



SOPPAT
SOLUTIONS TO PREVENT PATERNALIST
APPROACH TOWARDS NEETS



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European standards for making information easy to read and understand

Standards are a list of rules which help people to do things in the same way and in the right way.

■ What are these standards about?

These standards are to help people make their information easy to read and understand.

Adult education is also called lifelong learning.

Lifelong learning programmes are courses where adults can learn new things.

At the moment, lifelong learning programmes are often hard for people with intellectual disabilities to take part in.

The aim of this project is to make digital programmes easier for people with intellectual disabilities to use it.



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■ Who can use the standards?

Anyone who wants to make information easy to read and understand can use the standards.

However, some of the standards can be hard to understand.

So people with intellectual disabilities might need the help of a support person when they read them for the first time.

These standards were made to make information easy for people with intellectual disabilities to understand.

But these standards can also be useful to make information easy for many other people to understand.

For example:

- ☒ people who do not have English as a first language
- ☒ people who find it difficult to read.



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■ Why do we need these standards?

People with intellectual disabilities are just like everyone else. They can do a lot in life if they get the right support. People with intellectual disabilities can find it harder to understand things and to learn new things. So it is important for people with intellectual disabilities to have information that is as clear and as easy to understand as possible.

Like everyone else, people with intellectual disabilities have a right to good information.

This is written in the Convention of the United Nations which is about the rights of disabled people.

In its article 9, this Convention says that people with disabilities have to receive accessible information.

Good information helps people find out what they need to know.

It helps them to make their own choices and decisions.

If people with intellectual disabilities do not get good information, they will be left out. They will not be able to join in with things happening around them. And they will have to wait for other people to make choices and decisions for them.



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■ Why do we need these standards?

To make good information means making information easy to read and understand.

To do this well, you have to follow standards.

Standards are a list of advice which help people to do things in the same way and in the right way.

You should always think about the standards in this booklet when you want to make information easy to read and understand.

These standards will tell you how to make information easy to understand, whatever the format of information you are making.



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There are 4 different formats of information:

1. Written information:

These are things like leaflets, brochures and reports.

2. Electronic information:

This is written information on computers,
for example information on websites or on CD-rom.

3. Audio information:

This is information you can listen to,
for example on a CD or on the radio.

4. Videos you can watch on TV or on a computer.

These standards are for people who want to make information easy to read and understand.

It is also important to make stories or poetry easy to read and understand.



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General standards for easy to understand information

Before you start producing your information

1. Always find out as much as you can about the people who will use your information and about their needs.
2. Choose the best format for your information.
For example, information on a CD or DVD may be better for some people than written information.
3. Always use the right language for the people your information is for.
For example, do not use language for children when your information is for adults.
4. Remember that the people who will use your information might not know much about your subject.
Make sure you explain the subject clearly and also explain any difficult words to do with that subject.
5. Always involve people with intellectual disabilities when making your information.
For example, they can take part in making decisions
 - ☒ about the subject
 - ☒ about what to say on a subject
 - ☒ and about where to make the information available.They can also take part in checking the information to see how easy it is to understand.



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■ Words

6. Use easy to understand words that people will know well.
7. Do not use difficult words.
If you need to use difficult words, make sure you always explain them clearly.
8. Use examples to explain things.
Try to use examples that people will know from their everyday lives.
9. Use the same word to describe the same thing throughout your document.
10. Do not use difficult ideas such as metaphors.
A metaphor is a sentence that does not actually mean what it says.
An example of a metaphor is “it is raining cats and dogs”.
11. Do not use words from other languages unless they are very well known like the French word “voilà” in the English language.
12. Avoid using initials.
Use the word in full where possible.
Initials are the first letter of every word.
If you have to use initials, explain them.
For example, if you write “EU”, explain that it stands for “the European Union”.
13. Percentages (63%) and big numbers (1,758,625) are hard to understand.
Try not to use percentages and big numbers.
Instead, use words like “few” and “many” to explain what you mean.



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■ Sentences

14. Always keep your sentences short.
15. Speak to people directly.
Use words like “you” to do this.
16. Use positive sentences rather than negative ones where possible.
For example, say
“You should stay until the end of the meeting”
rather than
“You should not leave before the end of the meeting”.
17. Use active language rather than passive language where possible.
For example, say “The doctor will send you a letter”
not “you will be sent a letter”.

■ How to order your information

18. Always put your information in an order that is easy to understand and follow.
19. Group all information about the same topic together.
20. It is OK to repeat important information.
It is OK to explain difficult words more than once.



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■ Note:

Written information that is easy for people with intellectual disabilities to understand is often called “easy-to-read” information.

When you are preparing written information, use the 20 standards in section 1 as well as the following standards

■ Design and format

1. Use a format that is easy to read, follow and photocopy.

For example, A4 or A5.

2. Think about the size of your document.

A book of 100 pages is too long.

People could feel they are not able to read such a long book.

In this case, it would be better to write 3 smaller booklets.

3. Never use a design or layout that will make your document hard for people to read and understand.

The most important thing is that your document is easy for people with intellectual disabilities to understand.

4. Never use a background that makes it difficult to read the text.

For example, never use a picture or a pattern as a background.

Be careful when using a dark background.

When you do that, make sure the background is dark enough and the writing clear enough for you to read it.



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■ Writing

5. Always use a font that is clear and easy to read.

A font is a type of writing.

For example **Arial or Tahoma** are clear and easy to read fonts.

This means you should

Never use serif fonts.

These fonts are harder to read because the shape of the letters is not as clear.

Here is an examples

d serif font

d sans-serif font

Here are some examples of fonts that are harder to read

Century is not easy to read

Times new roman is not easy to read.



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■ Writing

☒ Never use writing that is too close together.

Example: Gill 14 condensed shrift.

This is not easy to read because it is too close together.

Arial 14 with character spacing at 70%.

This is not easy to read.

Text with line spacing set at multiple 0.8pt.

This is not easy to read.

☒ Never use writing that is too light and does not print off well.

Example: This is Eras 14 Light.

This is not easy to read because it is too light.

☒ Never use italics.

Example: *This text is in italics.*

It is not easy to read.

☒ Never use a special writing design.

Example:

It is not easy to read.

This is outlined text.

It is not easy to read. A A A A

6. Always use large writing.

You should use writing which is at least the size of **Arial 14**.

7. Do not write whole words in capitals.

Lower case letters are easier to read.

8. Try to use only 1 type of writing in your text.



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■ Writing

9. Underlining can make the text harder for some people with intellectual disabilities to read.

Use underlining with caution.

10. Where possible, **avoid writing in colour** because:

☒ some people cannot tell the difference between colours.

☒ people might need to photocopy your document in black and  white.

Then the colours would not come out clearly.

☒ Some colours do not stand out well against certain backgrounds.

For example yellow writing on white paper is not easy to see.

■ Words

11. Do not use difficult words.

If you need to use difficult words, make sure you always explain them clearly.

Where possible, explain the words at the time you are using them. In written documents, you could also have a list of useful words at the end of the document.



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■ Words

12. Be careful when you use pronouns.

Pronouns are words like “I”, “him” or “it” that you use instead of the actual person or thing you are talking about.

Make sure it is always clear who or what the pronoun is talking about.

If it is not clear then use the proper name instead.

13. Never use footnotes.

A footnote is when you explain something at the bottom of the page instead of explaining it in the text.

Example:

Do not write “Peter Smith¹ spoke at the meeting.”

Write

“Peter Smith is the president of a self-advocacy organisation.

Peter Smith spoke at the meeting.”

14. Keep the punctuation simple.

For example, do not write

Yesterday, I bought a green/yellow bike (a new one!)

for my son - whose name is Michael.

Instead, write

My son’s name is Michael.

Yesterday, I bought a new bike for him.

The new bike is green and yellow.

15. Avoid all special characters where possible, like \, &, <, § or #.

16. Avoid all abbreviations like “e.g.” or “etc.”



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■ Sentences

17. Always start a new sentence on a new line.

18. Never split 1 word over 2 lines.

This means never use a hyphen (-) to split a word over 2 lines.

19. Keep your sentences short.

You could do this by

☒ writing only 1 idea per sentence

☒ using a full stop before starting a new idea, instead of using a comma or an “and”.

Where possible, 1 sentence should fit on 1 line.

If you have to write 1 sentence on 2 lines, cut the sentence where people would pause when reading out loud.

Example:

Write:

The way this sentence is cut
is easy to read.

Do not write:

The way this sentence is
cut is not as easy to read.



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■ Writing text

20. Use headings that are clear and easy to understand.

Headings should tell you what the text underneath is about.

21. Always make sure you give people all the information they need.

Make sure it is clear who the information is for and what it is about.

22. Do not give people more information than they need to understand your point.

Only give them the important information.

23. Make sure the important information is easy to find.

To do this, you could:

- ☒ put this information at the beginning of the document
- ☒ highlight the important information in bold
- ☒ or put the important information in a box.

24. Try not to use too many layers of subtitles or bullet points.

25. Graphs and tables can be very hard to understand.

But they can sometimes explain things better than in writing.

When you use graphs or tables, make them simple and explain them well.

For example:

Mr Smith works most of the time on his computer.

He also gives people training

and makes easy-to-read information.

But this takes him less time than his computer work.

Finally, Mr Smith also goes to conferences.

But this is what takes him the smallest amount of time.



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■ What your text should look like

26. Use bullet points to list things.

A list of words separated by commas is not easy to read.

27. Do not write in columns.

28. Align your text to the left of the page.

Never justify your text.

Justified text has big gaps between words
and is harder to read.

Example:

This text is aligned to the left.

It is easy to read

because the spaces between the words are all the same.

This text is justified and it is
not as easy to read because
there are big gaps between
the words.

29. Do not put too much text on your page.

30. Leave space between paragraphs.

31. Do not indent your text.

This means that the first line of each paragraph should be aligned with the rest of the text.

32. Try to avoid narrow margins.

Margins are the spaces between the words and the edges of the page.

Where possible, keep all margins big enough
so that your page does not look too cramped.

33. Where possible, number the pages of your document.

In the case of documents for meetings, write “page 2 out of 4”. 16

This will help people know they have all the pages.



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■ Images

34. Many people find it hard to read text.

To help them understand your text,
you should put images next to it to describe what it is about.
Images are things like
☒ photographs,
☒ drawings,
☒ or symbols.

35. To illustrate your text, you can use

☒ photographs,
☒ drawings,
☒ or symbols.

Where possible, try to use the same style of images throughout your document.

36. Always use images that are good and right for the people you are writing for.

For example, never use images for children when you are writing for adults.



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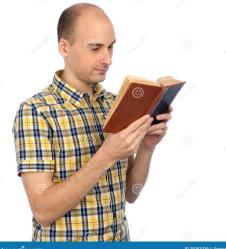
■ Images

37. Always choose images that are clear, easy to understand and go well with the piece of text they are helping to explain.

For example, make sure photographs are clear and do not have too many things in them to look at.

Example:

This is a clear photograph of a man reading a book.



This picture is not as clear because there are too many things in the photograph to look at.



38. Use the same image to explain the same thing throughout your document.

39. There are many ways to use images.

For example,
you can put 1 or 2 illustrations next to a paragraph to help explain what the text is about.



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■ How to show people it is an easy-to-read document

40. Put an easy-to-read symbol on the cover page of your easy-to-read document. This will help people see that it is an easy-to-read document. There is a European easy-to-read logo that you can use. It looks like this



You can download this logo at www.inclusion-europe.org/etr

■ Standards for the English language

41. Be careful with numbers like “7th” meeting. It might be hard for some people to understand. You could write something like

“The meeting we have had 6 times before”.

42. Be careful with numbers:

☒ Write numbers as digits, not as words.

This means you should write numbers as 1, 2, not one, two.

☒ Never use Roman numerals like V, X or XVI

43. Where possible, use the present tense rather than the past tense.



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■ How to show people it is an easy-to-read document

44. Avoid words like doesn't, wasn't, couldn't.
Write the words out in full instead.
For example does not, was not, could not.

45. Where possible, write dates out in full.
For example: Tuesday 13 October 2008.
Do not write 13/10/2008
or 13th October.