



ACCOMPANYING SHEET

Here are a few examples you can offer participants to spark brainstorming, without placing any emotional weight on the personal experiences shared.

Take a moment

You don't need to think of anything serious or professional.

Think of **any situation** where instructions were hard to understand.

It could be:

- Something administrative
- A form or email
- A recipe
- Instructions for a device
- Directions you received once
- Something you read quickly and didn't really get

There is **no right or wrong example!**

I'll start with a very simple example.

A few months ago, I tried to follow a recipe online.

It said '*quick and easy*', however, EASY it was not, let me tell you that!!!

Step 3 referred to something explained in step 7.

Step 5 used a word I didn't know (and I've never needed in my life before).

And at some point, I realised I had missed an ingredient... but I had no idea when I was supposed to use it, but I knew it made me mad.

Nothing horrible, life-threatening happened, I just felt a bit stupid, slightly annoyed, and I stopped enjoying what I was doing...needless to say I ordered take-away this evening.



That feeling — that small frustration — is what we're talking about here. So, you see, your example doesn't have to be life-changing, we're just looking for that moment where things stopped being clear.

I'll give you another example, this time about enrolling in a language course.

I wanted to sign up for a language class at a language school. I was motivated — learning a new language felt exciting, especially after HOURS spent on Duolingo.

But the registration process was divided into several categories:

new students, returning students, people who had already enrolled the year before, people who needed a placement test...

And yeah, sure, the instructions technically explained all of this — but using long sentences, internal terms, and a lot of cross-references. At some point, I wasn't even sure which category I belonged to. What felt strange is that I was trying to learn a new language, but I was already discouraged because I didn't fully understand the language used *right there, in the registration process, IN FRENCH – and I am a French speaker.*

Once again, nothing dramatic happened, BUT I just felt less motivated, slightly lost, and much less confident than when I started. And that's often how unclear instructions work: they don't stop people completely — they quietly push them away.

I'll finish with a more technological example.

I once tried to set up an external screen at home — laptop, docking station, HDMI cable, power supply – and they say Macs are INTUITIVE. In theory, everything was compatible, and when I saw my colleague do it a couple of days ago in the office, it seemed SOOOOO EASY.

The instructions were spread across different places: some in a PDF online, some inside the computer settings. The terms didn't really match, one document talked about 'mirroring', another about 'extended display', another about 'output source'. I wasn't sure if these were different options or different names for the same thing.

At some point, I realised I wasn't even sure what result I was aiming for anymore.

I just wanted the screen to work...and to cry a little bit. Because, once again, it was so trivial, it should be so easy, but I didn't know how to do it, and the instructions

That's clear!



Activity Sheet

didn't make it easier at all. I eventually managed — but mostly by trial and error, not by understanding.

So, as you can see from my examples, the situations we're looking for are so banal, so NORMAL, so every-day, that they can happen to anyone, to me, to you, to a university professor with 3 PhDs. If the instructions are not clear, they're just not clear, and it's not your fault.



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UNLOCKING THE MESSAGE

Participants experience the difference between complex and plain language, using two versions of a text.

Module 3 – Activity 1

Duration: 20 minutes

Activity type: Practical exercise / experiential learning

Working format: Small groups (3–4 people)



Learning objectives

- Identify barriers created by complex or unclear language
- Compare the impact of complex vs plain language on understanding
- Reflect on emotional and practical impacts of unclear communication



Materials & Resources Needed

- Printed version of a short complex text (1 per group)
- Printed plain language version of the same text
- Pens and paper



Success Indicators

- Participants can clearly explain why the first text was difficult
- Participants identify specific language elements that improved clarity
- Active discussion linking language choices to inclusion





○→○→○ Step-by-step

Step 1 – Introduction (3 min)

- Objective: Explain that participants will test two versions of the same message.
- Trainer role: Distribute the complex text and ask participants to explain their text without giving hints.

Step 2 – Main activity (12 min)

Participants try to understand the complex text. After a few minutes, the trainer stops the activity and distributes the plain language version. Participants redo the task.

Step 3 – Conclusion / Group discussion (7 min)

Reflection questions:

- What was difficult in the first version?
- What changed in the second version?
- How did you feel when the message was unclear?
- What exactly made the text difficult?

The trainer writes on a board a collective list
(long sentences, jargon, structure, missing context...)

- Important conclusion: the sector/the domain does not really matter in the lack of understanding of a text – there are recurring elements that appear in all of the texts, and they have nothing to do with the subject, but rather with the syntax, form, etc.





A - Original extract - GDPR

Source: European Data Protection Board / EDPB Guidelines 1/2024 on Article 6.1(f) GDPR

Personal data must be processed fairly for specified purposes and on the basis of a legal basis laid down by law. Article 6.1 GDPR provides that processing shall be lawful only if and to the extent that at least one of the legal bases set out in Article 6.1(a) to (f) GDPR applies. Consequently, before a controller starts processing personal data, it must identify the applicable legal basis and ensure that the requirements of at least one of the legal bases in Article 6.1 GDPR are fulfilled.



A - Plain language version

Data about people (like names, emails, health info) can only be used if there is a clear legal reason.

Before using anyone's personal data, an organisation must check and document which legal rule allows it.

B - Original extract - Higher education

Source: Council of the European Union / Recommendation on micro-credentials

Higher education institutions should use the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and comply with the principles in Annexe V to the EQF Recommendation, where possible, to demonstrate the notional workload needed to achieve the learning outcomes of the micro-credential.

Providers that do not use the ECTS may use other systems or types of information that can effectively describe learning outcomes and workload, in compliance with the principles in Annex V to the EQF Recommendation.



B - Plain-language version

Universities should clearly show how much work and study time short courses involve, using the recognised European system (ECTS).

If they use a different way of measuring, it must still clearly show what students will learn and how much effort it will take.





C - Original extract - Right to Vote and Stand for Election

Source: Council Directive 93/109/EC

Any person who, on the reference date:

(a) is a citizen of the Union within the meaning of the second subparagraph of Article 8 (1) of the Treaty; and

(b) is not a national of the Member State of residence, but satisfies the same conditions in respect of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate as that State imposes by law on its own nationals,

shall have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament in the Member State of residence unless deprived of those rights pursuant to Articles 6 and 7.



C - Plain-language version

If you are an EU citizen living in another EU country, you can vote and run for election to the European Parliament under the same conditions as local citizens, unless your rights have been legally removed.

D - Original extract - Right to Access a Basic Bank Account

Source: Directive 2014/92/EU - Opening and switching bank accounts and information on fees.

Consumers legally resident in the European Union (EU) have the right to open a payment account with basic features in any EU Member State. A basic bank account includes various services such as cash withdrawals at a bank counter or cash machines and the execution of payment transactions such as direct debits or credit transfers within the EU.



D - Plain-language version

If someone lives in the EU, they must be allowed to open a simple bank account that lets them:

- deposit and withdraw money,
- use a debit card,
- and make basic payments.

This right applies no matter which EU country they live in.





E - Original extract - Consent to Processing Health Data

Source: European Commission - EU health data exchange document

Consent or other lawful basis

Any processing (1) of health data must be based on the explicit consent of the citizen concerned or on any other lawful basis, pursuant to Articles 6 and 9 of Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

Continuity of service

Continuity and availability of the electronic health record exchange service is essential to guarantee continuity of care. Any incidents or interruptions that may arise in the course of the use of the service should be promptly addressed in accordance with defined business continuity plans.



E - Plain-language version

Before anyone's health information can be used in electronic systems, the person must say yes, or there must be another clear legal reason to use it.

Health systems must keep the online service working reliably so that doctors always have access to medical records when needed.



PLAIN LANGUAGE ROLE REVERSAL LAB

Participants learn how to apply plain language principles by analysing, rewriting, and testing a text.

Module 3 – Activity 2

Duration: 40 minutes

Activity type: Guided practice & rewriting lab

Working format: Pair work, then group discussion



Learning objectives

- Identify specific barriers in a text (not just general difficulty)
- Rewrite a text using plain language principles
- Test and improve clarity through feedback



Materials & Resources Needed

- Short jargon-filled texts (same as Activity 1 or you can provide other examples)
- Printed “Plain language rules” sheet
- Pens and paper



Success Indicators

- Rewritten texts are shorter, clearer, and better structured
- Participants can name and justify the rules they applied
- Peer feedback focuses on clarity, not preference





Plain language rules sheet from the European Commission

Ten principles for clear language.

1. Think before writing: consider the purpose, audience and message.
2. Structure the text: use headings, bullet points and white space.
3. Keep it short and simple: aim for 15–20 words per sentence.
4. Choose verbs, not nouns: for example, write "investigate" rather than "conduct an investigation".
5. Favour the active voice: say who is doing what.
6. Be precise: use concrete words for clear meaning.
7. Check for false friends: look out for similar words in two languages that mean different things.
8. Beware of jargon: explain technical terms.
9. Limit abbreviations and acronyms: write them out in full on first use.
10. Revise the text: check for flow, clarity and accuracy.

Putting these principles into practice makes every message count.





○→○→○ Step-by-step

Step 1 – Communicator vs recipient (5 min)

One participant reads and explains the text without changing the wording. The other listens and notes what they understand and what is confusing. The trainer guides the participants in their reflection.

Step 2 – Rewriting (15 min)

Pairs rewrite the text with constraints:

- Use at least 3 plain language rules
- Reduce the text length (e.g. -30% or fewer sentences)
- Make structure clearer (lists / shorter blocks)

Pairs rewrite the text in plain language: simpler words, shorter sentences, clear structure, friendly tone. They then test the new version by swapping roles or exchanging with another pair.

Step 3 – Group discussion (10 min)

Reflection questions:

- Which rule had the biggest impact?
- What was hardest to simplify?
- What did you remove or change first?
- Link with theory: Plain language supports dignity and equal access.
- Important conclusion: there is no one universal adaptation, there can be many of them.

It can be interesting to compare the adaptations between groups.



MINI TOOLKIT CREATION

Participants co-create a practical, plain language and universal design toolkit to use in their organisation.

Module 3 – Activity 3

Duration: 25 minutes

Activity type: Collaborative workshop

Working format: Small groups (3–5 people)



Learning objectives

- Produce practical tools for inclusive communication
- Apply plain language and universal design principles
- Transfer learning to real professional contexts



Materials & Resources Needed

- Flipchart paper or templates
- Markers or pens
- Example texts from participants' organisations (optional)



Success Indicators

- Each group produces a usable checklist and guidelines
- Tools are adapted to participants' real contexts
- Participants express confidence in reusing the toolkit





○→○→○ Step-by-step

Step 1 – Introduction (5 min)

- Objective: Explain that groups will create a tool to take back to their organisation.
- Trainer role: Clarify expected outputs.

Each group selects one concrete situation:

Website page, Email to users, Administrative document, Information leaflet, Registration process...

Step 2 – Main activity (15 min)

Each group creates:

- A 5-point plain language checklist
- A short list of do's and don'ts
- One adapted example (before/after)
- You can then put your creations here:
https://padlet.com/eva1360/thats_clear_workshop

Step 3 – Conclusion / Group discussion (X min)

- Groups briefly present their toolkit.
- Key points: Tools should be simple, reusable, and realistic.
- Link with theory: Universal design benefits everyone, not only specific groups.