

Using Plain Language to Enhance eRecruiting

An Employer Tip Sheet



TalentWorks Tip Sheet

Here's a news flash:

Accessibility matters to people with all kinds of disabilities—not just those with vision and hearing impairments. That means individuals with intellectual and learning disabilities, cognitive issues, traumatic brain injuries, and other disabilities, all of which can make using the Internet more challenging.

What's one of the best ways to meet the needs of these users? The answer is simple, literally. It's simplifying the content you write for the web. Effective writing tactics tend to appeal to all web users, whether they have a disability or not. So, use plain language. Short sentences. Bulleted lists. Lots of white space.

Plain Language and eRecruiting Content

When it comes to plain language, one “high-risk” area for reader confusion is online content related to recruiting. In fact, some of the worst culprits are online job descriptions, which have a tendency to be long, poorly written, and full of confusing jargon.

It's important to remember that plain language is not unprofessional writing or a method of “talking down” to the reader. It's a way of communicating about your job opening in an accessible way that can attract the largest number of potential candidates to your organization.

Less Is More

When writing job position descriptions and other eRecruiting content, it's helpful to use fewer and simpler words to make them more accessible. Remember to:

- Be concise.
- Use shorter paragraphs.
- Break documents into sections with separate topics.
- Make liberal use of white space so pages are easy to read and scan.
- Write using the same words your job seekers would use when doing a web search for the information.

Accessibility matters to people with all kinds of disabilities—not just those with vision and hearing impairments. Effective writing tactics tend to appeal to all web users, whether they have a disability or not.

Use Lists

For many eRecruiters, it can be tempting to write tasks, qualifications, and related information in the form of narrative sentences. But that can be confusing and less accessible for certain readers. It's better to:

- Use short lists and bullets to organize information. (In fact, when writing for the web, aim to use even more lists than you would in a paper document.)
- Use lots of headings, with limited text beneath each heading.
- Present each topic or point separately, and use descriptive section headings.

Be Clear

You can help job seekers understand your organization and available positions by being as clear as possible in your written descriptions and communications.

- Try not to assume applicants have complete knowledge of the subject matter, or that they have read related pages on your site. Clearly explain things so that each page can stand on its own.
- Never use the words "Click Here" as a hyperlink—link language should describe what your reader will get if they click the link. (For example, instead of "[Click Here](#)," a more descriptive hyperlink would say, "[Access the full instructions for completing this form.](#)")
- Eliminate unnecessary words.
- Simple words help you express your message clearly and let your readers concentrate on your content. Save longer or complex words for when they are essential.
- Foreign words, jargon, and abbreviations may detract from the clarity of your writing. Readers often skip over terms they don't understand, hoping to get their meaning from the rest of the sentence.
- Plain language does not ban jargon and other technical terms. But you need to understand your readers and match your language to their needs.

Learn More:

The content of this fact sheet was adapted from several sources, including the following:

- PlainLanguage.gov
- [The Center for Plain Language: 5 Steps to Plain Language](#)
- [Interactive Accessibility: Accessible Web Content & Intellectual Disabilities](#)
- [National Online Dialogue Sponsored by PEAT and the Autistic Self Advocacy Network: Improving the Accessibility of Online Tools for Workers with Intellectual Disabilities](#)