a public secondary school after November 30, 1996 without reimbursing the school?

Yes  No

# Goals of Plain Language

- Help readers *find* the information they need or want
- Help readers *understand* the information you're presenting

***Remember: If your document doesn't do both, it's not plain language.***

# Identify Your Audience

- Who is going to read your document? What does that audience need to know?
- Keep in mind the average user's level of technical expertise
- Write to everyone who is interested, not just to experts (focus on the 90 percent of readers in the middle of the spectrum)
- Even an expert will prefer a clearly written document



# Focus on the Reader

☹ NOT...

What do I want to say?

How can I protect **my** interests?

What can I do to **impress** you?

☺ BUT...

What does **the audience** need to know?

How can I serve **the audience's** interests?

What can I **clearly express** to the **audience**?

# Organize to Serve the Reader

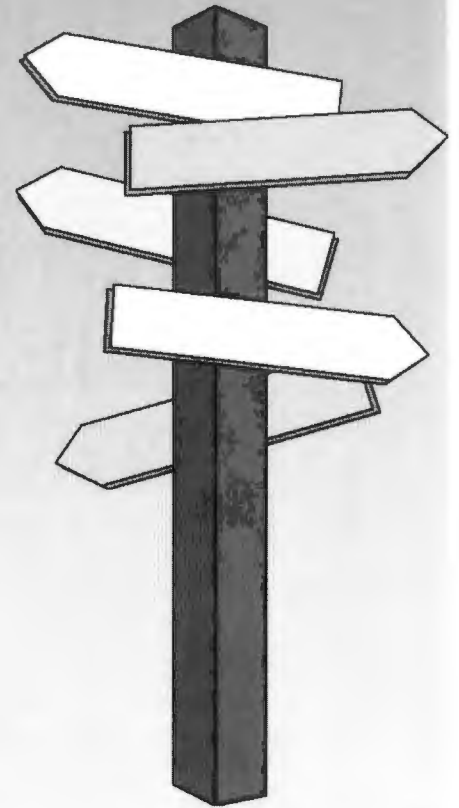
- BLUF: Bottom Line Up Front
- Anticipate questions an informed reader is likely to ask
- Organize writing to answer questions in the order the reader will ask them





# Headings

- Allow the reader to quickly find relevant information
- Break up the information (give the eye a pause)
- Increase blank space on the page
- Help the reader navigate the document



# Question Headings

- Readers have questions in mind
- Questions help readers relate to the information
- Questions help you organize the information



## How do I know if I am eligible to extend my stay in the United States?

You may apply for an extension of stay in the United States if:

- You were lawfully admitted into the United States as a nonimmigrant;
- You have not committed any act that makes you ineligible to receive an immigration benefit;
- There is no other factor that requires you to depart the United States prior to extending status (for example, a USCIS officer may determine that you should obtain a new visa prior extending your status); and
- You submit an application for an extension of stay before the expiration date on your Form I-94. (There are certain very limited circumstances under which USCIS will excuse a late submission.)

# Keep it Short

No one wants to read  
material like the next slide.

“  
”  
“  
”

# Executive Order 12988

With respect to the review of existing regulations and the promulgation of new regulations, section 3(a) of Executive Order 12988, "Civil Justice Reform," 61 FR 4729 (February 7, 1996), imposes on Executive agencies the general duty to adhere to the following requirements: (1) Eliminate drafting errors and ambiguity; (2) write regulations to minimize litigation; and (3) provide a clear legal standard for affected conduct rather than a general standard and promote simplification and burden reduction. With regard to the review required by section 3(a), section 3(b) of Executive Order 12988 specifically requires that Executive agencies make every reasonable effort to ensure that the regulation: (1) Clearly specifies the preemptive effect, if any; (2) clearly specifies any effect on existing Federal law or regulation; (3) provides a clear legal standard for affected conduct while promoting simplification and burden reduction; (4) specifies the retroactive effect, if any; (5) adequately defines key terms; and (6) addresses other important issues affecting clarity and general draftsmanship under any guidelines issued by the Attorney General. Section 3(c) of Executive Order 12988 requires Executive agencies to review regulations in light of applicable standards in section 3(a) and section 3(b) to determine whether they are met or it is unreasonable to meet one or more of them. DHS has completed the required review and determined that, to the extent permitted by law, this final rule meets the relevant standards of Executive Order 12988.

# Revised Version

This rule meets the applicable standards in sections 3(a) and 3(b)(2) of Executive Order 12988.

*“The most valuable of all talents is never using two words when one will do.”*

*~Thomas Jefferson*

# Before and After

## ➤ **Methods of Transmission or Transportation: 7-301. Secret Information.**

Administrative procedures shall be established by each DoD Component for controlling Secret information and material originated or received by an activity; distributed or routed to a sub-element of such activity; and disposed of by the activity by transfer of custody or destruction. The control system for Secret information must be determined by a practical balance of security and operating efficiency and must meet the following minimum requirements:

- It must provide a means to ensure that Secret material sent outside a major subordinate element (the activity) of the DoD Component concerned has been delivered to the intended recipient...
- It must provide a record of receipt and dispatch of Secret material by each major subordinate element. The dispatch record requirement may be satisfied when the distribution of Secret material is evident and addressees or distribution lists for classified documentation...
- Records of receipt and dispatch for Secret material shall be retained for a minimum of 2 years...



# Before and After

## **Transmission, Methods: 4-102. Secret.**

A. You may send secret information by U.S. Registered Postal Service mail within and between the United States and its Territories.

B. You may use Federal Express and U.S. Post Service Express Mail for transmitting secret mail within the United States and between the United States and its Territories under the following STRICT conditions:

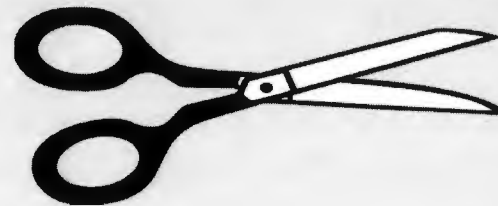
1. Mail should meet the weight and size limits of the carrier used.
2. You should follow the inner wrappings and receipt requirements in this handbook.
3. You should ensure delivery by Friday so that the carrier is not in possession of the package over the weekend.

# Use short paragraphs

- Limit a paragraph to one subject or step
- Smaller “bites” of info are easier to digest
- Aim for *no more than 7* lines

# Use Short Sentences

- Treat only one subject in each sentence
- Avoid complexity and confusion
- Aim for 20 words per sentence *or fewer*



# Pronouns

- Speak directly to readers
- Make your writing relevant to readers
- Require less translation from your readers
- Eliminate excess words

# Using Pronouns

- Use “*we*” to refer to your agency
- Use “*you*” for the reader
- Use “*I*” when the principal is signing

# Eliminate . . .

## Excess words

Some common sources of wordiness:

- Passive voice
- Redundancies
- Prepositional phrases
- Hidden verbs
- Unnecessary modifiers
- Failure to use pronouns



## Excess content

Think about your purpose, your topic, and your audience. If content doesn't further your reader's goals, don't include it!

# Word Economy

Once the candidate's goals are established, one or more potential employers are identified. A preliminary proposal for presentation to the employer is developed. The proposal is presented to an employer who agrees to negotiate an individualized job that meets the employment needs of the applicant and real business needs of the employer.

*52 words*

Once we establish your goals, we identify one or more potential employers. We prepare a preliminary proposal to present to an employer who agrees to negotiate a job that meets both his and your employment needs.

*37 words*



# Use Active Voice

- Active voice is more clear, concise and direct
- Passive voice is common in “bureaucratese”
- “Mistakes were made.”

# Identifying Passive Voice

- The person doing the action usually follows the verb.

***Example:*** Arlene was promoted by her boss.

- The verb has two parts: The verb “to be” plus the past participle of another verb.

***Example:*** The house will be leased by Fred.

# Why avoid passive voice?

## *Passive voice*

➤ Can disguise who does what:  
*The memo was written yesterday.*

➤ Is wordy:  
*The application must be completed by the applicant and received by the financial office at the time designated by that office.*

➤ Is awkward:  
*Consultation from respondents was obtained to determine the estimated burden.*

## *Active voice*

➤ Makes it clear who does what:  
*The Director wrote the memo yesterday.*

➤ Is concise:  
*We must receive your completed application by the deadline we establish.*

➤ Is natural:  
*We consulted with respondents to determine the estimated burden.*

# Passive to Active Voice Exercise

1. Excess and/or unauthorized expenses, delays, or luxury accommodations and services will not be reimbursed by the company, but will be borne by the employee.
2. Your application has been denied by the Department of State.
3. The submission you filed will be reviewed by the judges.

# Possible Answers

1. We will not reimburse you for
  - unauthorized expenses,
  - delays, or
  - luxury accommodations and services.
2. The Department of State denied your application.
3. The judges will review your submission.

# Department of Redundancy Department

- Bone-dry dust
- Fatally killed
- PIN number
- CAC card
- Free gift

# Avoid Hidden Verbs

- Hidden verbs are verbs disguised as nouns.
- They are generally longer than their true verb forms.



# Hidden Verbs

- Conduct an analysis
- Present a report
- Do an assessment
- Provide assistance
- Came to the conclusion that
- Analyze
- Report
- Assess
- Help
- Concluded

# Use Consistent Terms

- Avoid “*Shall.*” It is ambiguous and is not used in everyday speech
- Use “*must*” for an obligation
- Use “*must not*” for a prohibition
- Use “*may*” for a discretionary action
- Use “*should*” for a recommendation

# Don't sound so bureaucratic

- Limit jargon and acronyms
- Contractions aren't bad
- Use everyday words

# Bureaucratese

“Such preparations shall be made as will completely obscure all Federal buildings and non-federal buildings occupied by the Federal government during an air raid for any period of time from visibility by reason of internal or external illumination.”

Blackout Order of 1942

# Plain English

“Tell them that in buildings where they have to keep the work going to put something across the windows.”

~~President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

# Two Kinds of Jargon

## ➤ Technical terms

Example: public key infrastructure, common access card



## ➤ Obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words

Examples: heretofore, commence



# Euphemisms

Euphemisms are nice-sounding words or phrases that are substituted for more direct words. Examples:

- **Troubled Asset Relief Program = bailout**
- **Involuntarily undomiciled = homeless**
- **Pre-owned automobile = used car**
- **Negative savings = debts**
- **Incendiary device = bomb**





JWICS PKI LIMDIS  
NISP SAP SCIF FOCI ASIS AO  
JPAS OSCMIS ANACI LAA  
PSMO-I  
PSI ISFD FOUO  
IATO RSI ISCAP IdAM RRU  
e-QIP NARA POA&M IATO  
DDI(I&S) FIL NISS DTS  
DFARS ODAA



# Limiting Acronyms and Abbreviations

- Use “we” for the agency
- Don’t use acronyms/abbreviations for infrequent phrases
- Try another style (the Council)
- Make them pronounceable (SIPRNet, CAC, NISPOM)





*"The CEO KO'd our LOI with his MOU, and the SLA was BS for managing PNL, and the FDD was DOA, and now I'm on a PIP but next week I'm on ETO so WTF."*

What is this?



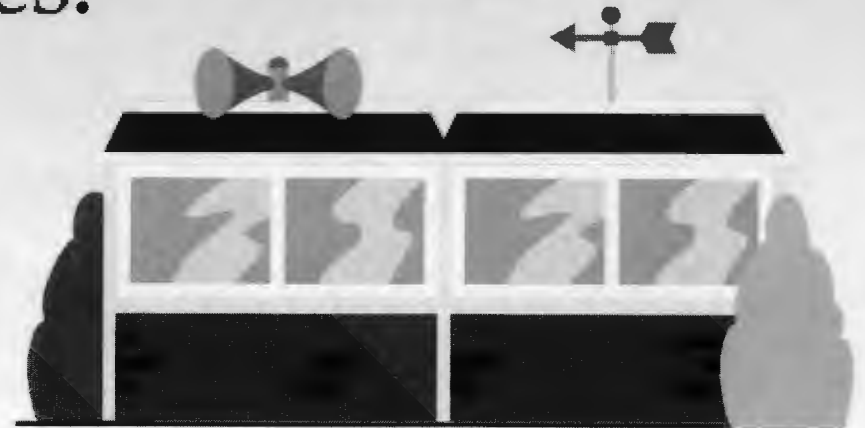
# Use Everyday Words

- anticipate
- attempt
- commence
- nomenclature
- implement
- in the event that
- promulgate
- terminate
- expect
- try
- begin, start
- name
- start
- if
- publish
- end, cancel

# Simpler is Better

Lithodial fragments ought not to be projected by the inhabitants of vitreous abodes.

People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.



# Simpler is Better

A perissodactyl ungulate may be propelled toward a body of aqueous fluid, but such ungulate cannot be compelled or forcibly induced to imbibe such fluid.

You can lead a horse to water,  
but you can't make him drink.



# Place Words Carefully

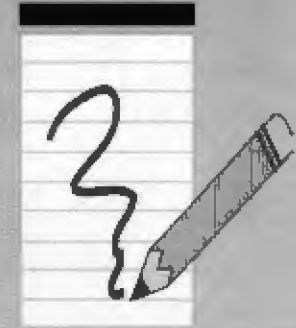
- Keep subjects and objects close to their verbs.
- Put conditionals such as "only" or "always" next to words they modify.
- Don't misplace modifiers.
- Put exceptions and long conditions after the main clause, not before or in the middle.



# Does word placement make a difference?

- Yesterday a mad dog bit five men and women in the south end.
- This section applies to appeals of orders involving the reporting and payment of royalties or other payments due under Federal oil and gas leases pending on the date this rule becomes effective.
- This rule proposes the spring/summer subsistence harvest regulations in Alaska for migratory birds that expire on August 31, 2014.

# Lists



- Make it easy for the reader to identify all items or steps in a process
- Add blank space for easy reading
- Help the reader see the structure of your document

## But don't make lists too long . . .

- Lists with 7 items or fewer tend to work best.
- Longer lists are hard to navigate.

# How does this read?

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is expanding its Direct Mail Program to provide that filings of Form I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country, Form I-800A Supplement 1, Listing of Adult Member of the Household, Supplement 2, Consent to Disclose Information, Supplement 3, Request for Action on Approved Form I-800A, Form I-800, Petition to Classify Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative, Supplement 1, Consent to Disclose Information, for the Hague Adoption Convention be filed at a designated Chicago, Illinois lockbox facility for initial processing.

# Now in List Format

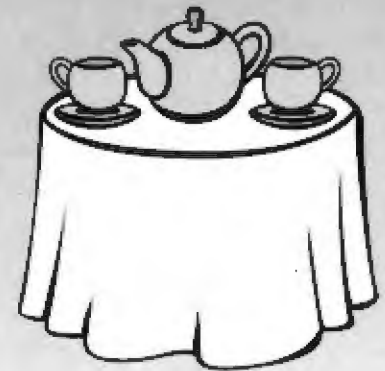
**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is expanding its Direct Mail Program to include the following forms:**

- Form I-800A, Application for Determination of Suitability to Adopt a Child from a Convention Country
- Form I-800A Supplement 1, Listing of Adult Member of the Household
- Form I-800A Supplement 2, Consent to Disclose Information
- Form I-800A Supplement 3, Request for Action on Approved Form I-800A
- Form I-800, Petition to Classify Convention Adoptee as an Immediate Relative
- Form I-800 Supplement 1, Consent to Disclose Information

Mail these forms to the Chicago Lockbox facility.

# Tables

- Save words
- Make it easy to locate specific provisions
- Make it easy to take in complex material at a glance
- Make your logic and structure clear



# Sending Expense Forms

We must receive your completed expense form on or before the 15th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you do not submit your form electronically, or the 25th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you submit your form electronically.

# When must I send my completed expense form?

<i>If you send your form</i>	<i>Then we must receive it by--</i>
Electronically	The 25th day of the second...
By mail or fax	The 15th day of the second...



# Plain Writing Resources

DSS Administrative Resource Center:

<http://dssinside.dss.mil/arc/default.aspx>

DoD Manual for Written Material:

[http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/511004m\\_v1.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/511004m_v1.pdf)

U.S. Government Printing Office Style Manual:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?granuleId=&packageId=GPO-STYLEMANUAL-2008&fromBrowse=true>

Federal Plain Language Guidelines:

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/reader-friendly.cfm>

Purdue Online Writing Lab:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Checklist for Plain Language

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/quickreference/checklist.cfm>