Which would you rather read?

PLAIN LANGUAGE:

Plain Language is
★ FAA Policy
★ A civil right
★ The law

FAA Plain Language Program Office
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Some Plain Language References

FAA Plain Language Order (Writing Standards)
http://tinyurl.com/6qzldy

Plain Language handbook for FAA writers
http://tinyurl.com/yelapgf

Plain Language: A Handbook for Writers in the U.S. Federal Government:
http://tinyurl.com/68jgs8

Plain Language Guidelines for the Federal Government:
http://tinyurl.com/6qg99k

Making Regulations Readable: The Federal Register
http://tinyurl.com/68oskv

Answering the Critics of Plain Language:
http://tinyurl.com/6hmcn5

Writing Effective Letters:
http://tinyurl.com/5agjs7

Writing for the Web:
http://www.usability.gov
http://www.usa.gov/webcontent

General Plain Language Websites:
http://www.plainlanguage.gov
http://www.centerforplainlanguage.org

FREE LUNCH IN THE CAFETERIA

Any person who is interested, may proceed to the dining facility where food will be served to them without need of purchase!

— part of the FAA Plain Language course
**Before You Write**
- Know your audience and your purpose
- Write to each audience separately
- Write for your reader, not for everyone
- Think clearly, then write plainly

**Your Reader Says**
- Tell me what I need to know
- Write to me, not to a group
- Anticipate my questions
- Don’t confuse me

**Your Goals**
Help your readers:
- Find what they need
- Understand what they find the **FIRST** time
- Use what they find

**Your Values**
- Challenge every word
- Simple and less are better
- Make it readable and understandable
- Don’t dumb “down:” clear “up”

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**Format Tools**
- Short Sentences: average 15-20 words
- Headings: question, topic, or statement
- Tables: columns and rows of information
- Relevant Illustrations: “can be worth a thousand words”

**Word Tools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USE</th>
<th>AVOID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Everyday Words:</strong> Due to the fact = Because  In the event of = If</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pronouns:</strong>  I, we, you, they, their, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Voice:</strong>  NO = The candle was jumped over by Jack.  YES = Jack jumped over the candle.  NO = The tank was checked by the pilot.  YES = The pilot checked the tank.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Verbs:</strong>  Conduct an analysis = analyze  Provide assistance with = assist  Give consideration to = consider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Present Tense:</strong>  The cost is $10, not,  The cost shall be $10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contractions:</strong>  we’ve, you’ll, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acronyms/Abbreviations:**
The #1 reader complaint

**Modifiers:** “totally” unrealistic, “completely” dead

**Doublets:** “null and void,” “rules and regulations”

**Noun Strings:** “contract fee level test procedure”

**Jargon:**
Obtain assistance consistent with your requirements = get the help you need (explain technical terms)

**Shall:**
(“shall” imposes no legal obligation on the reader) instead of “shall,” use:

- **Must** = mandatory
- **Must not** = prohibited
- **May** = optional
- **Should** = recommended

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**Plain Language**

**Gives you more**
- comprehension and compliance
- customer satisfaction
- time and money for customers and staff

**Does not give you**
- Correct spelling and grammar
- Success as a web page
- The right emotional tone