Simplify Language

Boulder Chamber

Communication skills to build trust, efficiency and access

www.simplifylanguage.com

Agenda and desired results

- Why simplify? Why is it challenging?
- Reduce writing by 20-80% without impacting precision or tone.
- Choose transparent language for different audiences.
- Organize written messages.
- Discuss risks and best practices of AI.

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Example

We believe that parks and recreation professionals are key to a fully integrated public health system and play a vital role in meeting the evolving health needs of their communities. They are uniquely positioned to create, in partnership with the community, public health leaders and other local organizations, upstream solutions that catalyze and transform their systems into holistic and people-centered community wellness hubs. In serving as community wellness hubs, parks and recreation connects community members to comprehensive programs, services and spaces that dismantle systemic barriers to health, especially for people of color and low-income communities, while investing in efforts that support and advance health and well-being holistically.

Parks and recreation professionals are essential for community health. They are uniquely positioned to partner with community members, health leaders, and local organizations to create wellness hubs that:

- **Provide programs, services, and spaces that improve health.**
- **Remove barriers to health, especially for people of color and low-income communities.**
- **Support overall well-being.**

When clear communication matters

- Marketing, recruitment, fundraising
- Relationships, collaboration
- Data collection
- Facilitating and presenting
- Trust, efficiency, productivity, inclusion, access, belonging

Why simplifying is challenging

What do people do when they don’t understand?

- **Pretend**
- **Misinterpret**
- **Feel shame, excluded, dumb**

Unlearning habits.

Time.

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Shift responsibility

Don’t ask “Do you understand?”

Try:

- I want to make sure I explained this well. Which part can I explain more clearly?
- This is confusing for many people. What questions do you have?

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Simplifying tips

1 Remove excess. Minimize fluff.

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- The orientation will take place on October 17th.
- In the event that your application is accepted, you will receive…
- We would like to extend an invitation for you to…
- You may be financially responsible to pay fees…
- The organization is dedicated to providing…
- In order for us to process your application in a timely fashion, please…
- If you have any questions or need further clarification, please don't hesitate to reach out to us anytime by calling 555-5555 or emailing lee@lee.org.

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Never start a sentence with

- We are reaching out today to let you know about…
- As you saw in my last email…
- Please note that…
- It should be noted that…
- As you may have heard…
- I want to inform you…
- In addition to…
- Not only do we…
- Please don’t hesitate to…
- This is a reminder to…
- We are excited to share that we are…

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2 Use simple words. Avoid jargon or define it.

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- collective impact
- systems change
- disseminate
- benchmarking

*Priority #1 is being understood!

- The Employee Survey is a biennial survey of employees.
- We included various stakeholders in our planning process.

3 Avoid words with different interpretations



He **passed out** at school.

- We don’t just meet **the bar**, we exceed **the bar**.
- I need to **bring everyone up to speed.**
- We need to **remove some red tape from** the process.
- This person will **field** communication from the public.
- You keep people **on their toes**!

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Simplify Language Checklist – Did I:

- ❑ Consider what my audience knows and needs to know?
- ❑ Remove excess?
- ❑ Provide too much or not enough detail?
- ❑ Read it aloud?
- ❑ Check for comprehension without asking “Do you understand”?
- ❑ Choose the efficient form of communication?
- ❑ Clearly define any unknown technical terms?
- ❑ Avoid words with multiple meanings?
- ❑ Put my purpose clear and at the beginning?
- ❑ Include white space and lists?
- ❑ Limit and define acronyms?
- ❑ End my sentence?

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Brevity is confidence.
Length is fear.

- from the book *Smart Brevity* by Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen, and Roy Schwartz

I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.

- Mark Twain or Blaise Pascal

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You have permission to be simple ☺.

Provide feedback and sign up for my newsletter here!



www.simplifylanguage.com

lee@simplifylanguage.com

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