

# Department of the Interior

## Plain Writing Act Implementation – Questions and Answers

### 1. What is plain writing?

Plain writing is writing that your intended audience can understand with a single reading. A plain document is –

- Organized to put information at the front.
- Written in a clear and easy-to-understand style.
- Streamlined to include only information that the reader needs.

### 2. Where can I find information about plain writing?

The Plain Writing Act and the OMB implementation guidelines require us to use the Federal plain writing guidelines which are available online at [www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov).

### 3. How can I get training in plain writing?

DOI University will soon offer several levels of training in plain language:

- An 18-minute online overview of plain writing.
- A 35-minute online mini-course.
- Quarterly classroom training.
- Additional online training lessons on selected writing topics.

### 4. What do I have to do?

Write all documents covered by question 5 of this reference guide in plain language. For detailed guidance, see the OMB guidelines on implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010 available at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-15.pdf>

### 5. What documents does the Act cover?

The Act covers applications, instructions, reports, analyses, regulatory preambles, and other documents distributed to the public. For more specifics, see section C(4) of the OMB guidelines.

### 6. Are regulations covered?

While the Plain Writing Act does not cover regulations, three Executive Orders require us to write regulations clearly. The OMB guidelines also reinforce this requirement. (See section C(4).)

**7. Are regulatory preambles covered?**

Yes. The OMB guidelines specifically state that regulatory preambles are covered by the requirements of the Act. (See section C (4).)

**8. Are environmental compliance documents, endangered species analyses, and other technical documents covered?**

The OMB guidelines state that –

The Act also requires agencies to use plain writing in every paper or electronic letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction. When an agency prepares a specialized or technical publication, the agency should take into account the subject expertise of the intended audience.

Since the audience for compliance documents, analyses, and other technical documents includes the non-specialist public, authors should write these documents to be understandable to the interested non-expert and to meet the other criteria in question 1 of this document.

**9. Do we have to rewrite existing documents?**

While the Act doesn't require us to rewrite existing documents, it is a good idea to do this where possible.

**10. Where can I get more information about this initiative?**

Abundant information is available at [www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov). Your bureau regulatory contact or the Office of the Executive Secretariat and Regulatory Affairs (202-208-3181) can also provide more information.