# Appendix A - Language & Writing Guidelines for Policy Development and Review

: Improving Communication from the Federal Government to the Public (2011) https://www.plainlanguage.gov

¾ Use "must"

- ¾ Do not use jargon or technical words unless strictly necessary.
    - x For example, "involuntarily undomiciled" vs. "homeless"

- ¾ Avoid legal language.
    - x For example, "thereafter," "foregoing," "henceforth," "hereby," etc.

- ¾ Use positive words instead of negative ones.
    - x For example, "no less than" vs. "at least"

- ¾ Start your sentences with the general idea. Then, if any exceptions apply, mention them after the general rule has been stated.
    - x For example, "except as described in section 1, the audit department will not begin the revision process until after a preliminary assessment is done" vs. "the audit department will begin the revision process after a preliminary assessment is done. However, see section 4 for exceptions"

- ¾ Write in the natural word order (subject, verb, and object). When you use modifiers or clauses, it is harder to understand.

- ¾ Exceptions
    - x Exceptions (from general rules) should be placed where it is easier for readers to understand the policy.
    - x If an exception (or condition) is just short, place it in the beginning.
      For example, "for your admission, you must submit a resume, a cover letter, a detail of your work experience, reference letters and contact information, unless you have already applied within a year" vs. "unless you have already applied within a year, you must submit (…)"
    - x If an exception or condition is long (and the main clause is short), place it at the end.
      For example, "except when you submitted your application for a national bursary within a year and received a partial acceptance, we will consider your application" vs. "we will consider your application except when you submitted (…)"
    - x When describing a category, avoid using exceptions
      For example, "all persons except those older than 18 years old must (…)" vs. "each person under 18 years old must (…)"
    - x Use exceptions to avoid a long description.
      For example, "Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba (list all provinces) must (…)" vs. "all provinces (instead of detailing each one) except territories must (…)"

- ¾ Instead of writing all steps in a paragraph, use lists to help identify the steps in the process and in chronological order.