

PPN Conference

Introduction to plain English

Sean Driver sdriver@nala.ie

11 October 2019



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Outline



What NALA do



What plain English is

**Simply
Put**

Benefits of plain English



Benefits to you

1. NALA's aim is to help more people improve their skills.

Every citizen has a right to literacy and numeracy.

Research shows that better literacy and numeracy gives people more choices, increases their income and improves their health.



- Awareness campaigns
- Freephone service
- Distance Education
- Resources
- Accreditation
- Integrating literacy onto programmes
- Tutor training
- Research

2. NALA also aims to get more organisations to adopt a whole-organisation approach to literacy and numeracy. This includes plain English.



Better literacy and numeracy is better for everyone.

- Plain English Service
- Plain English Mark
- Literacy Advisory services
- A-Z of Political Terms.

Melanoma Skin Cancer

What you should know



Plain
English
Approved by NALA

A Plain English Guide to Political Terms



NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



Your pocket guide to understanding financial terms

Financial Literacy Programme
A NALA/EBS Partnership



NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Outcomes

By the end of this presentation, you should be able to:

- outline the level and nature of literacy difficulties in Ireland;
- identify what makes material difficult to read and understand;
- describe the main benefits of plain English; and
- apply the plain English techniques to develop a more friendly style and keep your message.

Plain English pop quiz

1. What did Justin Milne, Chairman of Australian television network ABC, mean when he told his managing director to discuss **'external career development opportunities'** with journalist Emma Alberici?
2. Who described cells to hold separated children from their parents as **'tender age shelters'**?
3. What did General Motors mean when it reported that plants **'will be unallocated'** in 2019'?
4. Who said: "The great enemy of clear language is insincerity"?
What does this mean to you?

Questions for you

1. What are five elements of plain English? What are two elements that prevent clear communication?
2. What are the greatest challenges facing you in your job? How do they affect your ability to use plain English?
3. What style guides and reference works do you use when you write in your job?
4. When was the last time you used a government service online? Did you find it easy or difficult?
5. What do you know about the adult literacy situation in Ireland?
6. What would you like to learn at this session?

Reference guides

Simply Put.

Writing and design tips

NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosáigh

Plain English Style Guide for the Public Service

A resource to improve the quality and consistency of our communications

An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Ríthchóiríthe
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

NALA
National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosáigh

Customer Communications Toolkit for the Public Service
— A Universal Design Approach

An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Ríthchóiríthe
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design
NDA

HE

Guidelines for Communicating Clearly using Plain English with our Patients and Service Users

A resource to improve the quality and consistency of our communications

Plain English
Approved by NALA

Building a Better Health Service | Saibhéal Spleinín a' Fháilte

Home

Photo Guidelines

FAQ

Privacy Policy



PASSPORT TYPE



PROVIDE A PHOTO



PASSPORT DETAILS



REVIEW & PAYMENT

I would like to apply for:



Passport book

Standard book
34 pages

Large book
66 pages

€75

Select



Passport card

No size variation available

€35

Select



Passport book & card

Standard book
34 pages

Large book
66 pages

€100

Select

Findings for Ireland (OECD, 2012)

- One in _____adults at Level 1 in literacy
- One in _____adults at Level 1 in numeracy
- ____ in _____ adults at Level 1 in technology

What number and what %?

Level 3 skills are the desirable minimum as decided by the OECD. Five levels in all.

Findings for Ireland (OECD, 2012)

- One in six adults at Level 1 in literacy (18%: 521,550).
- One in four adults at Level 1 in numeracy (25%: 754,000).
- Two in five adults at Level 1 in technology (42%: 1,283,467).

Other points to consider

- 64,000 adults attend adult literacy classes and 15,584 of these are ESOL (English as a Second Language) students (DES, 2016);
- readers read 30% more slowly when reading in a second language;
- over 13% of Irish adults have a disability (Disability Federation of Ireland, 2018).



What NALA do



What plain English is

Simply
Put

Benefits of plain English



Benefits to you

What is plain English?

- Plain English is a way to write and present information so a reader can understand and act on it after a single reading.
- Plain English means:
 - writing accurately and clearly for the intended reader,
 - avoiding jargon, except for people who will understand it,
 - using clear layout and design so the information is easy to read.

Who uses plain English?



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Saint John of God



Where is plain English used?

Ireland

- gov.ie
- HSE
- DEASP
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
- The DPP
- Regulatory bodies like the HSA, Adoption Authority and HIQA.
- Bill passing through Oireachtas this year

Abroad

- US Plain Writing Act, 2010
- UK: GOV.UK
- European Commission: Clear Writing campaign
- International plain language standards are being developed.

Recent trends in plain Language



In September 2019, the International Organisation for Standards (IS) agreed to undertake a plain language standards project.



What NALA do



What plain English is

Simply
Put

Benefits of plain English



Benefits to you

Benefits of plain English

- In the UK, BT cut customer queries by 25% by using plain English.
- The Royal Mail saved £500,000 in nine months by redesigning just one form.
- When Arizona's Department of Revenue rewrote one letter in plain English, it got about 11,000 fewer phone calls than the previous year.

Benefits of plain English (2019)

The Department of Health published findings of a letter before and after it was written in plain English. The plain English letter showed a 20% increase in the number of patients calling to cancel appointments relative to the original letter. This saved time and effort for all involved.

Mr Sean Driver
NALA
Ranelgah
Dublin 6

2nd November 2017




Please reply to this letter

Dear Sean

You are on our General Surgery waiting list for a procedure with Deirdre Robertson. I apologise that you are still waiting. We want to provide our valuable services to our patients as soon as we can. That is why we are checking our waiting list.

We need you to please:

1. Answer the question below and sign.
2. Return this page to us in the freepost envelope enclosed.

	Read this letter
	Fill in the form
	Return this form

Please do this **even if** you have recently been in contact with the hospital.

If you **don't send** us back this page by **16th November 2017**, then we will take it that you do not require this procedure and **you will be removed** from our waiting list. Your GP (family doctor) will be informed.

Question: Do you still require this procedure? (tick one box only)

Yes, I still require it No, I had it done elsewhere No, other reason

If "No, other reason" please give reason:

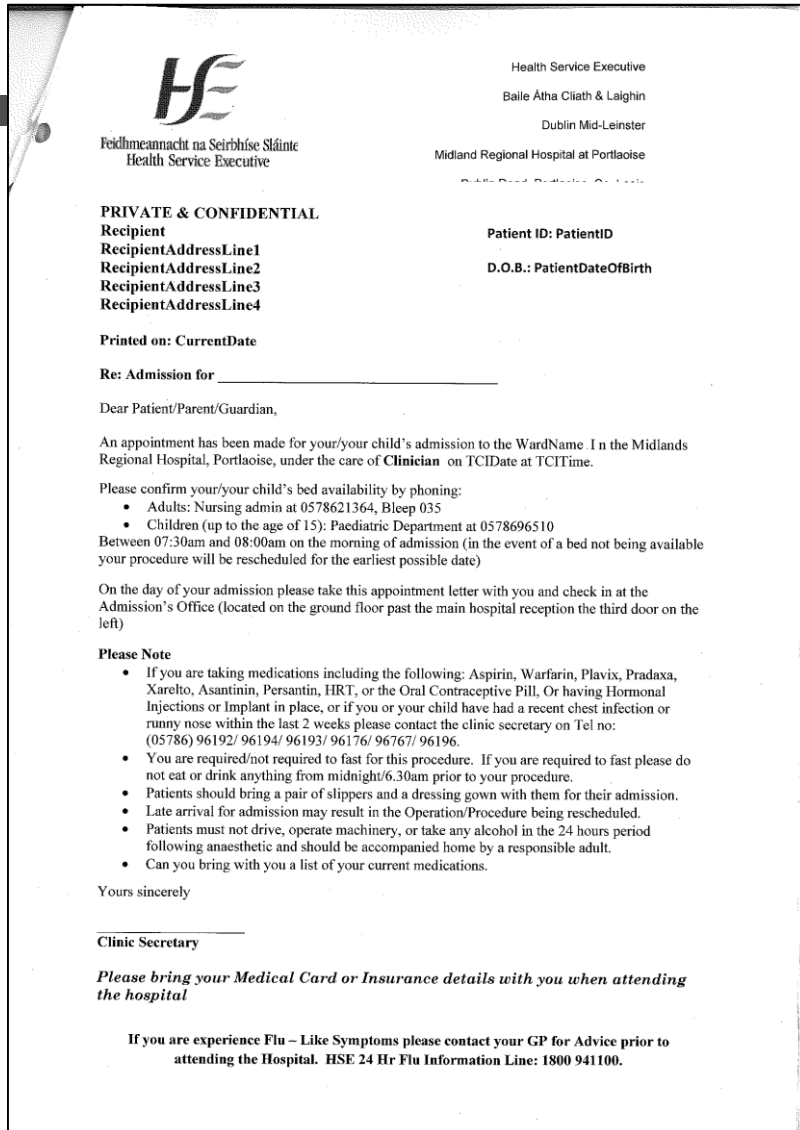
Please sign: _____ Medical Record No. 12345

If you have any questions about the above, please phone 01 635 3122.

Kind regards,

Carol Taaffe, Scheduled Care Department

Existing and Re-designed Inpatient Letter



HSE
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Health Service Executive
Baile Átha Cliath & Laignin
Dublin Mid-Leinster
Midland Regional Hospital at Portlaoise

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
Recipient
RecipientAddressLine1
RecipientAddressLine2
RecipientAddressLine3
RecipientAddressLine4

Printed on: CurrentDate
Re: Admission for _____
Dear Patient/Parent/Guardian,

An appointment has been made for your/your child's admission to the WardName. I in the Midlands Regional Hospital, Portlaoise, under the care of **Clinician** on TCIDate at TCITime.

Please confirm your/your child's bed availability by phoning:

- Adults: Nursing admin at 0578621364, Bleep 035
- Children (up to the age of 15): Paediatric Department at 0578696510

Between 07:30am and 08:00am on the morning of admission (in the event of a bed not being available your procedure will be rescheduled for the earliest possible date)

On the day of your admission please take this appointment letter with you and check in at the Admission's Office (located on the ground floor past the main hospital reception the third door on the left)

Please Note

- If you are taking medications including the following: Aspirin, Warfarin, Plavix, Pradaxa, Xarelto, Asantinin, Persantin, HRT, or the Oral Contraceptive Pill, Or having Hormonal Injections or Implant in place, or if you or your child have had a recent chest infection or runny nose within the last 2 weeks please contact the clinic secretary on Tel no: (05786) 96192/ 96194/ 96193/ 96176/ 96767/ 96196.
- You are required/not required to fast for this procedure. If you are required to fast please do not eat or drink anything from midnight/6.30am prior to your procedure.
- Patients should bring a pair of slippers and a dressing gown with them for their admission.
- Late arrival for admission may result in the Operation/Procedure being rescheduled.
- Patients must not drive, operate machinery, or take any alcohol in the 24 hours period following anaesthetic and should be accompanied home by a responsible adult.
- Can you bring with you a list of your current medications.

Yours sincerely

Clinic Secretary

Please bring your Medical Card or Insurance details with you when attending the hospital

If you are experience Flu – Like Symptoms please contact your GP for Advice prior to attending the Hospital. HSE 24 Hr Flu Information Line: 1800 941100.

Focus on key action

Strictly Private and Confidential
<Title> <Pt Forename> <Pt Surname>
<Pt. Address Line 1>
<Pt. Address Line 2>
<Pt. Address Line 3>
<Pt. Address Line 4>

Medical Record No.: <Patient MRN>
DOB: <Patient DOB>

Simplification <Insert current date>

Please phone to confirm your appointment for admission **Call for action**

Dear <Pt Forename>


Personalised **Reciprocity**

I have booked you an appointment for admission to <Specialty> at <<Hospital>> under the care of <Title> <Consultant Forename> <Consultant Surname>.

Date: <Insert day and date> **Salience**

Time: <Insert time>

Procedure:



We need you to please call <<insert number>> to confirm or cancel your appointment. If you cannot call during office hours, you can leave a voicemail at this number 24-hours a day. Easy

If you do not confirm by < date >, your procedure may be cancelled. If you cannot attend, please phone to let me know so another patient can use this valuable appointment. **Consequences & observer**

If you do not attend once or if you cancel twice, you may be removed from the waiting list. This follows national protocol. We will seek clinical guidance where appropriate. **Prep Note**

It is important that you read the enclosed Preparation Note for fasting and other instructions. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them when you call me. **Reassure & expectation**

Kind regards,
<<Insert forename surname of staff member>>, Clinic Secretary

✂ _____

Reminder: After you phone, fill in this slip and place it somewhere you can see it. Commitment device

I will attend my < specialty > appointment at _____ on _____ at _____
Place Date Time

USE PLAIN ENGLISH IN PRACTICE

- USE ALL CAPITALS. THEY MAKE THINGS EASIER TO READ
 - TIGHT LINE SPACING
 - ALIGN TO THE CENTRE
 - FOR EMPHASIS: USE *ITALICS* OR UNDERLINE –
 - USE A CLEAR FONT SUCH AS TIMES NEW ROMAN
 - ALWAYS USE SHORT VERSIONS TO SAVE TIME I.E
NALA, PPN?
- THE PASSIVE VOICE IS TO BE USED AT ALL TIMES AS
IT'S PROFESSIONAL
 - FONT SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

DESIGN PLAIN ENGLISH IN PRAC-TICE

USE ALL CAPITALS. THEY MAKE THINGS EASIER TO READ

Use Initial Capital Letters on Important Words for Effect

TIGHT LINE SPACING

ALIGN TO THE CENTRE

FOR EMPHASIS: USE *ITALICS* OR UNDERLINE –

USE A CLEAR FONT SUCH AS TIMES NEW ROMAN

IMAGES ARE ALWAYS GREAT

THE ACTIVE VOICE IS TO BE USED AT ALL TIMES

FONT SIZE DOESN'T MATTER

Use plain English in practice

- DON'T USE ALL CAPITALS, lower case is easier to read.
- Line spacing of 1.5
- Align to the left: **Avoid rivers of white space**
- For emphasis: no *italics* or underlining – use **bold**
- Sans serif font such as Arial, Verdana, Tahoma, Calibri
Avoid Times New Roman
- Font size 12 ideally, Define acronyms – what is NALA, PPN?
- We advise you use the active voice as it's direct and personal

Spring into Health

This programme has been twice shortlisted for the national Aontas award



“The effectiveness of the programme is demonstrated in the enhanced wellbeing of the men who engaged with it and the positive outcomes that were recorded.”
 (Evaluation Report 2018)



Place4U has teamed up with Tipperary ETB to deliver a 10 week Fitness & Wellbeing Programme for men aged 30+

We can help you to improve your

HEALTH

FITNESS

LIFESTYLE

- Advise on how to lower blood pressure, cholesterol & sugar levels
- Help you lose weight
- Provide Information on Health Services in your area
- Help you get fit and active
- Set realistic fitness goals specifically for you
- Provide support to motivate you to make positive lifestyle choices
- Help you to manage stress
- Show you how to cook healthier meals

The programme encouraged me to take up walking again and this has led to a weight loss of over a stone in 10 weeks

The programme has forged new friendships, improved health and wellness and increased everyone's feel good factor

What last year's participants had to say:

Place4U, Gladstone Street, Clonmel
 Starting 25th March 2019

To find out more please phone 08/ 440/935

AA

5.21

Contrast

Contrast is the difference in luminance or color that makes an object (or its representation in an image or display) distinguishable. In visual perception of the real world, contrast is determined by the difference in the color and brightness of the object and other objects within the same field of view. Because the human visual system is more sensitive to contrast than absolute luminance, we can perceive the world similarly regardless of the huge changes in illumination over the day or from place to place. The maximum contrast of an image is the contrast ratio or dynamic range.



Super
work
stand
ads v

Foreground

#FFA8A8

Hue 0°

Saturation 100%

Lightness 83%



Background

#870D4C

Hue 329°

Saturation 82%

Lightness 29%



Readability

Grade 16

Poor. Aim for 14.

Words: 180

Show More ▾

1 adverb, meeting the goal of 1 or fewer.**7** uses of passive voice. Cut to 2 or fewer.**2** phrases have simpler alternatives.**2** of 8 sentences are hard to read.**5** of 8 sentences are very hard to read.

The Corporate Plan was prepared on an inclusive basis involving consultation with internal stakeholders within the organisation, and external stakeholders such as social partners at local level, community, voluntary and environmental interests, and other public bodies operating locally. The views of all stakeholders at the consultation sessions were taken into account in the preparation of the Plan. The Council's Partnership Committee has also been consulted in preparation of the Plan.

In progressing the Corporate Plan the Council was obliged to identify a number of strategic objectives on which it wishes to deliver within the timeframe of the Plan. These objectives were framed in the context of the Council's operating environment, which will influence the extent to which the objectives are achievable. The objectives will translate into more detailed supporting strategies and activities, which will be identified in Annual Operational Plans. The Annual Operational Plans will be prepared for each year of the Corporate Plan's timeframe and will spell out in more detail the activities undertaken by different service areas to deliver on the Corporate Plan's objective. |

Readability

Grade 8

Good

Words: 121

Show More ▾

0 adverbs. Well done.

0 uses of passive voice. Nice work.

0 phrases have simpler alternatives.

2 of 13 sentences are hard to read.

0 of 13 sentences are very hard to read.

The Council has developed this corporate plan after considering the views of:

- people within the council, including our Partnership Committee,
- local businesses, trade unions and farmers,
- community, voluntary and environmental organisations, and
- other local public bodies.

We have identified the main objectives that we wish to achieve within the period covered by the corporate plan. A range of factors affecting the council's day-to-day work have shaped these objectives and will decide how far we can go in achieving them.

We will produce annual work plans for each year covered by the corporate plan. These plans will:

- break down the corporate plan's objectives into activities and strategies, and
- show how the council's different service areas will achieve the objectives.




Mr Sean Driver
NALA
Ranelgah
Dublin 6

2nd November 2017

Please reply to this letter

Dear Sean

You are on our General Surgery waiting list for a procedure with Deirdre Robertson. I apologise that you are still waiting. We want to provide our valuable services to our patients as soon as we can. That is why we are checking our waiting list.

	Read this letter
	Fill in the form
	Return this form

We need you to please:

1. Answer the question below and sign.
2. Return this page to us in the freepost envelope enclosed.

Please do this **even if** you have recently been in contact with the hospital.

If you **don't send** us back this page by **16th November 2017**, then we will take it that you do not require this procedure and **you will be removed** from our waiting list. Your GP (family doctor) will be informed.

Question: Do you still require this procedure? (tick one box only)

Yes, I still require it No, I had it done elsewhere No, other reason

If "No, other reason" please give reason:

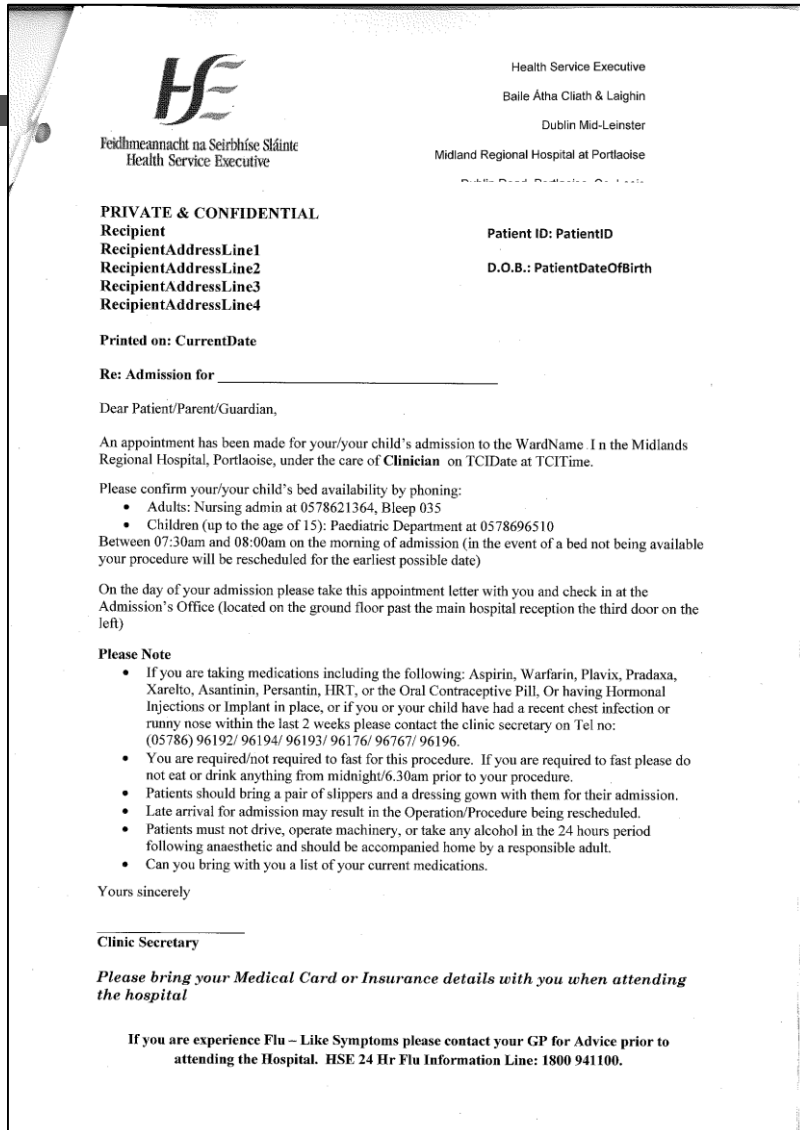
Please sign: _____ Medical Record No. 12345

If you have any questions about the above, please phone 01 635 3122.

Kind regards,

Carol Taaffe, Scheduled Care Department

Existing and Re-designed Inpatient Letter



HSE
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Health Service Executive
Baile Átha Cliath & Laignin
Dublin Mid-Leinster
Midland Regional Hospital at Portlaoise

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL
Recipient
RecipientAddressLine1
RecipientAddressLine2
RecipientAddressLine3
RecipientAddressLine4

Printed on: CurrentDate
Re: Admission for _____
Dear Patient/Parent/Guardian,
An appointment has been made for your/your child's admission to the WardName. I in the Midlands Regional Hospital, Portlaoise, under the care of **Clinician** on TCIDate at TCITime.
Please confirm your/your child's bed availability by phoning:
• Adults: Nursing admin at 0578621364, Bleep 035
• Children (up to the age of 15): Paediatric Department at 0578696510
Between 07:30am and 08:00am on the morning of admission (in the event of a bed not being available your procedure will be rescheduled for the earliest possible date)
On the day of your admission please take this appointment letter with you and check in at the Admission's Office (located on the ground floor past the main hospital reception the third door on the left)
Please Note
• If you are taking medications including the following: Aspirin, Warfarin, Plavix, Pradaxa, Xarelto, Asantinin, Persantin, HRT, or the Oral Contraceptive Pill, Or having Hormonal Injections or Implant in place, or if you or your child have had a recent chest infection or runny nose within the last 2 weeks please contact the clinic secretary on Tel no: (05786) 96192/ 96194/ 96193/ 96176/ 96767/ 96196.
• You are required/not required to fast for this procedure. If you are required to fast please do not eat or drink anything from midnight/6.30am prior to your procedure.
• Patients should bring a pair of slippers and a dressing gown with them for their admission.
• Late arrival for admission may result in the Operation/Procedure being rescheduled.
• Patients must not drive, operate machinery, or take any alcohol in the 24 hours period following anaesthetic and should be accompanied home by a responsible adult.
• Can you bring with you a list of your current medications.
Yours sincerely

Clinic Secretary
Please bring your Medical Card or Insurance details with you when attending the hospital
If you are experience Flu – Like Symptoms please contact your GP for Advice prior to attending the Hospital. HSE 24 Hr Flu Information Line: 1800 941100.

Focus on key action

Strictly Private and Confidential
<Title> <Pt Forename> <Pt Surname>
<Pt. Address Line 1>
<Pt. Address Line 2>
<Pt. Address Line 3>
<Pt. Address Line 4>

Medical Record No.: <Patient MRN>
DOB: <Patient DOB>


Simplification <Insert current date>

Please phone to confirm your appointment for admission **Call for action**

Dear <Pt Forename>

Personalised **Reciprocity**
I have booked you an appointment for admission to <Specialty> at <<Hospital>> under the care of <Title> <Consultant Forename> <Consultant Surname>.

Date: <Insert day and date> **Salience**
Time: <Insert time>
Procedure:



We need you to please call <<insert number>> to confirm or cancel your appointment. If you cannot call during office hours, you can leave a voicemail at this number 24-hours a day. Easy

If you do not confirm by < date >, your procedure may be cancelled. If you cannot attend, please phone to let me know so another patient can use this valuable appointment. **Consequences & observer**

If you do not attend once or if you cancel twice, you may be removed from the waiting list. This follows national protocol. We will seek clinical guidance where appropriate. **Prep Note**

It is important that you read the enclosed Preparation Note for fasting and other instructions. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them when you call me. **Reassure & expectation**

Kind regards,
<<Insert forename surname of staff member>>, Clinic Secretary

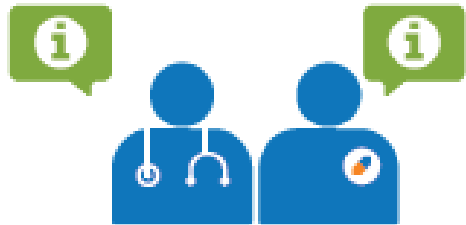
✂ _____

Reminder: After you phone, fill in this slip and place it somewhere you can see it. Commitment device

I will attend my < specialty > appointment at _____ on _____ at _____
Place Date Time

What is health literacy and numeracy?

Health literacy and numeracy has two elements:



Health services communicate clearly and take account of possible health literacy and numeracy needs.



People understand health information correctly and can make an informed decision.

Your treatment is...



I can't believe I have...

It is about mutual understanding

**Medical words or terms
can be difficult.**

**If you don't understand
them, feel free to ask
me to explain.**



Example: Before

The hospital patient has the right to information relevant to his situation that must allow the patient the fullest insight into all aspects of his situation, medical or otherwise, and, on an informed basis, enable him to make his own decisions or to participate in decisions which have implications for his or her wellbeing. (54)



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh

Example: After

You have the right to information that helps you fully understand your condition. This means you can make informed choices about your treatment.

(23 words)



NALA

National Adult Literacy Agency
Áisíneacht Náisiúnta Litearthachta do Aosaigh



What NALA do



What plain English is

Simply
Put

Benefits of plain English



Benefits to you

Why use plain English

Why use plain English

- Make communications with clients and colleagues faster, easier and cheaper
- Save time, money and resources
- Increase the satisfaction levels of staff and clients
- Make your organisation more accessible to everyone
- GDPR mentions plain language
- It will be a legal obligation soon

How you can adopt plain English

How you can adopt plain English

- Train your staff in the use of plain English with NALA – Culture Change
- Have Plain English champions
- Use Plain English resources and guidelines simplyput.ie
- Do a plain English audit of letters and forms with user testing and readability checkers
- Use your Plain English checklist! Display it!
- Have a plain English awards for staff who redesign documents to be in plain English
- Become a member of NALA to learn more about our work

Have a 'pseuds corner'

This is not a jersey. This is a portal through which men pass. This is not material. This is fabric that binds us together. This is not a souvenir. This is a reminder of all who have worn it before us. This is not black. This is the absence of fear. This is not a uniform. This is a country unified. This is not a jersey only 22 men wear. This is a jersey fitted for four million people. This is victory and loss, but it will not be defeated. This is everything but a jersey.

What do you think is being described?

Have a 'pseuds corner'

This is not a jersey. This is a portal through which men pass. This is not material. This is fabric that binds us together. This is not a souvenir. This is a reminder of all who have worn it before us. This is not black. This is the absence of fear. This is not a uniform. This is a country unified. This is not a jersey only 22 men wear. This is a jersey fitted for four million people. This is victory and loss, but it will not be defeated. This is everything but a jersey.

Adidas advert for the new All Blacks jersey.





What NALA do



What plain English is

**Simply
Put**

Benefits of plain English



Benefits to you



Simply Put.

Writing and design tips to make your documents easy to read

Phone
01 412 7900
Email
simplyput@nala.ie

Get started

What is plain English?

Writing tips

Document design tips

Checking documents

Words and phrases to avoid

News and events

EBS BUILDING SOCIETY AND NALA LAUNCH
'A-Z POCKET GUIDE ...

[View all news](#)



Be more effective - use plain English

Is it possible that you are losing customers because of complicated literature? Plain English can help because clearer information is more likely to save time and money.

[Read more](#)

«previous | next»

Plain English editing

What is this and how do I get a quote?



Plain English training

Find out more about our writing courses



Plain English Mark

Do your documents meet international standards?



Open Plain English Training

Learn how to:

- save time and money using plain English with colleagues and clients;
- use plain English techniques to improve your writing;
- use language, structure and design to make your documents and webpages easier to read.

When:

- Thursday November 21

Where:

- Carmelite Community Centre,
56 Aungier St. Dublin 2

How much:

- €120-€100(members)

Book online: Go to upcoming events on NALA.ie

Further information

NALA

Sandford Lodge

Sandford Close

Ranelagh

Dublin 6

DO6 YF65

Tel: (01) 412 7900

Website: www.nala.ie

Email: sdriver@nala.ie

Plain English website: www.simplyput.ie



<http://facebook.com/nalairland>



<http://twitter.com/nalairland>



NALA