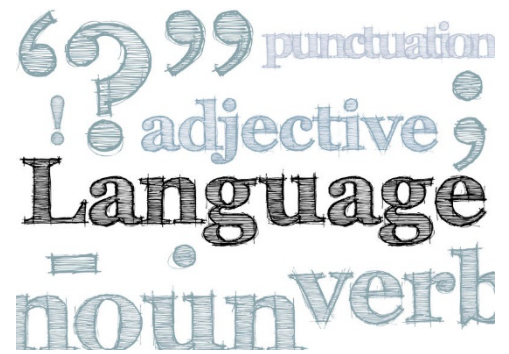


# Language

Language is important! Well written materials enhance understanding and help students learn. However, poorly written materials confuse students and hinder their success. Your students have different reading skills and levels of literacy. When writing, consider your varied audience and make sure that your materials can be easily used by all of them. Clear writing helps all students and is critical for students with learning disabilities, reading disabilities such as dyslexia, attention disorders, visual disabilities and students for whom English is a second language (ESL).



## Things to keep in mind

- Organize your information in a logical order - put important information first and work backwards
- Use simple, familiar language and everyday words - Avoid jargon or slang.
- Define acronyms and specialty words
- Use active voice - speak directly to your audience - avoid passive tense.
- Be specific and concise - keep it short and sweet
- Focus on important information - avoid adding unnecessary or distracting details
- Identify key objectives and include summaries to tell the student what they will learn and what they should take away from the lesson.
- Use meaningful titles for documents and headings - it will make it easier for students to identify your message and find information
- Use lists (when appropriate) to help organize information
- Always check spelling and grammar

## Tips and Tricks

- Keep your audience in mind - imagine you are a student in your course - would your materials make sense not knowing what you, as an expert in the subject, already know?
- Avoid "flowery language" - imagine listening to the document through the mechanical voice of a screen reader - would the flow be pleasing or frustrating?
- Help your audience relate to the information - tie examples to personal and cultural experiences that they can understand.
- To help you minimize passive voice, use strong verbs that describe action - avoid weak verbs like is, are, were, was etc...
- Use images, video and audio to help clarify information - just be sure to follow our recommendations for accessible graphics
- Keep it positive - positive statements tend to be easier to follow, more to the point and imply greater respect for your reader. For example: "remember to vote" is better than "don't forget to vote" and "Eat a healthy breakfast" is better than "You shouldn't eat junk food for breakfast".
- Read through your writing with a critical eye - are all of the words necessary? Is there an easier way to say something? Are you using a byzantine word when a simple one will do (see what I did there)?
- Programs such as Microsoft Word have built in programs that can help you to gauge the clarity and readability of your work.
- [Mail Chimp's Grammar and Mechanics Page](#) has some helpful (and fun) rules for writing.
- Tools such as the [Hemingway App](#) can help review your writing and make suggestions on making it easier to read. However, as with all tools, it is a machine that uses a set of rules without context so use your best judgement when reviewing its suggestions.