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Examples of Writing Samples Before and After Plain Language [1]

Here are examples of how to revise text from complex language to plain language. Each example demonstrates how to simplify content to make it more accessible for individuals with cognitive disabilities.

Example 1: Medical Information

- **Before Plain Language:**
  "The patient is advised to adhere strictly to the prescribed regimen of medication, which involves taking two tablets of 500 mg each of the antibiotic every eight hours, with the consumption of food to mitigate potential gastrointestinal side effects. Non-compliance with this schedule could result in diminished therapeutic efficacy and possible exacerbation of the condition."
- **After Plain Language:**
  "Take two 500 mg tablets of the antibiotic every 8 hours. It's best to take them with food to avoid stomach problems. Follow this schedule closely to make sure the medicine works properly and helps you get better."

Example 2: Legal Instructions

- **Before Plain Language:**
  "In accordance with the stipulations set forth in the agreement, the party shall remit payment of the stipulated amount within thirty days subsequent to the receipt of the invoice. Failure to adhere to this timeline may result in penalties or interest charges as delineated in section 4.2 of the contract."
- **After Plain Language:**
  "You need to pay the amount shown on the invoice within 30 days. If you don't pay on time, you might have to pay extra fees, as explained in section 4.2 of the contract."

Example 3: Employment Policy

- **Before Plain Language:**
  "Employees are required to maintain a professional demeanor and to adhere to the company's dress code policy, which mandates business attire during work hours. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of employment."
- **After Plain Language:**
  "Employees should dress in business attire during work hours. If you don't follow this dress code, you might face disciplinary actions, which could include losing your job."

Example 4: Safety Instructions

- **Before Plain Language:**
  “To ensure optimal safety when operating machinery, it is imperative to don all required personal protective equipment (PPE) including safety goggles, gloves, and ear protection. Adherence to these safety protocols is mandatory to mitigate risks associated with machinery operation.”
- **After Plain Language:**
  “Always wear safety goggles, gloves, and ear protection when using the machinery. This will help keep you safe and is required for your protection.”

Example 5: Financial Statement

- **Before Plain Language:**
  “The balance statement reflects an outstanding liability of $2,345.67, which remains due as of the end of the fiscal quarter. The accrued interest on this amount, as specified in the terms of the loan agreement, will be calculated and applied to the balance on a monthly basis.”
- **After Plain Language:**
  “You owe $2,345.67, which was due at the end of the last quarter. Interest will be added to this amount each month as outlined in your loan agreement.”

Example 6: Instruction Manual

- **Before Plain Language:**
  “To operate the device, engage the power switch located on the rear panel of the unit. Subsequently, adjust the settings using the control dial situated on the front interface. Ensure that the device is calibrated according to the user manual to achieve optimal performance.”
- **After Plain Language:**
  “Turn on the device by flipping the switch on the back. Then, adjust the settings with the dial on the front. Follow the user manual to make sure the device is set up correctly for the best results.”

Example 7: Event Invitation

- **Before Plain Language:**
  “You are cordially invited to attend the annual gala, which will be held on the 15th of October at 7:00 PM at the Grand Ballroom. Kindly RSVP by the 1st of October to confirm your attendance and indicate any dietary restrictions or special accommodations required.”
- **After Plain Language:**
  “Join us for our annual gala on October 15 at 7:00 PM in the Grand Ballroom. Please let us know by October 1 if you’re coming and if you have any special dietary needs or accommodations.”

Example 8: Customer Service Email

- **Before Plain Language:**
  “We regret to inform you that your recent request for a refund has been declined due to non-compliance with the stipulated return policy. Please review the policy guidelines available on our website for further clarification and the necessary steps for potential appeal.”
- **After Plain Language:**
  “We’re sorry, but we can’t give you a refund because it doesn’t follow our return policy. Please check our website for details on the policy and how you might appeal this decision.”

Conclusion

These examples illustrate how transforming complex language into plain language can significantly improve clarity and accessibility. By using straightforward vocabulary, short sentences, and clear instructions, you can make information more understandable for everyone, particularly those with cognitive disabilities.

Groups audience:
Coleman Institute for Cognitive Disabilities

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