Plain Writing Checklist

(adapted from the Office of Personnel Management's Plain Language Implementation Plan*)*

Have you …

- Written for the average reader within your intended audience?

- Organized the document to serve your reader's needs and answer your reader's questions?

- Included useful headings to guide your reader?

- Used numbered lists, bulleted lists, or tables to present complex materials?

- Used active voice?

- Written to one person at a time rather than a group?

- Used "you" and other pronouns?

- Used "must" instead of "shall" or "will" to indicate requirements, policy, or law?

- Used the simplest tense possible?

- Defined and used words consistently?

- Eliminated unnecessary and obsolete words?

- Avoided confusing words and phrases?

- Avoided technical jargon and bureaucratese?

- Limited your use of acronyms?

- Clarified ambiguities?

- Placed words carefully in each sentence?

- Used verbs instead of nouns?

- Created short, concise sentences, paragraphs, and sections (covered only one topic in each sentence and paragraph)?

- Made your questions and responses neither shorter nor longer than necessary?

- Hyperlinked to rather than repeated text from other documents or resources?