

## Clear Design: formatting for ease of reading

These guidelines take plain language considerations to the level of page layout and text formatting. They are part of a strategy to consider readability as part of clear communication.

### Summary of page set up for your documents

#### Headings

Choose one clear font for headings, another for text body. This document uses Arial for headings. First level headings are 18 points, followed by 16 points and 14 points. Do not underline, italicize, bold or centre the headings. Use upper and lower-case text for headings.

#### Text size and margins

The default text size for the body of the document is 12 points. This example uses Times Roman for the body text. Line spacing is set to 14 points. or 1.15 spacing. All text should be flush left with a ragged right margin. Do not hyphenate words. Margins should be at least one inch all around.

#### Headers and footers

Page numbers should be in the footer, (bottom outside) this example is Helvetica 12-point text. Title, section information or other identifiers should be inconspicuously set in the footer, .5 inches from the bottom edge. Use a sans serif font like Helvetica for the footer, in 10 or 11-point text. Footnotes, if used, are set above the footer, in for example, Times Roman 12 text.

#### White space and graphic elements

Use white space generously in the page layout. These blank areas make the page, and the document, easier to read. Do not use lines, boxes or blocks of colour to enclose text or graphics. Use white space instead. Do not put a line between columns of text. Leave the space, called a gutter margin, empty.

Choose graphic elements that let the words dominate. Do not wrap text around a graphic.

Choose a simple circle (●) to set off a displayed list, matching the symbol to the text font size.

## Clear Language and Design Quick Reference

### Tip 1: Organize Information

- Put the most important first.
- Group information by main points.
- Use headings and subheadings.

### Tip 2: Make it short

- Use only necessary words.
- Write only necessary information.

### Tip 3: Make it easy to find information

- Leave lots of white space.
- Use bullets and numbered lists.
- Present information in tables, lists, flowcharts, pictures and graphics.

### Tip 4: Choose a layout that is easy to read

- Set flush left margins and ragged right margins.
- Keep your text font size 12 point for text, more for headings.
- Chose upper and lower-case letters.

### Tip 5: Make it clear and direct.

- State information directly.
- Use “you” and “we” sentences.
- Chose photos or graphics that make meanings clear.

### Tip 6: Write simple sentences

- Use active verbs.
- Use short sentences. Each sentence should have one main idea.

### Tip 7: Use everyday words

- Choose common, familiar words.
- Avoid acronyms, jargon, idioms and technical terms. If you must use them, spell out acronyms. Explain jargon in everyday words.