List of plain English words and phrases

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Plain English (sometimes referred to more broadly as plain language) is a generic term for communicating in English that emphasizes clarity, brevity, and avoiding technical language—particularly relating to official government or business communication. It uses simple, familiar words instead of lengthy, formal words,[1] avoids jargon, prefers positive words to negative words,[2] and prefers strong verbs to be verbs.[3]

This is a list of plain English words and phrases and the more lengthy, formal words for which they are recommended as replacements in writing guides. The problem word is listed first; the plain English alternative follows.

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A

- above-mentioned, above-listed, before-mentioned, aforesaid – (omit)[4][5]
- abundance – enough, plenty, (or specific amount)[6]
- accede to – allow, agree to[6]
- accelerate – speed up[6]
- accommodation – room[7]
- accomplish – do[8]
- accorded – given[8]
- accordingly – thus, so[8][9]
- accrue – add, gain[8]
- accurate – right[8]
- acquiesce – agree[6]
- acquire – get[6]
- additional – extra[8][10][11]
- address – discuss[8]
- addressees – you[8]
- adjacent to – Next to[8]
- adjustment – change, alteration[6]
- admissible – allowed, accepted[6]
- advantageous – helpful[8]
- adversely impact on – hurt, set back[8]
- advise – tell[8][12]
- afford an opportunity – allow, let[8]
- aggregate – total[6]
- aircraft – airplane (USA) / aeroplane (UK)[8] ("Plane" can also mean "flat surface" and a woodworking tool; the word "airplane" avoids this confusion. The word "aircraft" can be used if you
need to specifically include balloons, blimps, gliders, etc.; it's the simplest word for the whole category of aerial vehicles.)

- alleviate – ease, reduce[^6]
- allocate – divide[^8]
- along the lines of – like, as in[^13]
- alternatively – or[^13]
- ameliorate – improve, help[^13]
- an absence of – no, none[^6]
- and particularly – particularly[^14]
- and/or – use either "and" or "or."[^8][^15]
- anticipate – expect[^8]
- a number of – some[^8]
- applicant – you[^16]
- application – use[^13]
- apparent – clear, plain[^8]
- apprehend – arrest[^17]
- appreciable – many[^8]
- appropriate – proper, right[^8]
- approximate – about[^8][^18]
- arrive onboard – arrive[^8]
- as a means of – to[^8]
- ascertain – find out, learn[^8]
- as per our telephone conversation of this date – as we discussed this afternoon[^19][^20]
- as prescribed by – in, under[^8]
- as far as ... is concerned – (omit)[^21][^22]
- as to– of, on, with, for, to, by, in, into[^23]
- as yet, as of yet – yet[^24]
- assist, assistance – help[^8][^25]
- at its discretion – can, may[^13]
- attain – meet[^8]
- attempt – try[^8]
- at the present time, at this time, at this point in time, at the moment – now[^8][^26][^27][^13]
- attributable to – because[^13]
- at your earliest convenience – as soon as you can[^28]
- authorize – allow, let[^29]

B

- basis, on a – (omit)[^30]
- be advised – (omit)[^8]
- because of the fact that – because, since[^31][^32]
- beg – ask[^33]
- belated – late[^34]
- beneficial – helpful, useful[^34]
- bestow – give, award[^34]
- by means of – by, with
- by reason of – because
- by virtue of – by, under
- beverage – drink

C

- capable of, am/is/are – can
- capability – ability
- case of, in the – (omit)
- caveat – warning
- cease – stop
- chauffeur – driver
- clearly, obviously – (omit)
- close proximity – near
- combat environment – combat
- combined – joint
- commence – Begin or start
- completely revoke – revoke
- comply with – follow
- complete – fill in
- component – part
- comprise – form
- conceal – hide
- concerning – about, on
- consensus, of opinion, consensus, general – consensus
- consequently – so
- consolidate – join, merge
- constitutes – is, forms, makes up
- contains – has
- convene – meet
- corridor – hall
- currently – (omit), now

D

- deem – believe, think
- delete – cut, drop
- demonstrate – prove, show
- depart – leave, go
- designate – choose, name
- desire – want, wish
- despite the fact that – although
- determine – decide, figure, find
- disclose – show
- different – After a number, this word is often unnecessary.
- discontinue – drop, stop
- disseminate – give, issue, pass, send
- does not have – lacks
- does not include – excludes, omits
- due to the fact that – because, since
- duly (authorized, signed) – (omit)
- during the period, during the time that – during, while

E

- each and every – (omit)
- early beginnings – beginnings, early days
- each...apiece – each
- economical – cheap
- effect modifications – make changes
- elect – chose, pick
- eliminate – cut, drop, end
- else but, else than – but
- elucidate – explain
- emphasize – stress
- employ – use
- enclosed please find – I have enclosed
- encounter – meet
- endeavor – try
- end (result, product) – omit
- enquiry – question
- ensure – make sure
- entitlement – right
- enumerate – count
- equally as – equally
- equipments – equipment
- equitable – fair
- equivalent – equal
- establish – set up, prove, show
- evaluate – test, check
- evidenced – showed
- evident – (omit), clear
- evince – show, prove
- excluding – except
- exclusively – only
- exhibit – show
- expedite – hurry
- expeditious – fast, quick
- expend – spend
- expertise – ability
- expiration – end

F

- facilitate – ease, help
- fauna – animals
- feasible – workable
- females – women
- finalize – complete, finish
- first(ly), second(ly), third(ly) – first, second, third
- first and foremost – first
- flora – plants
- following – after
- for a period of – for
- for example, ______ etc. – for example, such as
- forfeit – lose, give up
- formulate – plan
- for the purpose of, – to
- for the reason that, – to
- forward – send
- frequently – often
- function – act, role, work
- furnish – give, send

H

- has a duty to – must
- has a requirement for – needs
- herein, heretofore, herewith, thereof, wherefore, wherein – (omit)
- honest truth – truth
- however – but, yet

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I

- identical – same
- identify – find, name
- identify with – agree, understand
- if and when – use either word; not both
- immediately – at once
- impacted – affected, changed
- implement – carry out, start[^88]
- in accordance with – by, under[^8][^89][^90]
- in addition – also, besides, too[^8]
- in all likelihood – probably[^91]
- in an effort to – to[^8]
- inasmuch – since[^8][^92]
- in a timely manner – on time, promptly[^8]
- in between – between[^93]
- inception – start[^8]
- in connection with – with, about[^94]
- incumbent upon – must[^8]
- indicate – say, state, or show[^8][^93][^95]
- indication – sign[^8]
- individual – person[^96][^97]
- in excess of – more than[^98]
- in favor of – for[^99]
- initial – first[^8]
- initiate – start[^8]
- in lieu of – instead[^8]
- in light of the fact that – because[^100][^101][^102]
- in many cases – often[^103]
- in order that – for, so[^8]
- in order to – to[^8][^96][^104][^105]
- inquire – person[^106]
- in regard(s) to – about, concerning, on[^8][^107]
- in relation to – about, with, to[^8][^108]
- in some instances – sometimes[^109]
- inside of – inside[^110]
- institute legal proceedings against, bring action against – sue[^111]
- inter alia – (omit)[^8] or use "among others"[^110]
- interface – meet, work with[^8][^112]
- in terms of – (omit)[^110][^113]
- interpose no objection – don't object[^8]
- in the amount of – for[^8]
- in the case of – when[^114]
- in the event of – if[^8][^115][^116][^117]
- in the majority of instances – usually[^118]
- in the nature of – like[^119]
- in the near future – shortly, soon[^8]
- in the process of – (omit)[^8]
- in view of – since[^8]
- in view of the above – so[^8]
- regardless – regardless[^120][^121]
- is applicable to – applies to[^8]
- is authorized to – may[^8]
- is in consonance with – agrees with, follows[8]
- is responsible for – (omit) handles[8]
- it appears – seems[8]
- it is – (omit)[8]
- it is essential – must, need to[8]
- it is requested – please, we request, I request[8]
- it is important to add that, in this regard it is of significance that, it may be recalled that, it is interesting to point out that – (omit)[122]

L

- liaison – discussion[8]
- -ly (doubtless, fast, ill, much, seldom, thus) – (omit)[123]
- last will and testament – will[124]

M

- magnitude – size[8]
- maintain – keep, support[8]
- majority – most (except for voting)[125]
- make a mockery of – (omit)[126]
- make an attempt, make an effort – try[127]
- make reference to – refer[128]
- maximum – greatest, largest, most[8]
- mental attitude – attitude[129]
- merge – merge[130]
- methodology – method[8]
- minimize – decrease[8]
- minimum – least, smallest[8]
- modify – change[8]
- monitor – check, watch[8]
- month + of + year – March 2013[131]
- moreover – what's more[132]
- multiple – many[133]

N

- nature, of a – (omit)[134]
- necessitate – cause, need[8]
- nevertheless – still, besides, even so[135]
- notify – let know, tell[8]
- not able – unable[136]
- not accept – reject[137]
- not certain – uncertain[138]
- not unlike – similar, alike[139]
- not many – few
- not often – seldom, rarely
- not the same – different
- not...unless, not...except – only if
- not...until – only when
- not later than 10 May – by 10 May, before 11 May
- notwithstanding – in spite of, still
- now comes – (omit)
- null and void – use either "null" or "void"
- numerous – many

O

- objective – aim, goal
- obligate – bind, compel
- observe – see on a ________ basis (omit)
- obtain – get
- off of – off
- on request – if you ask
- on a daily basis – daily
- on a X basis – Xly (where X is an adjective)
- on the basis of – by, from
- on the contrary – but, so
- on the grounds that – (omit)
- on the other hand – (omit), but, so
- on the part of – by
- operate – run, use, work
- optimum – best, greatest, most
- option – choice, way
- orientate – orient
- ...out (calculate, cancel, distribute, segregate, separate) – omit
- outside of – outside
- overall (unless it means the garment) – (omit)
- oversight [v] – oversee
- owing to the fact that – because, since

P

- parameters – limits (except in mathematical and computer-programming uses)
- participate – take part
- particulars – details
- pass away – die
- per annum – a year
- perchance – perhaps
- perform – do
- permit – let
- pertaining to – about, of, on
- perspire – sweat
- peruse – read
- PIN number – PIN
- place – put
- portion – part
- possess – have, own
- point in time, particular point in time – time, point, now, moment
- potentiality – potential
- practicable – practical
- preclude – prevent
- preowned – used
- preliminary to, previous to, previously, prior to – before
- preparatory to – to prepare for
- prioritize – rank, set or make priorities
- proceed – do, go ahead, try
- procure – (omit)
- proficiency – skill
- promulgate – issue, publish
- provide – give, offer, say
- provided that – if
- provide guidance for – guide
- purchase – buy
- pursuant to – by, following, per, under, in response to, in carrying out, as required by

Q
- question as to whether, question of whether – question whether
- quite puzzling – baffling

R
- reason ... is because – because
- refer back – refer
- reflect – say, show
- regard as being – regard as
- regarding – about, of, on
- relative to – about, on
- relocate – move
- remain – stay
- remainder – rest
- remuneration – pay, payment
- render – give, make
- represents – is
- request – ask
- require – must, need
- requirement – need, rule
- reside, residence – live, house
- respectively – (omit)
- retain – keep
- retire – go to bed

S

- said, some, such, same – the, this, that
- selection – choice
- separate – After a number, this word is often unnecessary.
- set forth in – in
- shall – must
- should you wish – if you want
- similar to – like
- solicit – ask for, request
- state-of-the-art – latest
- strategize – plan
- subject – the, this, your
- submit – give, send
- subsequent, subsequently, subsequent to – later, next, after, then
- substantial – large, much
- successfully complete – complete, pass
- sufficient – enough

T

- take action to – (omit)
- terminate – end, stop
- than was formerly the case – now
- the month of – (omit)
- there are – (omit)
- therefore – thus, so
- therein – there
- there is – (omit)
- the undersigned – I
- the use of – (omit)
- this activity, command – us, we
- timely – prompt
- time period – (either one)
- to be violative of – violate
- took advantage of – preyed
- to wit – (omit)
- **transpire** (unless referring to plant transpiration) – happen[^224]
- **transmit** – send[^8][^225]
- **type** – (omit)[^8]

**U**
- **under the provisions of** – under[^8]
- **until such time as** – until[^8][^226]
- **utilize, utilization** – use[^8][^227][^228][^229]

**V**
- **validate** – confirm[^8]
- **variation** – change[^230]
- **various different** – "various" or "different"[^231]
- **very** – (omit)[^232]
- **very angry** – enraged[^233]
- **viable** – practical, workable[^8]

**W**
- **warrant** – call for, permit[^8]
- **we are in receipt of** – we've received[^234][^235]
- **whereas** – because, since[^8]
- **whether or not** – whether[^236] if
- **whosoever, whomsoever** – whoever, whomever[^237]
- **with a view to** – by, from[^238]
- **with reference to, with regard to** – about[^8][^239]
- **with respect to** – on, about[^240]
- **with the exception of** – except for[^8]
- **with the minimum of delay** – quickly (or say when)[^236]
- **witnessed** – saw[^8]

**Y**
- **you are requested** – please[^241]
- **your attention is drawn** – please see, please note[^241]
- **your office** – you[^8]

**Symbols**
- `/ (slash)` – and, or[^8]
See also

- Gobbledygook
- Jargon (buzzword)
- Jargon (corporate)
- Jargon (psychobabble)
- Jargon (technical)
- Jargon (technobabble)
- Legalese
- Linguistic prescription
- Nominalization
- Plain language
- Pleonasm
- Redundancy (linguistics)
- Verbosity

Notes

2. SEC 1998, p. 27.
5. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "lawyerism"
7. Garner 2009a, p. 371: "formal word"
9. Schiess, p. 1: "heavy connector"
10. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
11. Schiess, p. 1: "heavy connector"
12. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
16. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
17. Garner 2009a, p. 587: "officialese"
18. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
22. Wydick 1978, p. 733: "verbose"
25. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
27. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
31. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
32. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
33. Garner 2009b, p. 96: "commercialese"
34. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 6.
35. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
36. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
37. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
38. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
40. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
41. Garner 2009a, p. 155: "class distinction"
42. Wydick 1978, p. 755: "throat-clearing"
44. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
46. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
47. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
48. Garner 2009a, p. 371: "formal word"
50. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
51. Schiess, p. 1: "heavy connector"
52. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
53. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
54. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
55. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
56. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
57. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
58. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
60. Wydick 1978, p. 733: "verbose"
63. Garner 2009a, p. 287: "redundant"
64. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 11.
65. Garner 2009a, p. 300: "redundant"
66. SEC 1998, p. 31: "simpler synonym"
67. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "stuffy"
68. Garner 2002, p. 113: "deadwood"
69. Garner 2009b, p. 96: "commercialese"
70. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
71. Garner 2009a, p. 313: "redundant"
72. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
73. Garner 2009a, p. 313: "usually superfluous"
74. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "stuffy"
75. Garner 2002, p. 115: "a favorite word of jargonmongers"
77. Garner 2009a, p. 355: "cliché"
79. Wydick 1978, p. 733: "verbose"
80. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
81. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
82. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
83. Kimble 1998-2000, p. 113: "wordy"
84. Wydick 1978, p. 754: "adjective-adverb mania"
85. Schiess, pp. 1–2: "heavy connector"
89. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
90. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
91. Wydick 1978, p. 737: "verbose"
92. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
94. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
95. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
96. Garner 2002, p. 120.
97. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
98. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
100. Garner 2009b, p. 96: "commercialese"
101. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
102. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
103. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
104. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
105. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
106. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
107. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
108. Wydick 1978, p. 731: "compound preposition"
111. Garner 2009a, p. 587: "officialese"
114. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
115. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
116. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
118. Wydick 1978, p. 733: "verbose"
120. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
121. Garner 2009a, p. 570: "nonword"
123. Garner 2009a, p. 24: "nonword double adverbs"
124. Lebovitz 2008, p. 59: "redundant"
126. Garner 2009a, p. 522: "cliché"
127. Garner 2009a, p. 522: "redundant"
129. Garner 2009a, pp. 532–33: "redundant"
130. Garner 2009a, p. 533: "redundant"
131. Garner 2009a, p. 594: "superfluous"
132. Schiess, p. 2: "heavy connector"
133. Saffire 1997: "pompous, snooty"
135. Schiess, p. 2: "heavy connector"
136. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
137. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
138. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
139. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
140. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
141. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
142. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
143. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
144. SEC 1998, p. 27: "negative compound"
147. Butt 2006, p. 29: "jargon"
150. Wydick 1978, p. 737: "verbose"
151. Garner 2009b, p. 94: "officialese"
153. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
155. Schiess, p. 2: "heavy connector"
156. Garner 2009a, p. 594: "verbose"
158. Schiess, p. 2: "heavy connector"
161. Garner 2009a, p. 598: "redundant"
162. Garner 2009a, p. 600: "superfluous"
163. Garner 2009a, p. 601: "vogue word"
164. Garner 2009a, p. 602: "jargon"
165. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
166. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "verbose"
168. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
169. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
170. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
171. Garner 2009a, p. 618: "archaic"
172. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
173. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
175. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
176. Garner 2009a, p. 640: "clumsy phrase"
177. Garner 2009a, p. 648: "jargon"
178. Garner 2009a, p. 653: "euphemism"
180. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
181. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
182. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "compound preposition"
183. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
185. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
188. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
189. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 11: "word to avoid"
197. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 11: "word to avoid"
199. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
201. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
203. Garner 2009b, p. 96: "commercialese"
204. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "lawyerism"
205. Schiess 2003-2004, p. 56: "vague word"
206. Butt 2006, p. 29: "jargon"
209. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 11: "word to avoid"
210. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "officialese"
212. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
213. SEC 1998, p. 25: "superfluous"
215. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
216. SEC 1998, p. 31: "simpler synonym"
217. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 11: "word to avoid"
218. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "stuffy"
220. Schiess, p. 2: "heavy connector"
221. Garner 2009a, p. 845: "verbose"
222. Wydick 1978, p. 754: "adjective-adverb mania"
223. Lebovitz 2001, p. 56: "legalese"
224. Garner 2009b, p. 91: "genteelism"
225. Garner 2009a, p. 587: "officialese"
226. Wydick 1978, p. 733: "verbose"
227. SEC 1998, p. 31: "simpler synonym"
228. Garner 2009a, p. 587: "officialese"
229. Wydick 1978, p. 739: "stuffy"
231. Garner 2009a, p. 838: "redundant"
232. Garner 2009a, p. 842: "weasel word"
234. Garner 2009b, p. 96: "commercialese"
235. Plain English Campaign 2001, p. 10: "word to avoid"
238. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "compound preposition"
239. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "compound preposition"
240. Wydick 1978, p. 732: "compound preposition"

References


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