

A brief introduction to Plain Language

Linda Jane Ring / 11.03.2025



Interact



**Co-funded by
the European Union**
Interreg

Creating 'reader chaos'

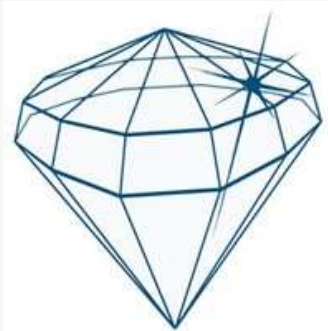
Engaging in an activity involving the leaves of a specific American plant, cured by a process of drying and fermentation, then encased in a thin cylinder of material manufactured in thin sheets from the pulp of wood or other fibrous substances, is strictly prohibited within this locality used as a place for commercial, professional, or bureaucratic work.

As part of its communication and visibility activities, Programme XYZ has strengthened its initiatives to support its projects in order to identify the most effective approaches and tools to foster the process of transferring the results achieved during the implementation of those projects to the benefit of public policies at local, regional and national level.

It is our advice that the focus of the presentation is discussed between the presenter and the responsible body for the event in advance. This can help with preparation and ensure that the content of the presentation fits with the event objectives and focus of the session in which it is being delivered.

To pave the way for emulation of these tried models elsewhere, awareness of the benefits needed to be generated in the first place, particularly among those who shape local and regional policy-making.

It is a matter of necessity that employees of Interreg Programmes be aware of the division of competences among employees of the Interact Programme. Moreover, it is vital that Interreg Programme staff be informed of the tangible contribution of Interact to improving their day-to-day situation in the workplace.

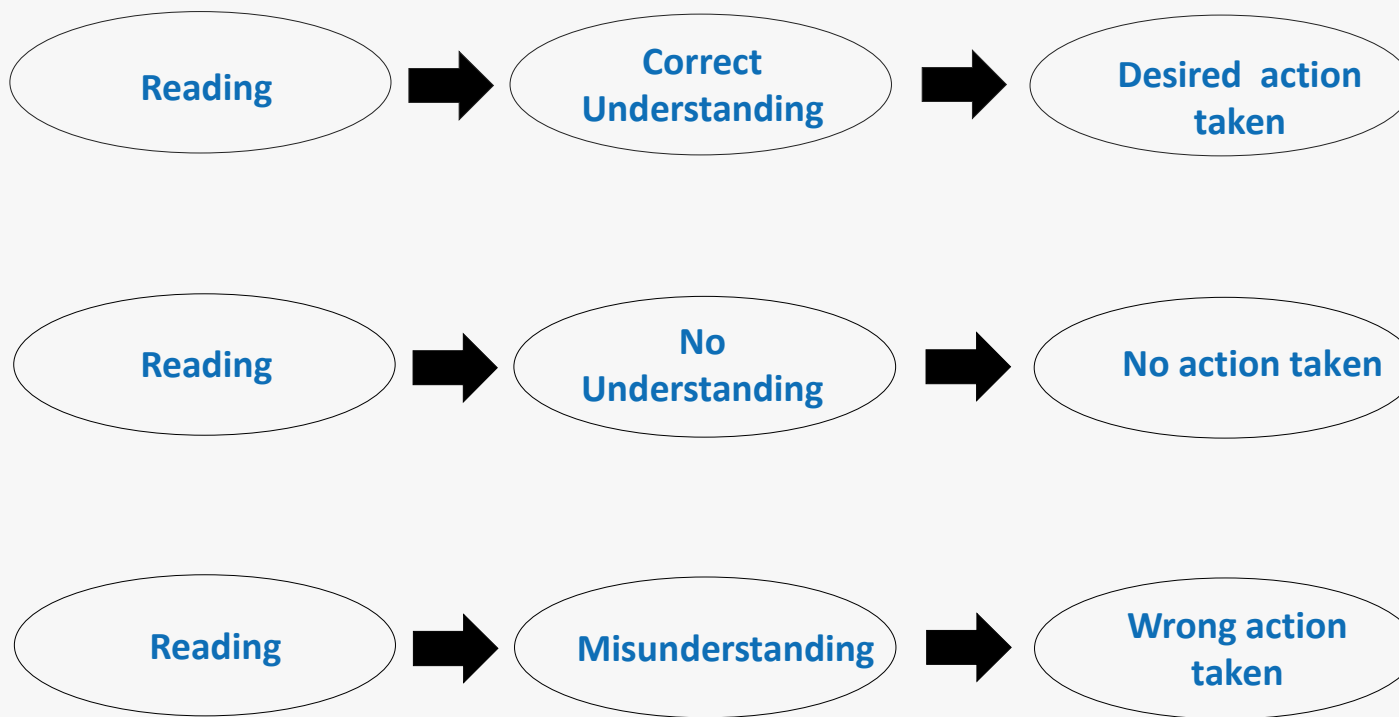


Plain English can be described as information that gets its meaning across **clearly and **briefly** to its intended audience.**

It must do this with the **necessary impact and the **most suitable tone**.**

The Plain English Campaign

The chain of understanding



Use everyday words, where possible

It is a matter of necessity that Interreg Programme staff be aware of the division of competences among employees of the Interact Programme. Moreover, it is vital that Interreg programme staff be informed of the tangible contribution of Interact to improving their day-to-day situation in the workplace.

Interreg colleagues need to know who does what in Interact. They also need to know what Interact is doing to help them with their work.





Expedientiously
quickly/efficiently

Dissemination
spreading/sharing

Incisive
acute

Concrete
specific/real

Elucidate
explain/clarify

Veracity
accuracy

Rectify
correct/put right

Mitigate
reduce

Hindrance
obstacle

Consolidated
complete/whole

Foster help
develop

Feasible
possible/doable

Utilisation
use

Deem
consider

Subsequently
then/next

Consequently
as a result

Procrastinate
delay/put off

Auspicious
promising/favourable

Predominantly
mainly

Quantify
calculate

Use everyday words...Keepers and Confusers

Keepers

- **Beneficiary**
- **Flate Rate**
- **Cross-border**
- **Transnational**
- **State Aid**
- **Capitalization**
- **Joint Secretariat**
- **Eligibility**
- **Reporting period**

Confusers

- **Subsequently**
- **Henceforth**
- **Expeditiously**
- **Elucidate**
- **Briefly/shortly**
- **Derogation**
- **Specificity**
- **Latin phrases**
- **Valorise**

Use shorter sentences – cut down the long ones

As part of its communication and visibility activities, Programme XYZ has strengthened its initiatives to support its projects in order to identify the most effective approaches and tools to foster the process of transferring the results achieved during the implementation of those projects to the benefit of public policies at local, regional and national level.

As part of its communication and visibility activities, Programme XYZ has strengthened its initiatives to support its projects.

Why is Programme XYZ doing this?

To identify the most effective approaches and tools to foster the process of transferring the results achieved during the implementation of those projects.

This will benefit public policies at local, regional and national level.

Use short sentences - Cut out the "fluff"

Based on a number of requests from Interreg Programmes and their Monitoring Committee members, Interact is organizing a workshop to explore the possibilities for improving the quality of Interreg Projects.

Interact is organizing a workshop, after Interreg Programmes and their MCs asked for help to improve the quality of Interreg Projects.

Write about people - use personal pronouns

The objective of this session is to assist Interreg Programme staff to better engage their readers through embarking on a gradual, lasting change of their writing style.

Our aim with this session is to help you change your writing style, so you can connect better with your readers.

Use active voice

Passive voice

Many errors were found in the reports.

The call was opened on 01. December.

The agenda will be published on time.

Active voice

The finance officer found many errors in the reports.

We opened the call on 01. December.

The board will publish the agenda on time.

Be consistent in your vocabulary

Sign up for this event now. We plan to make it an interesting workshop, and you will be working with many of your Interreg colleagues during both days of this meeting.

Sign up for this event now. We plan to make it an interesting event, where you will be working with your Interreg colleagues on both days.

Be consistent in all your lists

The main objective of your session has to be:

- realistic, and achievable by the end of the session
- specify what participants will be taught and how
- be measurable

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Ask questions in your text

How does this new regulation change your evaluation process?

Avoid double negatives

Don't send us your report if you haven't completed it.

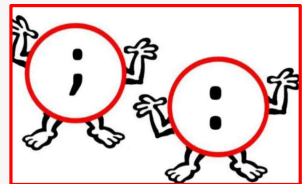
Place important information at the start of the sentence

In section 132, sub-section III, paragraph 6 of the document "Help for new applicants" on our website you can read more about how to check your application before sending it to us. (BLUF)

Avoid nominalisations ('Zombie' words)

The communication team's discussion of the problem lasted for 3 hours. Then a decision was made to contact the project.

Punctuate your sentences carefully



Nominalistions – we ❤️ them – but what are they?

-ion	intervention, discussion, implementation, participation
-ment	achievement, reimbursement, commitment, development
-al	approval, dismissal, refusal, perusal
-ance	performance, resistance, assurance, endurance
-ity	applicability, diversity, sustainability, specificity

Use nominalisations sparingly. Don't overuse them.

Lead your reader through your text – build bridges

Our next step in this process was...

This decision meant that project staff were now free to...

And here is what the results of our latest survey told us...

All of the above allows you to ...

And now for the best part about your feedback....

To conclude the discussion about use of AI, we can say that...

Your complete Plain Language checklist

Have I used everyday words?



Have I used short sentences?



Have I cut out the fluff?



Have I used personal pronouns?



Have I used an active voice?



Have I been consistent?



Have I asked questions?



Have I avoided nominalisations?



Do I have my BLUF?



Have I lead my reader?



Have I punctuated carefully?



Have I avoided double negatives?



The fundamental reason for the existence of Interreg

It is Interreg's belief that borders throughout Europe are no longer the hindrance they have been recognized as being in the past for citizens of European cities and regions.

There exists an awareness within Interreg that the challenges encountered by these residents of cities and regions are of a common nature, and that the achieving of a solution to these challenges and problems respectively on account of the specific nature of and differences existing between the individual cities' and regions' cultures, languages and mindsets creates a situation where resources are applied to an extent that could be considered wasteful.

Thus, the sensible approach is for these cities and regions to adopt a collaborative methodology as regards the application of their resources, to grant others access to their knowledge, and to regard and employ their differences, as previously referred to in this text, as a foundation for further developments. Therefore, provisions are made and conditions prepared to enable cities and region, universities and the corporate sector to have access to superior opportunities that pave the way for them to meet the demands of the tasks they have before them in cooperation with one another – whether the tasks in hand be bridge construction, training for the younger members of the community, supplying domestic properties with environmentally-friendly energy sources, or taking an area formerly perceived to be a wasteland and reinventing it as a leisure facility for the youngest members of the community.

All of the above serves as the foundation for Interreg's commitment to Territorial Cooperation throughout the regions and cities of Europe.

It appears to function successfully.

Here's what we do in Interreg

We believe in a world where borders are no longer obstacles for Europeans.

In that world we know that people in cities and regions face similar challenges. They often waste resources solving problems separately. This happens because of their different cultures, languages and mindsets.

It makes sense for them to pool resources, share knowledge and build on these differences.

So, we give people in European cities and regions, in universities and in businesses, the best possible opportunities for rising to their challenges together. We help them build bridges, train their young people, power their homes with green energy, or transform a wasteland into a playground for their children.

And this is why we are committed to Territorial Cooperation throughout Europe.

It works for people.

Creating ‘reader clarity’

No smoking in the office

Programme XYZ has increased its support to projects, to discover the most effective ways of sharing their results.

Why are they doing this?

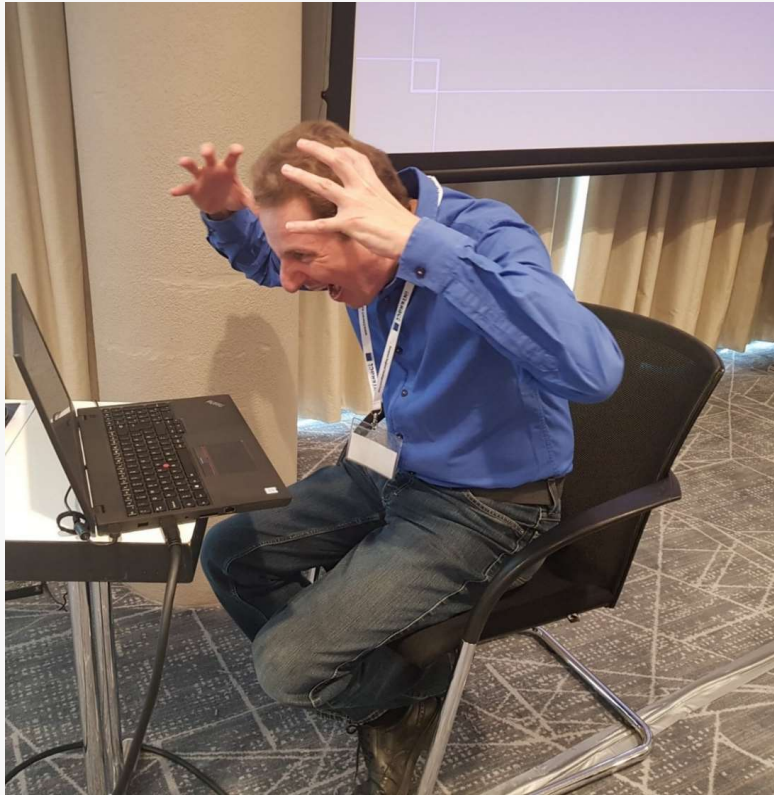
They are doing this to benefit policy at local-, regional- and national levels.

You are welcome to discuss the focus of your presentation with us before the event. This will help you prepare, and make sure that your presentation fits the event objectives and the focus of your session.

First, we had to make people aware of the benefits our tried and tested models bring. In particular, we worked with local- and regional policy-makers.

Interreg colleagues need to know who does what in Interact. They also need to know what Interact is doing to help them with their work.

How do you want your reader to react to your texts?



Don't use a big word when a singularly unloquacious and diminutive linguistic expression will satisfactorily accomplish the contemporary necessity.

Cooperation works

Thank you for your time, attention and interest this afternoon.

You will receive my slides and a few useful links later, and you are welcome to mail me with any questions about changing your writing style to a plainer one.

