

What is plain language?

Plain language is a style of writing or speaking that makes it easy to:

- **find** the information you're looking for,
- **understand** what you find, and
- **use** the information you've understood.

Plain language is critical in humanitarian work

- People need to **find, understand and use information** easily and quickly in a crisis.
- People need to **understand their rights** - especially their rights around the assistance they get.
- Humanitarian workers and the people they assist often communicate in languages which are **not their first language**. Plain language makes it easier to communicate and to avoid misunderstandings.
- It is very important to keep communication **simple and understandable**. It is less important that communications are perfectly written or spoken.
- Easy and clear communication helps international humanitarian organizations to **coordinate with local responders**. Plain language also helps organizations communicate with donors, partners, the media, and the public.

Tips for using plain language

Is your message clear?

- Put the most important information first. Keep sentences short (less than 20 words in English). Leave out information that is not critical to your main message.
- Use headings, bullet points, tables and boxes to organize the information.
- Use the active voice: "the team handed out blankets" instead of "blankets were handed out."

Are you using words that your reader or listener can easily understand?

- Use common, everyday words. Reduce the number of words that are complex or require knowledge of a specific subject or sector. Be careful not to use "devspeak" - the language of humanitarian and development workers that others do not easily understand.
- Avoid noun strings, which are nouns made up of many words. For example, instead of the noun string "critical life-saving medical services," explain what it is: "medical services that save lives."
- Avoid abbreviations or official names of laws that people may not know. If you have to use them, explain what they mean.
- If writing, use software such as [Microsoft Word](#) readability tests to see how easy it is to read your text.

Are you directly addressing your audience?

- Use "you," "us" and "we" often to help connect to the reader or listener and get their attention.
- Ask questions that show the reader or listener why the information is relevant for them, like: "Do you need emergency medical care?"

Read our plain language guide [here](#). Find out more from resources developed by the [USA](#), [Australian](#) and [UK](#) governments, and [Plain Language Association International](#).

Plain language in Ukrainian

These tips focus on writing, but you should also use them when speaking.

1. Use a conversational style and tone

Only use **formal style and tone** when necessary, e.g. an email to a government official. **Write more conversationally** for all other communication, for instance a poster explaining how to apply for temporary protection. Direct the information to your intended audience.

- **Indirect:** Якщо особи, які отримували пенсію або грошову допомогу, вимушені були змінити місце проживання, вони повинні повідомити про це відповідні органи влади. (If people who were receiving pension or welfare payments were forced to change their place of residence, they should inform the relevant authorities.)
- **Direct:** Ви отримували пенсію чи грошову допомогу, але змінили місце проживання? Повідомте про це відповідні установи. (Did you receive pension or social welfare payments but changed your place of residence? Notify the relevant institutions.)

2. Write in short sentences

Long sentences can cause confusion or misunderstanding. **Short sentences** make it easy to read fast and remember.

- **Long sentence:** Але головною особливістю при зверненні за отриманням статусу біженця є те, що особа не може працевлаштуватися, поки йде розгляд її заяви про статус біженця. (The main feature of applying for the status of refugee is that one cannot be employed while one's refugee application is being considered.)
- **Short sentences:** Ви подали заявку на отримання статусу біженця? Якщо так, ви не можете працювати, доки не приймуть остаточне рішення стосовно вашого статусу. (Did you apply for refugee status? If yes, you cannot work until your status is decided.)

3. Choose common words from standard Ukrainian

Use common, everyday words. Avoid complex or domain-specific words that people who work in a specific field understand, but others might not know. These words may also have a different meaning in everyday language. Avoid words from dialects of Ukrainian or other languages.

- **Uncommon:** телекомунікаційна мережа (telecommunications network)
- **Common:** телефонна мережа, інтернет (phone network, internet)

4. Repeat keywords

Word order is flexible in Ukrainian. People may have a hard time finding the key messages. **Repeat key words** in your text - this helps people understand your main messages.

Learn more about our Ukraine response at <https://clearglobal.org/ukraine-response/> or contact us at info@clearglobal.org.