

Plain language principle	If you're writing	If you're translating
<p>Present a clear and consistent peak message for the reader. The peak message is the one that stands above the multiple minor messages that most documents contain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distil your message to a single sentence of no more than 20 words.</li> <li>• Communicate that peak message early in the document to help the reader decide if it's relevant.</li> <li>• Delete any content that doesn't support that peak message.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write your own version of the peak message and confirm that with the client (through the Project Manager if necessary).</li> <li>• Reflect that message throughout your translation.</li> </ul>
<p>Generate the intended reader response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be clear about the purpose of your writing and the ideal reader response. Make it easy for the reader to respond in the way you want them to.</li> <li>• Use strong verbs to help the reader focus on required actions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how the writer seems to want the reader to respond. Ask the client (through the Project Manager if necessary) if it's not clear.</li> <li>• Choose strong verbs that guide the reader to respond as the writer intends.</li> </ul>
<p>Reduce sentence length</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aim for an average sentence length of 15-18 words.</li> <li>• Avoid sentences longer than 22 words.</li> <li>• Use dot points or numbered lists to break up sentences containing lists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Break long sentences into shorter sentences if appropriate.</li> <li>• Highlight long sentences in the original text and suggest that the writer reduces them.</li> <li>• Suggest a vertical-list structure for sentences that list three or more elements</li> </ul>
<p>Use words and terms that are familiar to readers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain potentially unfamiliar vocabulary.</li> <li>• Avoid idioms, which often don't translate accurately.</li> <li>• Use online corpora to check word frequency and use that as a proxy for how familiar it is likely to be</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirm abbreviations that aren't defined in the source document to avoid confusion for readers unfamiliar with them.</li> <li>• Don't try to show off your own vocabulary in the target language; choose familiar words that minimise reader effort.</li> </ul>

Plain language principle	If you're writing	If you're translating
Use the simplest tense	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favour simple past and simple present tenses.</li> <li>• Prefer the affirmative form over the negative form.</li> <li>• Avoid continuous tenses and perfect tenses unless they are essential to your message.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the simplest tense possible to convey the source document meaning while minimise reading effort.</li> <li>• Highlight areas of text where you think a simpler tense would improve clarity and query this with the client or Project Manager.</li> </ul>
Use pronouns like "you" and "we" to engage readers and retain their attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Favour first and second person pronouns to engage with readers directly.</li> <li>• Use "they" and "it" carefully to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings about who or what you are referring to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highlight areas of text where you think a first- or second-person point of view would improve clarity and discuss this with the client or Project Manager.</li> </ul>
Specify who is responsible and accountable for actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write in the active voice as much as possible</li> <li>• Aim to have at least 90% of sentences in the active voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convert passive sentences to active in the translation, where possible.</li> </ul>
Use bold subheadings every 6-8 paragraphs to help readers navigate the content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use concise statement subheadings that summarise the content to follow.</li> <li>• Avoid uninformative topic headings like "Introduction" and "Findings"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate subheadings so that they summarise the content to follow.</li> <li>• Read the content so you can translate the subheading appropriately.</li> </ul>