

UK Easy Read Standards

Version 3

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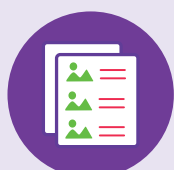
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What Easy Read is

Easy Read:

- Is a type of accessible communication used widely in the UK.
- Uses simple language, pictures, and a clear layout.
- Was originally designed with and for people with a learning disability.
- Is also used by many other people.
- Is written by lots of different people and organisations in the UK.



Why we need Easy Read Standards

These standards are a way to:

- Share ideas from all the good Easy Read work that is already going on in the UK.
- Make sure that all Easy Read in the UK is high quality and useful for its readers.
- Help make sure that new Easy Read writers can write Easy Read in a way that we know works well.



About the UK Easy Read Standards

- The standards come from the experience of people in the Working Group, who are from many different organisations and contexts. All these people and organisations work with people who need or prefer Easy Read.
- The standards aim to represent the most usual way of doing things when writing Easy Read in the UK.
- Easy Read writers need to make decisions that are right for their readers – this means that writers need to work closely with readers.
- In this document, we call Easy Read readers ‘Easy Read users’.
- The UK Easy Read Standards were developed and tested with Easy Read users.



About the UK Easy Read Standards Working Group

We are a group of over 60 people across the UK, from over 30 organisations. The group includes:



- Easy Read users.
- Easy Read writers.
- Easy Read designers.
- Organisations that work with Easy Read users.
- Organisations that write and publish Easy Read.

Every group member works in some way with Easy Read users, or is an Easy Read user themselves.

Part 1: Words

1.1 Use easy words that most people will know well.

☐ Register as an official member.

☒ Tell us you want to join.

☐ We have received a lot of responses.

☒ We got a lot of answers.

☐ We will give you all the relevant information.

☒ We will tell you everything you need to know.

☐ You can request a hard copy of this form from reception.

☒ Ask for a paper form at the front desk.



Easy Read users tell us that words we use when talking in everyday life are easier to understand.

1.2 Use examples from real life.

- ☐ Tell us about your education.
- ☒ **Tell us about the classes you had at college.**
- ☐ We want to know how you use public transport.
- ☒ **We want to know why you use buses and trains.**



Easy Read users tell us that stories and people make the information more real and easier to understand.

Use examples that your audience will be familiar with like catching a bus rather than driving a car (if they are bus users and not drivers).

1.3 Try not to use jargon.

Jargon is special words that people use in their work, that most people do not understand.

 Please disembark from the front door of the aircraft.

 **Leave the plane using the door at the front.**

 You have been diagnosed with hypertension.

 **You have high blood pressure.**



Easy Read users tell us that everyday words are easier to understand.

1.4 Sometimes you need to use jargon in Easy Read.

Jargon is special words that people use in their work, that most people do not understand.

But sometimes we need to use jargon in Easy Read. This is because readers need to understand things like:

- Money.
- Illness and medical treatment.
- Voting.
- Laws.

It can be hard to understand things like these without using jargon.

So Easy Read writers have to use jargon in a way that is easy to understand.

 Cast your vote at the polling station on Tuesday 4 July.

 Go to the **polling station** on Tuesday 4 July.

A **polling station** is a building where local people go to vote.



Easy Read users tell us that it is important to be able to understand and use jargon when making choices about their lives and taking action.

1.5 Use bold for the tricky word and use it again for the definition. Do not use bold for that same word in the rest of the document.

 You can ask for a receipt.

A receipt is a piece of paper that shows what you bought and how much it cost.

 You can ask for a **receipt**.

A **receipt** is a piece of paper that shows what you bought and how much it cost.



Easy Read users tell us that bold helps them to understand a new or tricky word. If the word is not bold, the definition can feel disconnected.

This can interrupt the flow of the information.

1.6 You can choose to include a difficult words list.

If you want to, you can also include a short ‘what the words mean’ list in the document.

This list has to be as well as the definitions inside the document.

You do not have to include this list. You need to check with your readers to see if they find this kind of list helpful.

See **section 4.5** of these standards for information about where the list should be.

1.7 Use the word **you** to mean the reader.

☐ Participants need to arrive at 12.30pm.

☒ **You need to arrive at 12.30pm.**

☐ Members can use the lockers for free.

☒ **If you are a member, you can use the lockers for free.**



Easy Read users tell us that this helps them understand how the document links to their everyday life.

1.8 Use the same words to talk about the same thing.

-  Loud noises can be unpleasant. Some people avoid these. We will try to reduce the volume of the machines in our company.
-  **Loud noises can upset people. Some people do not go to a place if there are loud noises. We will try to have less places with loud noises.**
-  We went to meet the staff team. The members of staff told us how they did their jobs. At the end of the day we said goodbye to the group of employees.
-  **We went to meet the staff team. The staff team told us how they did their jobs. At the end of the day we said goodbye to the staff team.**



Easy Read users tell us that using the same words again makes it clear when you are talking about the same thing.

1.9 Write numbers 1 to 999 as figures, not words.

 We will walk eight kilometres.

 **We will walk 8 kilometres.**

 There were thirty-five people at the meeting.

 **There were 35 people at the meeting.**



Easy Read users tell us that this makes the number stand out in the text.

It is more clear what the number means.

1.10 Write numbers over 1 thousand with mixed figures and words.

 There are 4000000 fish.

 There are 4 million fish.

 The moon is 384000 kilometres from Earth.

 The moon is 384 thousand kilometres from Earth.



Easy Read users tell us that too many figures all together are difficult to read.

Some Easy Read users can read long numbers, so it can be useful to have the long number in the picture.

1.11 Write about money using the word for the currency. Do not use a currency symbol in the words of your Easy Read. Use the currency symbol in the picture of your Easy Read.



£35.50



35 pounds 50 pence



\$170



1 hundred and 70 dollars



Some Easy Read users tell us that money is easier to read when there are no currency symbols, which can be confusing.

Some Easy Read users find it useful to see the currency sign in the picture.

1.12 Write about time using the 12-hour clock, not the 24-hour clock.

☐ 13.30

☒ 1.30pm

☒ 1:30 in the afternoon

☐ 07.15

☒ 7.15am

☒ 7.15 in the morning

☐ 17.00

☒ 5pm

☒ 5 in the evening

☐ 12.00

☒ 12 midday

☒ 12 lunchtime

☐ 00.00

☒ Midnight



Easy Read users tell us that the 12-hour clock is easiest to understand and words like **noon** and **midnight** are helpful.

Some people find words like:

- 10 in the morning
- 4 in the afternoon
- 8 in the evening

easier than 10am or 4pm or 8pm.

1.13 Writing about dates.

Put the date in plain digits, not as an ordinal number with -st, or -th.

Write the full name of the month, with no abbreviations.

Put the year in digits, as you usually would in other types of writing.

Do not abbreviate the year.

Include the day of the week, when writing about dates in the future.
Do not abbreviate the name of the day.

 6th Sept. '94

 **6 September 1994**

 Thurs. 24/09/26

 **Thursday 24 September 2026**



Easy Read users tell us that dates can be harder to read when they have ordinal suffixes (like **st**, **th**, **nd** or **rd**) or when they use **/**.

1.14 Sometimes the exact number is important to know. But there may be other times when it doesn't really matter.

- ☐ There were 15297 people at the football match.
- ☒ There were over 15 thousand people at the football match.
- ☒ There were lots of people at the football match.
- ☒ Nearly all the seats at the football match were full.



Easy Read users tell us that information is easiest to understand when it is written in a chatty style which suits each particular Easy Read document.

1.15 Do not use percentages.

☒ 10%

☒ 1 in 10 people we asked

☒ 1 in every 10 people

☒ 50%

☒ Half the people we asked

☒ Half of all people

☒ 95%

☒ Nearly everyone we asked

☒ Nearly all the people we asked

☒ Almost all people

1.16 Use big numbers in addresses and phone numbers.

 **Address:** 1276 Shaw Road
Glasgow
G1 1AZ

Phone: 01632 960824

Mobile: 07700 901925

Part 2: Sentences

2.1 Groups of things can be listed with bullet points.

 You can get here by walking, car, bus, tram or taxi.

 You can get here by:

- walking
- car
- bus
- tram
- taxi



Easy Read users tell us that bullet points make it easier to read and understand when there are several things. But a few Easy Read users report that bullet points can sometimes be confusing, especially if they are an unusual shape or colour.

Make sure to check with your Easy Read users if you can.

2.2 Write short sentences with simple punctuation. Leave out trickier punctuation.

Avoid these:

Brackets	()
Exclamation mark	!
Semicolon	;
Speech marks	“”
Percentage	%
Apostrophe for contraction	can't, hasn't

 10% of the people we asked said they couldn't get the information they needed!

 1 out of every 10 people we asked said they could not get the information they needed.



Exclamation marks to show excitement or emotion can be hard to understand.

 Mostly use these:

Full stop

•

Question mark

?

Only use a question mark when the reader needs to give an answer to a question.

So you will use question marks in surveys and other documents where the reader has to type or write or speak an answer straight away:

**How will I get
my ticket?** 



Do not use a question as a heading in a document.

This is an example of a question the reader does not have to answer.

This is confusing for the reader.

**How you will
get your ticket** 



Re-write the question as a statement.

This tells the reader what this page is about.

 Sometimes use these:

Comma

,

Hyphen

-

Colon before bullet lists

:

Apostrophe to show possession

dog's lead, people's choice



Easy Read users tell us that more complex punctuation makes Easy Read documents harder to read and understand.

2.3 Use the active voice.

Subject + verb + object.

Someone doing something.

 The form will be brought to you by a nurse.

 A nurse will bring you the form.



Easy Read users tell us it is easier to understand things when they are written in the active voice.

2.4 Use short sentences.

Have 1 idea in each sentence.

Most Easy Read sentences have up to 15 words.

Many Easy Read sentences are shorter than 15 words.



This letter is to tell you that the price of your gym membership is going up from 1 December 2025.



This letter is about your gym membership.

The price of your membership is going up.

This change will happen on 1 December 2025.



Easy Read users tell us that shorter sentences make the information easier to follow.

2.5 Start each sentence on a new line.

 This letter is about your gym membership. The price of your membership is going up. This change will happen on 1 December 2025.

 This letter is about your gym membership.
The price of your membership is going up.
This change will happen on 1 December 2025.



Easy Read users tell us that using new lines makes the information easier to follow.

2.6 Use descriptive web links

There are different ways of including website addresses in Easy Read documents.

In an **online document** you can use a link the reader can click:

- They should be placed within descriptive link text, never use generic link text like 'click here' or 'read more'.
- They should stand out from the body text – [most hyperlinks are blue and underlined](#). This makes them instantly recognisable as hyperlinks, most people understand you can click on blue, underlined text, without needing to read the link text.
- However, many Easy Read users find hyperlinks difficult to understand. Underlining is avoided in Easy Read as it makes the text harder to read. You can use **blue and bold** if you want to avoid underlining.

In a **paper document** you can type the full link. This shows the reader what they need to type into their device to get to the right website:

- You do not need to include <https://www>.
- Use a link shortener if the URL is very long or if the text contains random letters, numbers, or characters. A link shortener is an online tool that turns long web addresses into short links.

You need to talk to your readers about what kind of website addresses they need.

2.7 Advice on QR codes

If you use QR codes:

- Make sure there is writing that explains where the QR code links to.
- Make sure the QR code is big enough to be used easily. Some people find it hard to get their phone to focus on a small QR code.
- Consider using [Navilens accessible QR codes](#), which some people find easier to use.

Part 3: Easy Read text

3.1 Text should be left aligned.



You can ask for a **receipt**.
A **receipt** is a piece of paper showing
what you bought and how much it cost.



You can ask for a **receipt**.
A **receipt** is a piece of paper showing what
you bought and how much it cost.



Easy Read users tell us that text is easier to follow when it starts in the same place on each line.

3.2 Text should be in a sans-serif font.

 Avoid fancy or serif fonts:

Times New Roman	Easy Read
Georgia	Easy Read
Courier New	Easy Read

 Use plainer sans-serif fonts:

FS Me	Easy Read
Arial	Easy Read
Tenorite	Easy Read
Helvetica	Easy Read



Easy Read users tell us that the extra flicks and lines in serif fonts make it harder to read the words.

3.3 Use the same font throughout the document.



You can ask for a **receipt**.

A **receipt** is a piece of paper showing what you bought and how much it cost.



You can ask for a receipt.

A receipt is a piece of paper showing what you bought and how much it cost.



Easy Read users tell us that when fonts change in a document it can be confusing.

3.4 Body text should usually be 18 point.

 Text should be at least 16 point.

 14 point or less is too small.



Easy Read users tell us that anything above 28 point becomes too big and hard to read.

Be mindful that too large a font makes the document longer.

18 point in one font might be smaller than the same size in another font.

Easy Read is different to the Large Print format.

3.5 There should be a size difference between the main text and the headings.

At least a 4 point difference is recommended.

This means:

- Main text 18 point
- Subheadings 22 point
- Main title 26 point



Easy Read users tell us that texts are easier to understand when there are clear differences between headings and main text.

3.6 Text should be plain and clear.

 Avoid:

- Underlining
- *Italics*
- **Shadowing**
- CAPITAL LETTERS

 Use lower case letters



Easy Read users tell us that lower case letters are easier to read.

Part 4: The whole Easy Read document

4.1 Document pages should be A4.

If you want to have document printed in A5 you need to set your page up and design it in an A5 document.



Easy Read users tell us that sometimes they prefer paper copies of documents, so using the A4 size is helpful.

4.2 Use black text on a white background.

This means that Easy Read users can change the background colour easily if they need to.

They can change the background colour by:

- Printing on coloured paper.
- Printing on white paper and using a physical **overlay**.
- Reading on a screen that uses an electronic **overlay**.

An **overlay** is a coloured see-through thing that goes over the document. The overlay changes the colour of the white background, but does not change the colour of the black writing.

Overlays come in different colours, to help different people see and understand the writing.

If you do set any colour behind the text, this can be an issue for people who want to print on a particular colour paper.

People who use a pen reader tell us that having a strong colour behind the text can stop the pen from working properly.



Some Easy Read users tell us they like to print on yellow paper because they have a sight impairment.

Other users prefer to use different colours because they have dyslexia.

As writers we cannot know what colour readers need or prefer – so we must use a white background.



Text should stand out on the page.

If you use a coloured background, you must test the accessibility of the colour contrast using accessibility guidelines like WCAG or other guidelines in your area of work.



There should be nothing behind the text on the page - for example an image, a logo or a watermark.

4.3 Each page should be numbered.



Easy Read users tell us that some people find page numbers useful and other people do not find page numbers useful.

But so far nobody has reported that page numbers get in the way of understanding.

So it is good practice to include page numbers for readers who do find them helpful.

4.4 The document should be as short as possible

Most Easy Read documents are 20 pages or less. Longer documents can be split into additional booklets.

If you need to write a longer document, you must test it with Easy Read users as you are writing it, to make sure it is not too long



Easy Read users tell us that long documents can be confusing, overwhelming and stressful.

4.5 If there is a difficult words list, this should be at the beginning or end of the document.

It should be kept to one page, if possible.



Easy Read users tell us that some people need and like a difficult words list.

Other people do not like or need a difficult words list.

So far, no users have told us that a difficult words list causes problems.

4.6 Pictures should be on the left of the text.



There should be plenty of room between the margin and the text for a picture.

There should be space between the picture and the text.



Easy Read users tell us they are used to seeing the picture first, and then the text.

This layout helps them to navigate each Easy Read document.

“ I like it when the picture matches all the text. I get confused when the text goes above or below the picture. It is not clear then if it goes with the bit above or the bit below. ”

4.7 Pictures should be at least 5cm wide



Easy Read users tell us that 5cm images are preferred.

4.8 Use 1 picture for each idea.



Easy Read users tell us it is most helpful when there is 1 picture to support the text beside it.

“ There were pictures to match up to each point so everything came across very clearly and felt very specific. ”

4.9 Use a maximum of 5 images on an A4 page.



Easy Read users tell us when there are lots of pictures on one page, it can be overwhelming.

Some pages might need more than 5 pictures.

This could be things like:

- A cover page.
- A list.

If you need to use more than 5 pictures, you should test the document with Easy Read users.

4.10 Use equal spacing throughout the whole document.

-  You should not have one page with 3 images spaced out and another with 6 crammed in together.
-  Use the same size margins on every page.
-  Put headers in the same place on every page.
-  Use the same style of bullet points in the whole document.
-  Always have pictures on the left and text on the right.



Easy Read users tell us that when the same kind of spacing is used throughout an Easy Read document it is easier to read and understand.

Some pages might need slightly different spacing.

This could be things like:

- Long lists
- Maps
- Close-up pictures to show detail
- Surveys or other interactive documents

If you need to use different spacing, you must write the document with Easy Read users.

4.11 Sentences or paragraphs should not run over 2 pages.



Easy Read users tell us that text is harder to read and understand when a sentence carries on from 1 page to another.

Make sure there is a page margin around the text.

We recommend 2cm margin at each side of an A4 page.



Easy Read users tell us that texts are easier to navigate when there is a good margin around the text.

4.12 Make sure there is a good amount of space between sentences and images.

We recommend 1cm minimum between the picture and the words.



Easy Read users tell us that documents are harder to read when words and pictures are touching or too close.

4.13 Use at least 1.2 line spacing between lines of writing.



Easy Read users tell us if the lines are too close together then the words are hard to read.

4.14 Make sure there is a good amount of space between new paragraphs.

We recommend a minimum space of 3 centimetres between paragraphs or sections of text.

Be careful not to use too much space. This could make the document too long and more difficult to read.



Easy Read users tell us that having blank space on a page makes the pictures and the words easier to follow.

4.15 At the start of the document, tell readers it is an Easy Read, and tell them who wrote the document. You can also tell readers a bit about how Easy Read works.



This is an Easy Read by the UK Easy Read Standards Working Group.

It uses simple language and pictures to help you understand.

4.16 At the end of the document, say where you got the pictures from. You might also include a logo.



This Easy Read uses pictures from BaseSix.

4.17 If you are writing an Easy Read that needs the user to answer questions, there must be an easy way for the user to answer underneath each question.

Examples of these documents are:

- Surveys
- Application forms
- Feedback forms

Easy Read users tell us that it is easier to give the answers straight after each question. It is confusing if there is a separate page or separate document for answers.

Part 5: Pictures and logos

5.1 Use pictures that are easy for your users to understand.



Some Easy Read users tell us that pictures from real life are easiest to understand. Many Easy Reads have photos or realistic pictures.

Some other Easy Read users find drawn pictures more interesting, and this makes them want to carry on reading the document.

5.2 Whenever possible, use pictures of the real items and people that you are writing about. Take your own photographs if you need to.



Easy Read users tell us that it is helpful to see pictures of real people, places and items.

“ A photo of someone helps us see what something would look like in the real world. ”

5.3 Add simple graphics to photos or pictures, to add meaning.

This might include things like:

- An arrow to show prices going up.
- A green tick to show something positive.
- A red cross to show something negative.

5.4 Use a plain background most of the time.

Where possible remove any busy backgrounds from photos to make the pictures easy to understand.

In some situations the background may help the ER user to understand better and you might choose to leave it in.

5.5 Think about how to represent the communities you are writing about and writing for.



Easy Read users tell us that they like seeing people like them in Easy Read documents.

5.6 Make sure you have permission to use the pictures you choose.

5.7 If you use a logo with writing in it, make sure the writing is big enough for users to read.

If the writing is not big enough, then you should write the words into the document text.

5.8 Only use alt-text if your users ask for it. In most Easy Read documents, you should mark the pictures as ‘decorative’.

5.9 Use pictures of calendars for dates and clocks for times.

5.10 Consider the guidance on choosing images by the International Easy Read Community of Practice.

[International Easy Read Community of Practice image guidance.](#)

The UK Easy Read Standards Working Group

Thank you to the Working Group members that worked on the UK Easy Read Standards, including:

[Ace Anglia](#) – David Hill

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[Easy Read Wales](#) - Laura Griffiths

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Hawdd ei Ddeall Cymru
Easy Read Wales

[Easy Read Wales](#) designed this document.