



PLAIN LANGUAGE CHECKLIST

It is important to remember that community organizations in the NWT deal with a number of researchers working in a range of fields, each using its own technical language. Information provided to NWT communities needs to be written in language that can be easily translated into any of the region's eleven official languages. Using plain language, therefore, is key for effective communication with communities.

Use the following checklist to review any publications before they are circulated.

Your document should:

Use an introduction to clearly show the purpose and organization of the document. Clarify how results link to original questions.

Include only essential information; leave out the extras.

Be organized into short sections with clear headings and subheadings.

Put the most important information at the beginning of the document and each section.

Write short paragraphs. Use short sentences with 20 words or less; each with just one idea. Use bullet lists where appropriate.

Include white space between paragraphs and sections.

Use short, simple, clear words; common words with no jargon. Define or leave out technical terms; define acronyms.

Use active voice and positive tone. Respect gender, culture, and other differences.

Use a narrative approach to tell a story.

Limit the use of tables and statistics. Use comparison, real-world measures and examples.

Include maps, photos, and other graphics to help people understand information.

Use at least 12 point, minimum 9 point serif font for body text in written materials and sans serif for online publications. Use contrasting font (sans serif) for headings and subheadings.

Be translated, if appropriate. For a map of linguistic regions please see:
http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/publications/024-Official_Languages_Map-web.pdf

Be reviewed with a community partner and acknowledge participation of northern contributors.

For more information and resources about using plain language, see the ARI and NWT Literacy Council websites: www.nwtresearch.com www.nwt.literacy.ca/Plain%20Language

