Writing inclusively

Step 1: Decide what and how you want to write

☐ **Think of the adapted text that you need.**

Ask yourself:

- What is its function?
- What information do I want to include?
- Do I need to do some research before writing?

If you want to adapt an existing document, you can also look at our instructions on how to write an inclusive job contract and start from there.

☐ Choose if you need the document in **plain language** or in **Easy-to-read**.

The main differences are:

Plain language

- It is meant for a wide audience, including people with or without reading difficulties.
- You can use pictures, icons, and visual cues, but you do not have to.
- It is less regulated than Easy-to-Read. There exist ISO standards on plain language, but there is some room left for interpretation.

Easy-to-read

- It is an international standard, designed specifically for people with intellectual disabilities. Dyslexia is not an intellectual disability because it does not impact intellect. However, people with the strongest reading difficulties may need the text to be adapted to Easy-to-Read, instead of Plain Language.
- You have to use pictures, icons, and visual cues.
- There are also more rules about the structure of the sentence, for example, one sentence can only express one idea.
- It is highly regulated, with clear guidelines and an official logo:

We advise you to use plain language if:

- You have employees with Specific Learning Disorders and non-native speakers of the language used in your company, but none of your employees have deep difficulties in reading.
- You have only just started your journey towards inclusive text. You are not sure if you can apply all the rules of Easy-to-Read language by yourself, and you can not hire an inclusion expert to help you.

We advise you to use Easy-to-read if:

- You work with individuals with intellectual disabilities or those with significant reading difficulties.

- You are devoted to using all the rules from the Easy-to-read [guidelines](), or you can afford to have someone do it for you.

The ideal situation is to have the documents in plain language for everyone, and an additional Easy-to-read version for those who need it.

If you plan to write the document in both versions, you can start with the text in plain language and then refine it further until it fully complies with the Easy-to-Read guidelines.

Step 2: Adapt the documents

☐	**Make your information clearly structured**. Use headlines, and put the most important information at the front.
☐	**Divide long sentences to make them shorter.**
☐	**Replace difficult words with simpler ones** (for example "get" instead of "obtain").
☐	Turn lists into **bullet points**.
☐	Turn sentences in passive voice into **active voice**. Say "You will do…" instead of "Tasks will be done by…".
☐	Use a **clean sans-serif font** (like Arial or Verdana).

- [ ] **Adjust the font size**. It should be at least 12 for Plain Language and 14 for Easy-to-read text.

- [ ] **Adjust the line spacing.** It should be 1.5 throughout the entire document.

- [ ] **Read your text from the start.**

  Ask yourself: if I didn't know anything about the topic, would I understand it?

- [ ] If you want your text to meet the official **Easy-to-read standards**, read the guidelines and follow all the points.

  After that, you can download the official Easy-to-read logo and add it to your document.

Step 3: Ask for feedback and make corrections

- [ ] **Show the adapted document to your employees.**

  Ask if it is understandable for them, and if they want to change something.

- [ ] Take your time to **correct the document**, if needed.

Common challenges and solutions

Challenge	Solutions
Lack of time	Start with the most important documents. Train your staff so you do not have to do the adaptations alone.
You do not know how to simplify something	Ask for help from an inclusion expert or simply someone good at writing.
You do not understand how to simplify text	Even if you are using Plain Language, you can still read the Easy-to-read guidelines. They are very simple and include many practical examples.