

# How plain language can make all the difference

When we edit into plain language there are usually some gains and losses in meaning because exact equivalence is almost impossible. But we aim to get as close as possible to the original meaning, and we can often bring out the meaning better by using different words and reorganizing the information. Here are a few examples of how good editing can make a difference.

If you like the look of these examples, contact us to see how we could transform your documents.

## A | Clear as a fire bell

- **Before**

In our endeavour to ensure guest safety at all times, can visitors please note that fire bell testing is carried out every Monday at 9.30am.

- **After**

To help ensure the safety of guests, we test the fire bell every Monday at 9.30am.

## B | Reclaiming the language

- **Before**

Reclamation of the site will involve the identification and remediation of any pollution and contamination which may be present on the site together with the removal or treatment of hazardous features such as unstable ground and mineshafts etc.

- **After**

In reclaiming the site, we will:

- identify and clean up any pollution and contamination, and
- make safe or remove hazards such as unstable ground and mineshafts.

## C | So many words, so little time

- **Before**

The physical condition of a property is a fundamental determinant of its quality.

- **After**

The quality of a property depends mainly on its condition.

## D | Efficiency savings from plain words

- **Before**

The department is required to make savings of £13m next year and this objective will be achieved by efficiency savings. An evaluation of cash collection methods and procedures and identification of potential savings in this area have been conducted by senior management and determined to be part of this overall process.

- **After**

We must save £13m next year and will do so by improving efficiency. Senior managers have studied our cash-collection methods and found them to be a possible source of savings.

## E | Teeming with text

- **Before**  
The team's function is to perform problem definition and resolution.
- **After**  
The team define and resolve problems.

## F | Plain English or bussed?

A bus-driver in Derbyshire took matters into his own hands when confronted by a puzzling company manual. Here are two of the 183 rules he edited, using his inside knowledge of what drivers really needed to know:

- **Before**  
Ensure the potential impact of non-routine factors and problems and other services are assessed and details notified promptly to an appropriate person.
- **After**  
Inform the depot if you are stuck in traffic or involved in an accident.
- **Before**  
Ensure machinery for issuing and endorsing tickets is confirmed as in working order and is set in accordance with approved procedure.
- **After**  
Check the ticket machine is showing the correct date and price.

## G | Determination needed

- **Before**  
The adjudicators may as a result of their enquiries reach a preliminary determination on a complaint and if they do so, after informing the complainant and member company, shall give them an opportunity to make further comments to them on the facts stated; and the adjudicators shall consider any such representations made to them and may either confirm their preliminary determination as their determination on the complaint unchanged or modified as appropriate, or they may decide not to confirm their preliminary determination and to continue their investigation.
- **After**  
The adjudicators will make enquiries and may reach a preliminary conclusion on a complaint. If so, they will inform the complainant and the member company and give them an opportunity to make further comments to the adjudicators on the facts stated. The adjudicators must consider these comments. They may then:
  - confirm their preliminary conclusion as their final decision or modify it, or
  - decide not to confirm it and continue investigating.