



CAN-ASC-3.1:2025- Plain Language

National Standard of Canada



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Accessibility Standards
Canada

Normes d'accessibilité
Canada

Canada

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1 Accessibility Standards Canada: About us

Accessibility Standards Canada, under whose auspices this Standard has been produced, is a Government of Canada departmental corporation mandated through the *Accessible Canada Act*. Accessibility Standards Canada's Standards contribute to the purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act*, which is to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, through the realization of a Canada without barriers through the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers.

Disability, as defined by the *Accessible Canada Act*, means any impairment, including a physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication or sensory impairment — or a functional limitation — whether permanent, temporary, or episodic in nature, or evident or not, that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society.

All of Accessibility Standards Canada's standards development work, including the work of our technical committees, is carried out in recognition of, and in accordance with, the following principles in the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- all persons must be treated with dignity regardless of their disabilities;
- all persons must have the same opportunity to make for themselves the lives that they are able and wish to have regardless of their disabilities;
- all persons must have barrier-free access to full and equal participation in society, regardless of their disabilities;

- all persons must have meaningful options and be free to make their own choices, with support if they desire, regardless of their disabilities;
- laws, policies, programs, services, and structures must take into account the disabilities of persons, the different ways that persons interact with their environments and the multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization and discrimination faced by persons;
- persons with disabilities must be involved in the development and design of laws, policies, programs, services, and structures; and
- the development and revision of accessibility standards and the making of regulations must be done with the objective of achieving the highest level of accessibility for persons with disabilities.

These principles align with the principles of the United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, ratified by the Government of Canada in 2010 to recognize the importance of promoting, protecting, and upholding the human rights of persons with disabilities to participate fully in their communities. Standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada align with articles in the Convention.

Accessibility Standards Canada seeks to create standards that are aligned with its vision. This includes commitments to break down barriers to accessibility and abide by the principle of “nothing without us” in our standards development process, where everyone, including persons with disabilities, can expect a Canada without barriers.

As part of the "nothing without us" principle, Accessibility Standards Canada promotes that accessibility is good for everyone, as it can have society-wide benefits. As a result, Standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada are designed to achieve the highest levels of accessibility. This means that Accessibility Standards Canada standards create equity-based technical requirements while taking into consideration national and international best practices, as opposed to focusing on minimum technical requirements.

This approach is meant to push innovation in standards and develop technical requirements that have broad positive impacts. This approach to innovation strives to improve the outcomes for all Canadians, including creating employment opportunities and solutions that contribute to Canada's economic growth.

The standards development process used by Accessibility Standards Canada is the most accessible in Canada, if not the world. Accessibility Standards Canada provides accommodations to meet the needs of Technical Committee members with disabilities. Accessibility Standards Canada provides compensation for people with disabilities to encourage their active participation. Accessibility Standards Canada ensures an accessible public review process, including accessible permission forms and multiple formats of the standard, to encourage Canadians with disabilities to comment. To facilitate an accessible experience for all, our standards are available for free on our website. This includes providing standards in multiple formats, including plain language, American Sign language (ASL) and langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) summaries. This allows the following groups to benefit from the technical content of our standards:

- people with disabilities;
- people without disabilities;
- the federal public sector;

- private sector;
- non-government organizations;
- indigenous communities; and
- society.

Accessibility Standards Canada applies an intersectional framework to capture the experiences of people with disabilities who also identify as 2SLGBTQI+, Indigenous Peoples, women, and visible minorities. Its standards development process requires that technical committees apply a cross-disability perspective to ensure that no new barriers to accessibility are unintentionally created. In addition, standards developed by Accessibility Standards Canada align with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which were adopted by Canada in 2015 to promote partnership, peace and prosperity for all people and the planet by 2030.

Accessibility Standards Canada is engaged in the production of voluntary accessibility standards, which are developed by technical committees using a consensus-based approach. Each technical committee is composed of a balanced group of experts who develop the technical content of a standard. At least 30 % of these technical experts are people with disabilities and lived experience and 30% are from equity seeking groups including 2SLGBTQI+, indigenous peoples, women and visible minorities. These technical experts also include consumers and other users, government and authorities, labour and unions, other standards development organizations, businesses and industry, academic and research bodies, and non-governmental organizations.

All Accessibility Standards Canada standards also incorporate related findings from research reports conducted through Accessibility Standards Canada's Advancing Accessibility Grants and Contributions program. This program involves persons with disabilities, experts, and organizations to advance accessibility standards research and supports research projects that help with the identification, removal, and prevention of new barriers to accessibility.

Accessibility Standards Canada standards are subject to review and revision to ensure that they reflect current trends and best practices. Accessibility Standards Canada will initiate the review of this Standard within four years of the date of publication. Suggestions for improvement, which are always welcome, should be brought to the notice of the respective technical committee. Changes to standards are issued either as separate amendments or in new editions of standards.

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In addition to its focus on developing accessibility standards, Accessibility Standards Canada has been a leader amongst Canadian federal organizations for promoting and adopting accessibility internal to government. Accessibility Standards Canada is the first organization in the federal government to have a Board of Directors majority-led by persons with disabilities. Accessibility Standards Canada has a state-of-the-art accessible office space for its employees, Board of Directors, and Technical Committee Members. The carefully designed accessible workspace aligns with the organization's belief in the importance of equitable design.

To obtain additional information on Accessibility Standards Canada, its standards or publications, please contact:

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2 Standard Council of Canada Statement

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SCC is a Crown corporation within the portfolio of Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada. With the goal of enhancing Canada's economic competitiveness and social well-being, SCC leads and facilitates the development and use of national and international standards. SCC also coordinates Canadian participation in standards development, and identifies strategies to advance Canadian standardization efforts.

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Please read this Legal Notice before using the standard document.

3.1 Legal notice for standards

The Canadian Accessibility Standards Development Organization (operating as “Accessibility Standards Canada”) standards are developed through a consensus-based standards development process approved by the Standards Council of Canada. This process brings together volunteers representing varied viewpoints and interests to achieve consensus and develop standards.

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Revisions may have been or may eventually be developed in relation to this edition of the standard. It is the responsibility of the users of this document to verify if any revisions exist.

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This document was developed as a reference document for voluntary use. It is the responsibility of the users to verify if laws or regulations make the application of this Standard mandatory or if trade regulations or market conditions stipulate its use, for example, in technical regulations, inspection plans originating from regulatory authorities, and certification programs.

Although the primary application of this Standard is stated in its scope, it remains the responsibility of the users of this Standard to judge its suitability for their particular purpose. It is also the responsibility of the users to consider limitations and restrictions specified in the purpose and/or scope of this Standard.

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National Standard of Canada

CAN-ASC-3.1:2025

Plain Language



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5 Preface

This is the first edition of CAN-ASC-3.1, Plain Language.

This Standard is intended to align with other relevant standards, such as:

- CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024 - Accessibility requirements for Information and Communication Technology products and services (EN 301 549:2021, IDT); and
- ISO 24495-1:2023 - Plain language - Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines.

Note: See Clause 7.3 Notes 1 to 4. This Standard is broad in scope and benefits, but is focused on its Canadian context and mandate, thus it aligns with ISO 24495-1:2023 in many ways and differs in others.

This Standard is intended to align with relevant acts, codes, regulations and statutes, such as:

- *Accessible Canada Act;*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;*
- *Canadian Human Rights Act;*
- *Official Languages Act;* and
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.*

This voluntary Standard can be used for conformity assessment.

Development of this Standard was undertaken by Accessibility Standards Canada (ASC). The content was prepared by the Technical Committee on Plain Language, selected by ASC, under the authority of ASC management, and has been formally approved by the Technical Committee.

Note 1: This Standard was developed by consensus, which is defined as a substantial agreement implying much more than a simple majority, but not necessarily unanimity. Consistent with this definition, a member may be included in the Technical Committee list but not be in complete agreement with all the Clauses in this Standard.

Note 2: This Standard is subject to periodic review, and suggestions for improvement will be referred to the appropriate technical committee.

5.1 International agreements

5.1.1 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* protects and promotes the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities without discrimination, and on an equal basis with others. Parties to the Convention are required to promote and ensure the full enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities, including full equality under the law. The Convention has served as the major catalyst in the global movement towards viewing persons with disabilities as full and equal members of society.

This Standard aligns with the following Articles in the Convention:

- a) Article 5 – Equality and non-discrimination
- b) Article 6 – Women with disabilities
- c) Article 7 – Children with disabilities
- d) Article 8 – Awareness-raising
- e) Article 9 – Accessibility
- f) Article 12 – Equal recognition before the law
- g) Article 13 – Access to justice

- h) Article 19 – Living independently and being included in the community
- i) Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information
- j) Article 24 – Education
- k) Article 25 – Health
- l) Article 30 – Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport

5.1.2 Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals are a global call to action. They aim to leave no one behind and address social, economic, and environmental challenges. Canada and 192 other United Nations member states adopted the 2030 Agenda in 2015. Standards can provide concrete and actionable guidance towards the achievement of the Goals.

This Standard contributes to the following Goals:

- a) Goal 4 – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education to promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- b) Goal 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- c) Goal 12 – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- d) Goal 16 – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- e) Goal 17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

6 Introduction

The goal of this Standard is to make sure that communication is relevant, findable, understandable, and usable for the intended audience.

Plain language is a way to provide communication that is equitable, inclusive, and barrier-free.

The focus first and always is on the intended audience for communication. Remember that a communication is in plain language if the intended audience can achieve three goals: find what they need, understand what they find and use that information.

Developing communications in plain language is a process with interrelated steps and considerations. But developing plain language communications is not linear, ending at a publication as the product. Instead, the process is cyclical. It begins with planning and continues with audience feedback informing revisions of communications and the development of new communications.

6.1 What is plain language

This Standard uses the following definition:

A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information.

This definition is adapted from the definition from [Plain Language Association International](#).

This Standard uses the term “intended audience” because it is more inclusive than “reader,” which is used by the [International Plain Language Federation](#) and cited in [ISO 24495-1:2023](#).

This Standard recognizes that plain language is variable. What is plain language for one audience might not be for another. Plain language depends on more than the audience. For example, plain language could depend on these factors:

- a) the topic and message
- b) the format of the communication
- c) the circumstance or context of use

Only members of the intended audience can say whether a communication is plain language for them.

6.2 Benefits of plain language

Both the intended audience and an organization benefit from plain language.

Overall, communication in plain language can save both parties time and money.

Intended audiences who receive communications in plain language benefit in these and other ways:

- a) they quickly understand actions to take;
- b) they make fewer mistakes;
- c) they are more likely to follow instructions;
- d) they are more satisfied with products and services;
- e) they are more likely to find the source of communication credible and reliable; and

- f) they can more easily increase their knowledge and counter disinformation and misinformation.

Organizations that offer communications in plain language benefit in these and other ways:

- a) they can share or exchange information effectively and efficiently;
- b) they remove or prevent communication barriers;
- c) they reduce follow-up questions and the need to clarify communications after publication;
- d) they reduce misunderstandings and mistakes;
- e) they make the process for translating communications more efficient; and
- f) they build a reputation for being a trusted source of credible, reliable, and accurate information.

Millions of people in Canada and their families are affected by disability. Many of them face barriers to finding, understanding, and using information. This Standard puts these people first by working to remove those barriers and prevent new ones. Following this Standard to remove and prevent barriers will help all people, with and without disabilities, take part in society.

Note 1: In 2022, over one quarter of Canadians aged 15 and over had at least one disability (27%). Source: [Canadian Survey on Disability, Statistics Canada](#).

Note 2: Almost every person will temporarily or permanently experience a disability at some point in their life. Source: [Disability, World Health Organization, 2022](#).

6.3 Contexts where plain language is essential

Plain language can help organizations communicate more effectively with their intended audiences in most situations, but in the following contexts, plain language communications are essential:

- a) bureaucratic: where a communication is about policies, procedures, or ways to access public or regulated services;
- b) unfamiliar: where a communication is about something new to the intended audience;
- c) rights oriented: where a communication is about a person's rights as a citizen or human being; or
- d) critical: where a communication is about something that can significantly affect the lives of the intended audience.

6.4 Principles guiding this standard

This Standard incorporates principles of plain language, accessibility, inclusion, and diversity.

- a) People have a right to accurate information that is easy to find, understand, and use.
 - i) This Standard aims to achieve the highest level of accessibility for people with disabilities, recognizing plain language will also help any person who faces barriers to information.
- b) People who face barriers have a right to accurate information in the format and language that is the most accessible to them, in a timely manner and at no extra cost to the intended audience.
 - i) This Standard adopts an intersectional approach to identifying, removing, and preventing barriers to information.

- ii) This Standard aims to counter ableism in communication. Countering ableism requires a deliberate effort by each person and organization to identify and remove barriers.
 - iii) This Standard promotes person-centred communication, putting people's information needs and dignity at the forefront. This includes respecting the preferences of people with lived experience and recognizing that some people choose identity-first language and others choose person-first language.
 - iv) This Standard encourages organizations to learn from, with, and about the audiences who need information. It discourages organizations from making assumptions about the intended audience, their needs, and their priorities.
- c) Plain language is an ongoing process that involves developing, revising, and evaluating communications.
- i) This Standard encourages organizations to involve the intended audience throughout this process.
 - ii) This Standard encourages organizations to continuously improve the way they develop, revise, and evaluate communications based on information from audiences, changes in communication technology, and emerging research.
 - iii) This Standard is based on internationally established and well-documented plain language practices, empirical research, and expert consultation.

7 Scope

This Clause describes what this Standard applies to, the organizations and people this Standard applies to, and how requirements and recommendations are worded in this Standard.

7.1 What this Standard applies to

This Standard applies to communications of information for different audiences.

This Standard applies primarily to communications that organizations produce for external audiences but could also apply to internal communications.

This Standard applies to communications offered in various formats. The following are some examples:

- a) printed communications in all sizes including medication labels, pamphlets, books, road signs, and billboards;
- b) digital communications such as websites with text and video, digital books, and social media posts;
- c) audio-visual communications such as public service announcements on television and online videos;
- d) audio-only communications such as radio advertising; or
- e) communications transcribed and produced in braille.

This Standard presents some possible formats for communications. It does not present all possible formats. As technology evolves, different formats will become available and relevant to developing plain language communications.

This Standard does not apply to the following:

- a) works of art;
- b) informal conversations; or
- c) constructed languages, including computer code and mathematical language.

This Standard applies to communications in the languages identified in the *Official Languages Act* and the *Accessible Canada Act*:

- a) English;
- b) French; and
- c) Primary languages for communication by Deaf people:
 - i) American Sign Language
 - ii) Langue des signes québécoise
 - iii) Indigenous sign languages

This Standard could also apply to other languages not listed above.

7.2 Organizations and people this Standard applies to

This Standard could apply to all organizations, communicators, and entities in the private and non-profit sectors by helping them to make their communications accessible. Specifically, this Standard is intended for use by federally regulated entities. “Federally regulated entities” means the following:

- a) departments, agencies, and other bodies in the Government of Canada; and

- b) industries, companies, and other organizations governed by Canada's federal laws.

Note 1: This Standard refers to any entity using this Standard as an organization and addresses it directly as “you.”

Note 2: This Standard applies to communications for all people in Canada, as well as others outside Canada, who communicate with or receive communications from the organization.

7.3 Barriers this Standard applies to

People might face barriers to communication. This Standard focuses on the barriers that people might face to communication instead of specific disabilities. This Standard addresses barriers within these broad categories:

- a) language and comprehension barriers: barriers related to unfamiliar language and the way information is presented, making the information hard or impossible to understand;
- b) memory, attention, and processing barriers: barriers that make it hard to pay attention to, retain, or process information because of stress, cognitive overload, or attention-related challenges. These difficulties could arise from complex, lengthy, or dense texts, visuals, or audio, leading to reduced understanding;
- c) emotional and distress-related barriers: barriers that trigger emotional distress or trauma responses, making it hard for people to pay attention to and understand the information;
- d) information access and navigation barriers: barriers that make it hard to find, follow, or move through information in digital, printed, or physical environments;
- e) visual, hearing, and format barriers: barriers caused by texts, visuals, or audio without alternate formats; or

- f) digital and interactive accessibility barriers: barriers that make digital communications hard to use for finding, understanding, and using information.

Note 1: This Standard is intentionally broad in scope as it applies to benefit all people, as noted in About Accessibility Standards: “Accessibility Standards Canada’s Standards contribute to the purpose of the *Accessible Canada Act*, which is to benefit all persons, especially persons with disabilities, through the realization of a Canada without barriers through the identification, removal, and prevention of accessibility barriers.”

Note 2: This scope is broader in terms of the people it benefits than some other standards and guidelines related to plain language. As a result, this Standard and other standards and guidelines overlap in some ways and differ in others.

Note 3: At the same time, this Standard is focused on its Canadian mandate and context. This Standard presents examples relevant to its Canadian context in English and French.

Note 4: The technical committee for this Standard draws on its experience and expertise in Canada, membership in national and international associations, and the international body of knowledge and best practices for plain language, accessibility, and communications. See Clause [4](#).

7.4 Adoption of this Standard

This Standard is voluntary. See Clause [3](#).

You can choose to adopt this Standard in whole or in part. Choosing to adopt the whole Standard benefits your intended audience the most.

Accessibility Standards Canada can recommend this Standard as regulation to the minister responsible for the *Accessible Canada Act*. See Clause [1](#).

7.5 Terminology

The Standards Council of Canada requires specific wording in a National Standard of Canada. See Clause [2](#).

This Standard uses the following three terms to present requirements and recommendations:

- a) **Shall**: indicates a requirement that you must do to conform with this Standard.
- b) **Should**: indicates a recommendation that is advised but not required.
- c) **May**: indicates an option that is allowed, with no preference either way.

Notes follow clauses. Notes help users of this Standard understand or use the relevant clause, give examples of ways to implement the clause, and highlight cautions. Notes are separate from the main text of the standard.

Annexes are supplements to the standard and are identified as “normative” or “informative”:

- a) A normative annex is required when implementing this Standard.
- b) An informative annex is optional guidance for implementing this Standard.

8 References

This Standard refers to the following publications, and where such reference is made, it shall be to the edition listed below:

8.1 Normative

The following standards are necessary for applying this Standard in certain contexts, such as digital and web communication.

Accessibility Standards Canada

CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024 - Accessibility requirements for ICT products and services (EN 301 549:2021, IDT)

Note: CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024, as adopted in Canada, refers to specific Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 and 2.1 (WCAG)

CAN-ASC-5.2.1: Part 1 - Design and Delivery of Accessible Programs and Services: Accessible Service Delivery – Accessibility for federally regulated entities as defined by the *Accessible Canada Act* (draft)

8.2 Informative

The following standard is not necessary when applying this Standard, but they might help with the wording, structure, and design of your communication.

International Organization for Standardization

ISO 24495 - 1:2023-Plain language - Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines

9 Definitions

9.1 Definitions

The following definitions shall apply in this Standard:

Ableism - Individual and societal discrimination and exclusion in the form of attitudes, prejudices, and actions that devalue and limit the potential of people with disabilities.

Source: Adapted from the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on ableism and discrimination based on disability

Note: Ableism, like other forms of discrimination, can be conscious or unconscious, intentional or unintentional, and blatant or casual, and it can be embedded in institutions, systems, or the broader culture of a society.

Accessibility - Enabling people with disabilities to live independently and participate fully in all aspects of life, having access to all aspects of society on an equal and equitable basis with others.

Source: Adapted from the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, article 9 – Accessibility

Note: "All aspects of life" include employment, physical environment, transportation, information, communications (including information and communications technologies and systems), financial security, social services, and other facilities and services open or provided to the public.

Alternate formats - See Formats.

American Sign Language (ASL) - The language used by most Deaf Canadians in anglophone communities. It is a visual language made up of specific gestures involving the hands, face, and body. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.

Assistive technology - Equipment, product system, hardware, software, or service that is used to increase, maintain, or improve a person's capabilities.

Source: Adapted from CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024

Note: Assistive technology is an umbrella term that is broader than assistive products and adaptive technology.

Barrier - Anything that hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. These may include architectural features, attitudes, physical conditions, technologies, communication methods, information formats, or policies and practices that create exclusion.

Sources: Adapted from *Accessible Canada Act* and *Accessibility Standards Canada*

This Standard focuses on the barriers that people might face when accessing and understanding information or communication, rather than focusing on specific disabilities. These can appear in different ways and combine to make communication and access to information difficult. This Standard addresses six broad categories of barriers that interfere with people's ability to find, understand, and use information. See Clause [7.3](#).

Note: This Standard uses "addressing barriers" to mean identifying, removing, and preventing barriers.

Communication - The act of giving or exchanging information, ideas, and feelings as well as the tools and methods used to achieve that act. Where other standards and guidance refer to a "document," "content," or "publication," This Standard refers to a communication, as in the definition of plain language.

Note: Examples of a communication are a poster, a contract, a notification letter, a form to fill in, a website with text and visuals, a social media post, a public service announcement, a safety manual, and many other formats.

Design - The integration of text, visuals, audio, or other elements to develop the presentation and function of a communication. An example is a graphic designer choosing an easily readable typeface for a print fact sheet about water safety, or a content creator using text, audio, and video for website about an upcoming election.

Disability - Any impairment that, in interaction with a barrier, hinders a person's full and equal participation in society. A disability might include an impairment or functional limitation that is physical, mental, intellectual, cognitive, learning, communication, or sensory. Disabilities can be permanent, temporary, or episodic, and they can be apparent to other people or not.

Source: Adapted from the *Accessible Canada Act*

Diversity - The variety of identities found within an organization, group, or society. Diversity is expressed through factors such as culture, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, education, ability, family status, or social class.

Source: Adapted from the Government of Canada's Guide on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Terminology

Evaluation - A broad set of activities to assess how well a communication meets this Standard.

Formats - The different ways that information is presented. This Standard combines modes and forms in the term "formats" to include print and electronic formats such as printed labels, pamphlets, posters, print and digital reports, websites with text and video, digital books, audio-visual communications, and communications transcribed and produced in braille. See Clause [7.1](#).

Alternate formats are accessible formats that organizations make available to people who need them. For example, if an organization provides online documents as one format, some people might face barriers to reading those documents and might need alternate formats such as large print, braille, audio, or another ICT product or service, such as those covered by the CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.

Identity-first language - Language and expressions that emphasize a characteristic or disability first. Terms such as “blind person,” “autistic person,” “deaf person,” and “Deaf culture” are examples. See also person-first language definition and [Clause 10.4](#).

Inclusion - The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected, and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement.

Source: Government of Canada’s Guide on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Terminology

Note: This practice involves changing the environment by removing barriers so that each person has equal access to opportunities and resources and can achieve their full potential.

Information and communication technology (ICT) - Technology, equipment, or an interconnected system of equipment whose main function is to create, convert, duplicate, automatically acquire, store, analyze, evaluate, manipulate, manage, move, control, display, switch, interchange, transmit, receive, or broadcast data or information.

Source: Adapted from CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024

Note: Examples of ICT are web pages, telecommunications products, computers and ancillary equipment, software including mobile applications, information kiosks and transaction machines, videos, IT services, and multifunction office machines that copy, scan, and fax documents.

Intersectional - A framework that explains the cumulative way in which a person or group of people are affected by many forms of discrimination and disadvantages because of who they are in society.

Source: Adapted from Crenshaw, Kimberlé Williams. 1994. "Mapping the Margins". In *The Public Nature of Private Violence*, ed. Fineman, M. and Mykitiuk, R. New York: Routledge. Google Scholar

Note: A single person can experience the effects of many systems of oppression, such as ableism, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, and transphobia. When these systems of oppression intersect, they change and compound the barriers people face. For example, a person with a disability who also experiences discrimination because of social class might not be able to afford to buy assistive technology that would remove barriers and help them participate fully in society.

Intended audience - The people to whom you are directing your communication and the people you expect to receive your communication. The intended audience includes people with different information and accessibility needs and who face different barriers. You could have more than one intended audience for your information. You might have to develop more than one communication to provide plain language to each intended audience. As well, a single communication might have a primary audience and a secondary audience. See Clause [10.1](#).

- a) A primary audience is the main group of people to whom you are directing your communication.
- b) A secondary audience consists of other people who will also receive or interact with the communication.

Note: "Intended audience" is the wording used in the definition of plain language in this Standard and is broader than "readers." The word "intended" is meant to prompt organizations to deliberately consider their audiences' needs.

Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) - The language used by most Deaf Canadians in francophone communities. It is a visual language made up of specific gestures involving the hands, face, and body. It has its own grammatical rules and sentence structure.

Person-first language - Language and expressions that emphasize the person first, rather than a characteristic or disability. Terms starting with “person with...” are examples of person-first language. The *Accessible Canada Act* uses person-first language. See also identity-first language definition and Clause [10.4](#).

Plain language - A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information.

See Clause [6.1](#).

Primary audience - See Intended audience.

Secondary audience - See Intended audience.

Subject index - Focused on topics, a subject index is an arrangement of entries designed to allow users to locate information in a communication or specific communications in a collection. The entries are in alphabetical or another arrangement, and the order is different from the order of the communication or collection indexed.

Source: Adapted from ISO 999:1996

Testing - A specific kind of evaluation that involves showing a communication to members of its intended audience and getting direct feedback.

10 Audience

“A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information.”

See Clause [6.1](#).

To develop a communication in plain language, learning about, from, and with the intended audience of the communication is key. When you research, consult, and engage with the intended audience, you are well on your way to developing a communication in plain language.

This Clause helps you to do the following things:

- a) identify your intended audience or audiences. There are often more than one;
- b) learn about your intended audience, the possible barriers they face, and ways to address those barriers; and
- c) identify your intended audience’s needs and considerations, and how to meet those needs.

You will also learn that developing a communication in plain language is a cyclical process of learning, creating, reviewing, and evaluating. People, technology, attitudes, and best practices change over time. Staying current on these changes will help you continue to develop plain language communications.

10.1 Identifying the intended audience

To develop a communication in plain language, you shall do each of the following:

- a) identify the intended audience for the communication;
- b) identify if the intended audience consists of a primary audience for the communication and one or more secondary audiences; and
- c) if there is more than one audience, identify if an audience needs a separate communication.

Note: Many people might need or want information about a subject, but one communication is rarely in plain language for everyone.

For example, there are many audiences for information about the disability tax credit:

- 1) primary audience: people with disabilities who apply for and benefit from the disability tax credit
- 2) secondary audiences: accountants, advocates, caregivers, doctors, and others who help someone to apply for the tax credit or complete forms
- 3) audience that might need a separate communication: government staff implementing or promoting the disability tax credit program

10.2 Learning about the intended audience

- a) Throughout the development of your communication, you shall consult and engage with the intended audience about their information needs and any barriers they face except as identified in Clause [10.2 b](#)).

The following are possible strategies:

- i) create an accessibility advisory committee to review communications;
- ii) co-create communications with members of the intended audience;
- iii) consult with people from your intended audience at key points during the development of the communication; or
- iv) have representatives of the intended audience evaluate the communication before publication. See Clause [11](#) .

Note: The following are examples of things to learn from and about your intended audience:

- 1) ages
- 2) barriers (see Clause [10.3](#))
- 3) ways the intended audience prefers to be identified (see Clause [10.4](#))
- 4) needs and considerations (see Clause [10.5](#))
- 5) the format or formats the intended audience needs or prefers (see Clause [10.6](#))
- 6) language or languages the intended audience understands best (see Clause [10.7](#))

- 7) locations
 - 8) reliability of the intended audience's internet access
 - 9) other demographic information
- b) Where consultation and engagement is not possible, you shall do the following:
- i) ask for feedback from the intended audience after the communication is made public. See Clause [11.5](#); and
 - ii) use information from feedback and from information from audience engagement used in the development of similar communications or communications to similar audiences. See Clause [10.2 c](#)).

Note: Consulting and engaging with the intended audience might not be possible in these situations:

- 1) the information is confidential until made public;
 - 2) the information is sensitive until made public; or
 - 3) there is no time for engagement because the information will be made public urgently, as in the case of an emergency.
- c) You may learn about the intended audience for the communication using these strategies:
- i) Look at information from previous audience engagement used in the development of similar communications or communications to similar audiences.
 - ii) Learn about the intended audience and barriers through published research including the following:
 - 1) Statistics Canada or local census data for geographic, demographic, communications, cultural, and other information

- 2) studies and research evidence for information about how to address barriers

10.3 Learning about barriers

- a) You shall learn about the barriers that members of your intended audience might face in finding, understanding, and using your communication. See Clause [7.3](#).

The following are examples of such barriers:

- i) language and comprehension barriers
- ii) memory, attention, and processing barriers
- iii) emotional and distress-related barriers
- iv) information access and navigation barriers
- v) visual, hearing, and format barriers
- vi) digital and interactive accessibility barriers

Note 1: Members of your intended audience might experience many barriers to communication at the same time. It is important to address these barriers.

Note 2: You might need to provide a communication in different formats to address the barriers that members of your intended audience face.

- b) After you have identified barriers, you shall consult with people from the intended audience to find the best ways to address those barriers.

10.4 Learning about self-identity

You shall consult with people with lived experience, including advocacy groups, about terms they use when referring to themselves.

Note 1: People with lived experience are those with personal, direct, and first-hand knowledge and understanding of accessibility needs.

Note 2: As much as possible, use the language used by your intended audience in your communication.

Note 3: If there is no consensus on a term, it is best to choose one term and acknowledge the other terms and explain your choice, preferably in a place in the communication that will be prominent to your intended audience.

Note 4: This standard uses person-first language, according to the *Accessible Canada Act*. Some people or advocacy groups might use identity-first language.

10.5 Identifying the needs and considerations for the communication

You shall identify the following needs and considerations for the communication and develop your communication accordingly:

- a) attitudes and concerns: the attitudes and concerns that the intended audience has about the information and about you as the organization delivering the communication;
- b) context: the context in which the intended audience will receive the communication;

- c) format: the format or formats the intended audience needs or prefers for the communication;
- d) information: what you want to convey in a communication, including these concerns:
 - i) the information the intended audience needs or wants to know;
 - ii) the information in the communication that the intended audience will find most important; and
 - iii) the information you need the intended audience to understand;
- e) purpose and use: the intended audience's purpose and motivation for engaging with the communication and your expectations for the intended audience's use of the communication; and
- f) urgency: how quickly the intended audience needs the information.

Note 1: You might need to develop different versions of the communication if a single version cannot meet the needs and considerations of all members of the intended audience.

Note 2: What the intended audience needs or wants to know and what you, as an organization, need the intended audience to know might be the same, or there might be some differences. Identifying the differences and what matters most to the intended audience can help you to structure the communication.

Note 3: If your intended audience might have a negative attitude either to the information in your communication or to your organization, identifying ways to mitigate this negativity can help you communicate your message more effectively.

10.6 Formats for the intended audience

You shall choose formats needed or preferred by the intended audience and best suited to the communication. See Clause [7.1](#).

Note: You might need to provide your communication in different formats to meet the needs of different members of your intended audiences.

10.7 Languages for the intended audience

You shall produce your communication in the language that your intended audience needs to understand it. See Clause [7.1](#).

Note 1: This Standard applies to communications in English, French, and sign languages. But a document is in plain language only if it is in the language best understood by the intended audiences.

Note 2: You might need to provide the communication in more than one language.

10.8 Communications in many languages

- a) When developing a communication in many languages, you shall make sure that the communication is in plain language in each language.
- b) When translating a communication into another language, you should work with translators who are familiar with plain language in the language they are translating into.

- c) When planning live or pre-recorded communications in sign and spoken languages, you should give interpreters enough time and resources to prepare.

Note: For example, interpreters recommend having information in advance. This allows time to understand the meaning and intent of the communication in the original language and to consider the subject, terms, concepts, names of people and places, numbers, abbreviations, metaphors, and historical and cultural references.

10.9 Delivery and cost of communications

- a) You shall deliver communications following the draft standard CAN-ASC-5.2.1: Part 1.
- b) You may publish some alternate formats at the same time as when you publish the original documents. This would help you reduce the time and effort needed to meet some requests.

10.10 Contact and version information

To meet the intended audience's needs, you shall state the following within the communication:

- a) how to contact you, the organization that developed and delivered the communication, so that members of the intended audience can do any of the following:
 - i) ask questions;
 - ii) ask for an alternate format; or
 - iii) give feedback;
- b) if the communication is available in more than one language, where to find each language version;

- c) if the communication is available in more than one format, where to find each format; and
- d) information about the version of the communication so that feedback can refer to the correct version.

Note: For example, the version of the communication might be the month and year of publication.

10.11 Continuing to learn about, from, and with audiences

You shall repeat the process of identifying your intended audience and learning about barriers they face and their needs and considerations when updating material.

Note: The makeup of your audiences might change over time. Audience needs, barriers and ways to address them, and formats also change over time. Repeating the process of identifying audiences and learning about them helps you continue to develop communications that meet the definition of plain language for your intended audience.

11 Evaluation

"A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information."

See Clause [6.1](#).

In this Standard, "evaluation" refers to a broad set of activities that assess how well your communication meets this Standard. "Testing" refers to a specific kind of evaluation that involves showing your communication to members of your intended audience and getting their direct feedback.

Only the intended audience can tell you if your communication meets the definition of plain language for them. In other words, only the intended audience can say if the structure, wording, and design of your communication are so clear that they can easily find what they need, understand what they find, and use that information. Conforming with this Standard's requirements involves engaging members of your intended audience as you draft, design, and test your communication. Testing your communication with your intended audience is the only way to make sure that your communication is in plain language.

That said, you may also take these other steps to increase the likelihood that your communication is clear to your intended audience:

- a) desktop review;
- b) subject matter expert review; and
- c) plain language expert review.

These reviews don't have to be separate phases. For example, if the person developing the communication is also a subject matter expert, they can review the communication for subject accuracy as they develop it. Similarly, if the person developing the communication is also a plain language expert, the communication might not need a separate plain language review.

Finally, after you publish your communication, continue to evaluate it by collecting outcome measures and feedback from your intended audience to inform future communications.

11.1 Desktop review

- a) As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should do a desktop review using tools like checklists and software.
- b) You should review your communication to make sure that it conforms with this Standard's clauses about structure, wording and expression, and design. See Clauses [12](#), [13](#), and [14](#).
- c) You should use accepted software tools to evaluate your communication for accessibility in structure, wording, and design.

Note 1: Examples of software tools to help you evaluate your communication:

- 1) For accessibility in structure:
 - a) use the outline view function on a word processor to view only headings and confirm that they have parallel structure
 - b) use heading-mapping software to identify skipped heading levels

2) For accessibility in wording:

- a) use the read-aloud function or a screen reader to read your communication to make sure that the communication reads as you intend and is accessible to people who use screen readers. Reading aloud can also identify homonyms where words have different meanings but the same pronunciation with either the same spelling or different spelling
- b) use writing tools to help you identify features that can make your communication harder to understand, such as nouns formed from verbs (nominalizations) or groups of nouns. See Clause [13.3 a\)](#)

3) For accessibility in design (see Clause [14.5](#)):

- a) check that the communication is usable without the need for colour by printing it in greyscale
- b) use a colour blindness simulator to make sure that your communication does not use colour alone to convey essential information
- c) use a contrast checker to make sure that the contrast between text and background and within visuals conforms with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024

Note 2: Caution - Readability formulas and reading levels are unreliable and ineffective ways to assess whether your communication is easy to read, understand, and use. They cannot be used to determine if a communication conforms with this standard.

11.2 Subject matter expert review

As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should work with a subject matter expert to review your communication to make sure that the information is accurate.

Note: Examples of subject matter expert review include the following:

- a) having a medical expert review health information for scientific accuracy
- b) having a legal expert review information about the law for legal accuracy
- c) having a person with lived experience review information about their specific disability for accuracy

11.3 Plain language expert review

As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should work with a professional with plain language training or expertise to review the communication to identify and remove barriers to finding, understanding, and using the information in your communication.

Note: For example, if your intended audience experiences memory, attention, and processing barriers, consider working with an expert in developing Easy Read communications.

11.4 Testing

- a) As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you shall test your communication with members of your intended audience.

Note 1: Testers might not feel able to give honest feedback if they perceive a difference in power between themselves and the person conducting the test. Consider engaging a third party to do the testing, such as an organization that specializes in user testing.

Note 2: Each communication project involves many stages. Asking for feedback from your intended audience at each stage has the following advantages:

- 1) it will inform changes you can make so that your final communication is in plain language;
 - 2) it will let you evaluate the effectiveness of the changes you made at a previous stage; and
 - 3) it can let testers focus on one element of the communication at a time.
- b) You shall choose testing methods based on what you want to learn about your communication.

Note: Examples of testing methods:

- 1) to test understanding, consider using teach-back, also known as paraphrase testing
- 2) to test emotional impact, consider using reaction cards or plus/minus testing

- 3) to test usability, consider using task-based testing. For example, you can evaluate how quickly a person can complete a task or how many mistakes they make when trying to complete the task using your communication
- c) You shall recruit testers who reflect the diversity of your intended audience to user test your communication.

Note: The number of testers you need will depend on the size and diversity of your intended audience and the importance of the communication to that intended audience. For example, a communication about income taxes will need testing with more people compared with a communication about a new commemorative stamp from Canada Post.

- d) You shall conduct testing in ways that respect your testers and that value their time and expertise using these strategies:
 - i) tell testers that you are testing the effectiveness of your communication, not your testers' knowledge or abilities;
 - ii) compensate testers in some way for their time; and
 - iii) offer testers ways of giving feedback that are accessible to them.

Note 1: Respectful compensation can take many forms. For example, some people receiving disability assistance might not be able to accept money because they have a limit on how much income they can earn while receiving assistance. Consult your testers to learn what forms of compensation would be acceptable to them.

Note 2: Users might prefer giving written feedback, live oral feedback, recorded feedback (audio or video), or feedback through adaptive communication tools or a support person.

- e) You shall test the communication in its final version and format unless doing so is impossible.

Note: Examples of testing communications in their final version and format:

- 1) you are creating a video encouraging people to check their measles vaccination status. Early feedback from the intended audience about the script and storyboard will give you valuable information, but you still need to test a fully rendered video with your intended audience
 - 2) you create a communication that some people might receive as a printed document and others might read as a PDF online. Test both formats with your intended audience
- f) If you expect that you might have to publish a communication urgently with no time to consult with the intended audience, you should plan for these situations using these strategies:
 - i) As much as possible, develop and test these communications with your intended audience before you urgently need to use them.

Note: For example, wildfire evacuations are emergencies that might require urgent communications, but you can anticipate that they will happen and prepare and test those communications in advance.

- ii) Develop and test templates for communications you might need during emergencies that you can customize based on the situation.

- g) You should test the communication in an environment and context where the intended audience will use it.

Note: For example, you create a written sign explaining security procedures. The sign will be used in a busy, noisy airport. If possible, test this plain language communication in an environment that simulates the conditions of the airport.

11.5 Ongoing evaluation

- a) You should continue to evaluate your communication regularly after publication.

Note: The following are reasons for regularly evaluating communications after publication:

- 1) to determine if communications continue to meet audience needs;
 - 2) to evaluate any communications that could not be evaluated before publication;
 - 3) to learn how audiences are using communications; and
 - 4) to learn about changing needs as technologies evolve.
- b) If it was impossible for you to test your communication with members of your intended audience before publication, you should user test your document after publication and publish a revised version if the testing uncovers problems. See Clause [11.4 f](#)).

- c) You should explicitly invite feedback from your intended audience about your communication. See Clause [10.10](#).

Note: On your communication itself or where your communication is available to your intended audience, include your contact information and a clear invitation to send feedback about the communication.

- d) You should keep a record of feedback from your intended audience.

Note: Caution - A lack of feedback does not necessarily mean that your communication has met your intended audience's needs. People might not give feedback for many reasons. For example, they might be uncomfortable being honest with you, or they might not trust that their feedback will be taken seriously.

- e) After you publish your communication, you should measure relevant outcomes to evaluate the communication's effectiveness at making its information easy for the intended audience to find, understand, and use.

Note: Examples of outcomes to measure:

- 1) number of phone calls or emails expressing confusion
- 2) number of complaints about your communication on social media
- 3) number of people who accurately and fully complete a form
- 4) response rates to surveys

12 Structure

"A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information."

See Clause [6.1](#).

In this Standard, structure refers to how a communication is organized in a format, what information is included, how the information is ordered, and how parts are related. This Standard also identifies elements that contribute to an effective structure for a communication in plain language. A structure that is clear helps members of the intended audience navigate the communication and helps them understand the information they find.

The example of headings demonstrates how wording, structure, and design are interrelated in the definition of plain language. Effective headings clarify for the intended audience what information is included in the communication and help them predict, find, and understand the information. The way the headings are presented in the design makes the structure evident for the intended audience and easy to follow.

As with all aspects of plain language, developing an effective structure involves learning about, from, and with the intended audience, engaging with them, and evaluating the communication with them. See Clauses [10.1](#) to [10.9](#).

12.1 Structure and audience

You shall develop the structure of a communication using these strategies:

- a) learn what structures and formats are accessible to the intended audience, familiar to them, and preferred by them. See Clauses [10.5](#) and [10.6](#);
- b) plan the structure to help the intended audience find information in the communication; and
- c) evaluate the structure of the communication with the intended audience and revise based on the evaluation. See Clauses [11.4](#) and [11.5](#).

12.2 Structure and prior knowledge

You should use the intended audience's prior knowledge to develop the communication as follows:

- a) when the intended audience knows and prefers a format and structure, consider using that same format and structure for a communication. See Clause [12.1](#); or
- b) when the intended audience has some knowledge about the subject, use a structure that builds on that prior knowledge to give more information that the intended audience needs.

Note 1: Using a format and structure that is familiar to the intended audience and preferred by them helps them find information in the new communication.

Note 2: Building on the prior knowledge of the intended audience helps them understand the new information, shows respect for them, and builds trust.

12.3 Structure and format

- a) For digital communications, you shall conform to CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.
- b) To address digital and interactive accessibility barriers in structure and format, you should do the following:
 - i) offer alternate formats, such as audio or video with captions; and
 - ii) use options built into word-processing or desktop design programs to tag titles, headings, and other elements in the structure.

Note: Examples of strategies to address digital and interactive barriers in structure and format:

- 1) keep navigation simple such as with a single menu bar
 - 2) place the menu bar at the top
 - 3) provide step-by-step guidance and clear labels
 - 4) label links and buttons descriptively such as “Apply now” instead of “Click here.” Make sure the purpose of the link is clear in the link text
 - 5) offer PDFs that are text based, not just scanned images
- c) To address language and comprehension barriers in structure and format, you should do the following:
 - i) consider using a structure that combines text and visuals to convey meaning and to help the intended audience find, understand, and use information. See Clauses [14](#) and [14.6](#) ; and
 - ii) use a consistent structure of text and visuals.

12.4 Planning information and its parts

- a) After you have identified what information your intended audience needs (see Clause [10.5](#)), you shall plan the following:
 - i) how related information can be grouped together; and
 - ii) how different information can be divided into parts.

Note: Examples of grouping information:

- 1) for people who need information about a job program, the communication might include the following:
 - a) when the program starts
 - b) who can apply
 - c) steps to apply
 - d) key deadlines
 - e) how to get more information.
- 2) When a person needs to fill in a form, the parts of the form could include the following:
 - a) a part asking for contact information
 - b) a checklist
 - c) a part asking for a person's signature and the date of signing

Note: For more information about forms, see Clause [15](#).

- b) If your communication has many audiences, you should do either of the following:
 - i) develop separate communications for each audience; or
 - ii) structure the single communication in a way that clearly identifies what information is directed to each audience.

Note 1: For example, use headings “For homeowners” and “For renters.”

Note 2: If the communication has a primary audience and one or more secondary audiences, consider using a structure that focuses first on the primary audience to give what is most important to them and then gives more information for any secondary audiences.

12.5 Prioritizing information

You shall identify the priority of information for your communication, including:

- a) information that is most important for the intended audience;
- b) information that is less important but needed;
- c) information that the intended audience already knows. See [Clause 12.2](#);
- d) background or supplementary information; and
- e) information that is not needed.

Note: It is best to keep supplementary information separate. You might be required to include information that is not important to most of the intended audience, such as the legal basis of a policy. You might want to include information that most of the intended audience considers less important, such as a list of sources or a detailed explanation. If you need to include supplementary information within your communication, use appendices, bibliographies, or other ways to separate it from the main part.

12.6 Organizing the information

- a) You shall organize the information in a structure that is as simple as the intended audience needs.

Note: Examples of organizing information:

- 1) in a brief communication in print or online, the intended audience might need only a title, 2 or 3 groups of information with a heading for each group, and your contact information
 - 2) for a longer or more complex communication, the intended audience might need a title, contact information, information organized in a structure with 3 levels of headings, and many other elements to help find information, understand it, and use it
- b) You shall position the information that is most important to the intended audience early in the communication and where it is easy to find. See Clause [12.5](#).

Note: Example: Give warnings or cautions first or early in the structure.

- c) You shall use a structure that is logical for the intended audience.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) organize to show hierarchy in the communication, from most important to least important, followed by background or extra information;
- ii) organize information to show relationships in the information that will be relevant to the intended audience, such as the following:
 - 1) similarity
 - 2) contrast
 - 3) sequential order
 - 4) cause and effect
 - 5) options and implications
 - 6) question and answer
 - 7) concern and response
 - 8) fact and support
 - 9) instruction and example response to fill in a form
 - 10) instruction and illustration to support it; or
- iii) include lists in the structure where doing so will support the intended audience finding, understanding, and using the information. See Clause [13.6 d](#)).

Note 1: Example: Organize key dates and the implications for each in sequence.

Note 2: Example: Organize the information to answer questions or address concerns where the question or concern arises. In contrast, grouping many questions and answers separate from the related information, such as in a “Frequently Asked Questions” or “FAQs” section, might make it harder for the intended audience to get the information they need when they need it.

Note 3: For more information about forms, see Clause [15](#).

12.7 Title and headings

In a communication with many parts, you shall use titles and headings as follows:

- a) use a title that makes the subject and purpose clear to the intended audience;
- b) use headings to make the structure clear;
- c) use headings to help your intended audience find their way in the communication;
- d) use specific headings to help your intended audience scan for specific information they want; and
- e) use headings to help your intended audience predict the information after each heading.

Note 1: In very short communications, such as billboards and road signs, titles and headings are not necessary. Structure and priority are made evident instead using layout, typography, and contrast. See Clause [14](#).

Note 2: Example: A title such as “New programs to help apartment renters” gives a clear subject, purpose, and audience to help audiences decide if the communication is relevant to them. In contrast, a title such as “Rent Program 2025-P001: Updates” does not help clarify if the communication is relevant.

Note 3: Example: Headings such as “Who can apply,” “When to apply,” and “How to apply” are specific and focused on the intended audience. In contrast, generic headings such as “Part 1,” “Part 2,” “Conclusion,” “Eligibility,” “Intake deadlines,” “Steps,” or only numbers are not.

Note 4: For more about constructing titles and headings, see Clause [13.5](#).

12.8 Other elements of structure

- a) You should include an overview of the communication to help the intended audience find, understand, and use the information.

Note 1: The overview could take one of the following forms or a combination of them:

- 1) an introduction of one or more sentences;
- 2) a table of contents;
- 3) an executive summary; or
- 4) an abstract.

Note 2: In a very short communication, a specific title alone might be enough as an overview for the intended audience.

- b) In a long communication, you shall include a subject index to help the intended audience find information in the communication. A long communication is defined as a communication with 48 pages or more, or 16,000 words or more.

Note: A search tool is not an adequate replacement for a subject index but could be used as a complementary navigation tool.

- c) You should use other strategies and include other elements in the structure to help the intended audience find, understand, and use the information.

Note: Examples of other strategies and elements that could support plain language in different contexts:

- 1) for key terminology that the intended audience must understand, define each term and include all terms and their definitions in a list that is easy to find
 - 2) for key dates, use a specific heading, list the key dates, and state what is significant about each date or what needs to be done by each date
 - 3) for calling attention to what a person needs to do or have, use a specific heading. For example, “Bring these documents”
 - 4) for steps in an application process, use a specific heading and number the steps in order. See Clause [13.6 d\)](#)
 - 5) for equal options to choose from, state that the intended audience chooses any from the list and use an unordered list format. See Clause [13.6 d\)](#)
 - 6) for supplementary or background information, use a specific heading and organize the communication so that this information is clearly available but not prioritized. An example for a website is an option to download the supplementary information in a clearly titled PDF. See Clause [12.4](#)
- d) You should plan in the structure where to give your contact information, information about versions in other languages or formats, and version information. See Clause [10.10](#).

13 Wording and expression

"A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information."

See Clause [6.1](#).

Wording and expressions used in your communication work together with its structure and design so that your intended audience can easily understand and use the information.

Elements that make a communication understandable include words, numbers, sentences, punctuation and capitalization, titles and headings, paragraphs, sections, and lists, and writing style and tone.

13.1 Words

- a) You shall choose clear and precise words that the intended audience already knows, understands, uses, and accepts, using these strategies:
 - i) choose clear and concise words that are acceptable to the intended audience;
 - ii) use everyday words that are familiar to the intended audience;

Note: When using existing plain language word lists and other professional resources for writers and editors, consult your intended audience to confirm that the words are clear and precise for them.

- iii) use the simplest form of a word that expresses the meaning and is understandable to the intended audience;
- iv) if you need to choose between 2 or more words that are equally familiar, use the word with the fewest syllables;
- v) choose a word that has only one meaning in the context of the communication;

Note: Some words lead to confusion. For example, homonyms are words which have different meanings but the same or similar pronunciation with either the same spelling or different spelling.

- vi) use the same word to mean the same thing;

Note: For example, if you say “Warning! Do not go beyond this barrier” then use “barrier” or “barriers” throughout. Do not use “fence” or “railing” to mean the same thing.

- vii) use different words to mean different things;

Note: For example, using “may” to convey both permission and possibility can confuse your intended audience. Instead, choose two different words for those two functions, like “can” for permission and “might” for possibility.

- viii) use literal and concrete words that are relevant to the intended audience’s concrete experience;

Note: Caution - Some kinds of words could mean different things to different people. For example, concept words that represent abstract ideas such as “respect” and “equality,” category words that group items such as “fruits” and “animals,” and value-judgment words such as “enough” and “excessive” might be interpreted differently from the way you intended. Testing your communication with your intended audience (see

Clause [11.4](#)) might uncover some of these differences and inform your choices of wording.

- ix) include concrete examples to explain abstract or complex ideas;
- x) remove words and phrases that are unnecessary for the intended audience to understand the information; and

Note: Examples of unnecessary adverbs, adjectives, modifiers, and other words:

- 1) words and phrases that don't add meaning, such as "actually" and "it goes without saying that"
 - 2) repeating words with similar meaning, such as "unneeded luxury"
 - 3) pairs of words that imply each other, such as "past memories" and "final outcome"
 - 4) specific words implying their general categories, such as "red colour"
- xi) use figurative words and phrases and figures of speech only when the intended audience knows and understands them.

Note 1: Figurative words and figures of speech include similes, metaphors, hyperbole, personification, allusions, and idioms.

Note 2: Expressions that are unique to a culture are hard to translate and understand in other languages.

Note 3: Try not to use unnecessarily violent language. For example:

- 1) [Specific to English] "hardest hit", "target user", and "overkill"
- 2) [Specific to French] "il a frappé fort avec son message," "elle l'a fusillé du regard," and "l'opposition a tiré à boulets rouges"

Note 4: Caution - Although some people in the intended audience might know and use figurative words and phrases or figures of speech, they could be harmful to others. For example, comparing someone to an animal or object such as a "beast" or a "drone" or using a metaphor like someone's words are "a poison."

- b) You shall use words that are unfamiliar to your intended audience, uncommon words, or specialized words only in these situations:
 - i) when the intended audience needs to learn the unfamiliar word to meet their needs; or
 - ii) when the intended audience understands and prefers the uncommon or specialized word.

Note: For example, use words from local dialects and slang and informal language if these are best understood by the intended audiences. See also Clause [10.4](#).

- c) You shall help your intended audience learn words that are unfamiliar to them, uncommon words, or specialized words.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) highlight and explain words that are unfamiliar to the intended audience, uncommon words, or specialized words as soon as they appear using concise, clear, and everyday words while retaining the meaning;

Note: For example, using a consistent phrase such as “this means” to help alert the intended audience that what follows is a definition.

- ii) include a glossary of unfamiliar, uncommon, or specialized words in longer communications and anytime a glossary is preferred by the intended audience;
- iii) clarify the meaning of unfamiliar, uncommon, or specialized words with examples in words, visuals, or both; or
- iv) show the intended audience how to say words that are unfamiliar to the intended audience, uncommon words, or specialized words by giving them a phonetic or audio pronunciation.

Note: For example:

- 1) [Specific to English] “A provincial court could appoint someone to be a committee (pronounced caw-mi-tay) of estate.” This description clarifies that in this context, the word committee is pronounced differently from its common pronunciation.
 - 2) [Specific to French] the word ombudsman is pronounced « om-bouds-man » in French.
- d) To address emotional and distress-related barriers when choosing words, you shall use language that is acceptable to the intended audience when discussing sensitive topics or provide content warnings before difficult subjects.

Note : Consider including references to mental health resources or support services.

- e) To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when choosing words, you should choose words of one to two syllables when possible.
- f) To address language and comprehension barriers when choosing words, you should not use any figurative words or figures of speech. See Clause [13.1 a\)](#).
- g) To address visual, hearing, and format barriers, you should present your information including examples in a way that a person can understand the information and context without having a particular visual or audio image in their memory.

Note: Using adjectives related to sound or colour could create a barrier for someone who has never heard the sound or seen the colour before.

- h) You may develop a word list and glossary of plain language equivalents for specialized words and phrases to make writing and editing more efficient and make communication consistent across your organization.
- i) You shall use the full names, proper nouns, and special phrases instead of abbreviations using these strategies:
 - i) use a shortened word form to refer to the full name, proper noun, or special term such as “the program” or “the disease” only when preferred by the intended audience;
 - ii) place the shortened word form in parentheses after the first mention only when needing to be clear what the shortened word form is referring to; and

Note: Examples:

- 1) first mention of “Canadian Union of Public Employees (the union),” then “the union” for subsequent mentions

- 2) first mention of “Canadian Space Agency (the agency),” then “the agency” for subsequent mentions
 - 3) first mention of “Capital gains tax,” then “the tax” for subsequent mentions
 - 4) first mention of “King Charles III,” then “the king” for subsequent mentions
- iii) restructure the information when it becomes unclear what the shortened word forms are referring to.
- j) You shall use abbreviations, including acronyms and initialisms, only in these situations:
- i) when the abbreviation is well known and generally accepted by the intended audience; or
 - ii) when space is limited such as on a form, in a table, or within a figure.
- k) You shall follow these strategies when using abbreviations:
- i) provide the full name, proper noun, or special term followed by the abbreviation in parentheses when it first appears except where the abbreviation is more familiar to the intended audience than the full name or special term;
- Note 1:** Examples of providing the full name followed by the abbreviation: “Canada Revenue Agency (CRA),” “kilogram (kg).”
- Note 2:** Examples of abbreviations that are likely to be more familiar than the full name: “RCMP,” “CBC,” “HIV,” “DNA.”
- ii) use the full name or special term plus abbreviation in parentheses the first time it is used in each major section of longer communications, such as chapters; and

- iii) include a list of essential abbreviations and their meaning when used in forms, tables, and figures.

Note 1: Using many unfamiliar abbreviations increases demands on your intended audience's working memory, making it harder for them to follow the information in your communication.

Note 2: When the abbreviation is an acronym and expressed as a word such as AIDS, COVID, and CUPE, it can pose challenges for screen readers, which do not always read out the acronym in a clear way.

- l) [Specific to English] You may use contractions when they are used and easily understood by your intended audience.

Note: Examples of common contractions are “can’t” for “cannot” and “don’t” for “do not.”

- m) [Specific to English] To address memory, attention, and processing barriers, you should use whole words.

Note: Unfamiliar contractions can increase confusion and increase the chances of a misinterpretation.

- n) You should not use words or abbreviations from another language, including Latin words and phrases, unless your intended audience knows and uses them.
- o) You should not use jargon or slang unless the intended audience already knows and uses it or needs to learn it.

Note: For example, jargon “the house” when referring to the parliament.

13.2 Numbers

- a) You shall express numbers in the form that makes them clear and understandable for the intended audience.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) choose either numerals or words, depending on the purpose, context, format, and preference of the intended audience;

Note: In general, numbers when depicted as numerals are consistently better understood than words by most audiences. Numerals stand out within the text.

- ii) present numbers consistently throughout and across communications directed to the same intended audience;
- iii) use numerals when representing data or facts;
- iv) break down complex numbers into simpler terms;

Note: For example, when referring to large numbers, use numerals for the significant number and use a word for the magnitude (15 million, not fifteen million or 15,000,000).

- v) use decimal places when they are relevant for audience understanding;
- vi) present numbers so that they are understood quickly, easily, and without ambiguity;

Note: Similarity in appearance between numerals and letters can cause confusion, especially when presented close to one another. See Clause [14.4](#).

- vii) use numerals when referring to numbered sections, pages, sequential lists, tables, and phone numbers;

- viii) present numbers and numerical concepts in the least complex way for the subject, context, and to support the intended audience and their goals;
- ix) to express dates and times, use either numeral or word form depending on context, format, and what is clear to the intended audience; or

Note 1: In Canadian English, the word form of the date is presented as month, day, year. For Canadian French, the word form of the date is presented as day, month, year. The Standards Council of Canada specifies that when expressing dates in numerals, all dates are presented as YYYY-MM-DD in both English and French.

Note 2: In online communications such as forms, an option is to include a popup calendar, date picker, or calendar widget so that the person can choose the date.

- x) express proportions (percentages, decimals, and fractions), money, weights and measures, and distances in forms that are best understood by the intended audience.
- b) To address language and comprehension barriers when using numbers, you should do the following:
- i) use general expressions of magnitude or words such as many, most, half, or few instead of quoting percentages, numbers, and statistics; or
 - ii) situate an event in time using simple benchmarks known to the intended audience.

Note: For example, “A long time ago...” instead of “In 1835...,” “After the Second World War...” instead of “In 1952...”

13.3 Sentences

- a) You shall construct clear and concise sentences.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use a basic sentence pattern so that it is clear what is happening and who is doing what;

Note: In English and French, the basic sentence pattern is subject–verb–object (or complement).

- ii) keep the subject close to its verb and the verb close to the object without long interrupting phrases;

- iii) use imperative construction if the implied subject "you" is clear;

- iv) construct sentences so they can be interpreted only in one way;

Note: An example of a sentence that can be interpreted in more than one way is “The panellists discussed violence on television,” which could mean that the panellists were on television discussing the issue of violence or that they were discussing the issue of violence depicted on television.

- v) use as few words as possible to clearly express the idea and make a complete sentence;

- vi) keep each sentence to only one idea;

- vii) keep introductory clauses short;

- viii) break up long, complicated sentences;

- ix) use the present tense as much as possible;

Note: Present tense is the simplest and most direct way to express actions, and it can often be used to express actions occurring at times other than the present. For example, “They go tomorrow” is in the present tense and expresses the same future action as “They will be going tomorrow,” but it is more simply expressed.

- x) give context before presenting new information;
- xi) when the subject is repeated, use a pronoun only if it is clear to the intended audience who or what the pronoun is referring to;
- xii) [Specific to English] break up groups of nouns that modify another noun;

Note 1: Many nouns in a row are also known as noun strings, noun stacks, or clustered nouns. Although noun strings can make information shorter, they are hard to understand. They force the audience to take the phrase apart to understand the meaning. Using “of,” “to,” or “for” can help break up noun strings.

Note 2: Example: Revise “the public relations improvement program,” to “the program to improve public relations.”

- xiii) use the simplest form of a verb;
- xiv) use the verb form instead of a noun that is formed from the verb;

Note 1: For example, use “consider” instead of “take into consideration.”

Note 2: A noun that is formed from a verb or other part of speech is known as a nominalization. Nominalizations formed from verbs can be harder to understand than their equivalent verb forms.

- xv) use the verb form instead of an adjective that is formed from the verb;

Note: For example, use “reflects” instead of “is reflective of.”

- xvi) use a conjunction to join two clauses that express a single idea;
- xvii) place modifying words such as “only” and “always” next to the words they modify;
- xviii) place a conditional clause either at the end or beginning of the sentence; or
- xix) create clear conditional “if-then” statements.

Note: For example, “If you get into the pool, you will get wet” instead of “You will get wet if you get into the pool.”

- b) You should construct most sentences in the active voice.

Note: The active voice clearly tells the intended audience who or what is doing the action. The active voice is more direct. It sends the message quickly, clearly, and easily. For example, “You need to show your photo identification before boarding the plane.” instead of “Your photo identification needs to be shown before boarding the plane.” In the passive voice, it is not always clear who or what is doing the action.

c) You may construct sentences in the passive voice only in these situations:

i) when you do not know who or what is doing the action;

Note: Example: “I was robbed.”

ii) when the receiver of the action is more important than the doer of the action; or

Note: Example: “Up to 5 staff will be hired by the end of the month.”

iii) when the process (verb) is the focus and the doer is self-evident from the verb.

Note: Example: “Wheat is grown in well-drained soil.”

d) To address language and comprehension barriers when constructing sentences, you should help the intended audience understand each sentence.

The following are possible strategies:

i) complete sentences on single lines. Sentences of 7 to 12 words or 30 to 60 characters are ideal;

ii) start each new sentence on a new line;

iii) leave words whole by starting and finishing a word on the same line;

Note: This means not hyphenating words to allow them to break across a line.

iv) aim to construct sentences that fit on a single line, avoiding constructing sentences that split over two lines, pages, or screens whenever possible;

- v) if the sentence is longer and wraps over two lines, split the sentence at the place of the conjunction or at the place where there is a pause when said aloud; or
- vi) provide easy-to-read text paired with supportive visuals for complex information.

13.4 Punctuation and capitalization

- a) You shall use punctuation marks that your intended audience understands and accepts, using these strategies:
 - i) use common punctuation marks, such as the period, comma, colon, and question mark;
 - ii) use hyphens only to clarify relationships within and between words, and refrain from using hyphens to break a word across lines. See Clauses [13.3 d\)](#) and [14.4 e\)](#);

Note: Examples of hyphens clarifying relationships within and between words:

- 1) [Specific to English]:
 - a) the hyphen in the word “re-signed” helps distinguish it from the word “resigned”
 - b) the hyphen in the compound “brain-eating amoeba” helps clarify that the amoeba eats the brain and not the other way around
- 2) [Specific to French] the hyphen in the word “sans-abri” refers to a person without a permanent home, whereas without a hyphen, it can refer to a person who has no shelter, such being without a shelter in the forest during a thunderstorm.

- iii) [Specific to English] use punctuation to help make relationships between elements in sentences, and between sentences, clear; and
- iv) keep the punctuation consistent throughout the communication.

Note 1: Caution – If punctuation seems overly complex or sentences are long, consider revising a sentence to simplify.

Note 2: A serial comma can help the intended audience understand a list of items in a sentence. This means placing the serial comma after the second last item and before “and” and “or”. For example, a comma placed before “and the families that host them” in the sentence “The program targets newcomers, refugees, international students, and the families that host them,” clarifies that the program applies to families that host newcomers, refugees, and international students, and not just families that host international students.

Note 3: For punctuation in titles and headings, see Clause [13.5 a\)](#), and for punctuation in vertical lists, see Clause [13.6 d\)](#).

- b) You should reduce the use of these punctuation marks where possible:
 - i) asterisk
 - ii) exclamation mark
 - iii) en dash
 - iv) em dash
 - v) ellipsis or suspension points
 - vi) parentheses
 - vii) slash

- viii) semi-colon
- c) You shall not use punctuation marks or symbols to replace words except when they are used and understood by the intended audience.

Note: Examples of symbols that replace words:

- 1) an en dash (–) to replace the word “to”
 - 2) an ampersand (&) to replace the word “and”
 - 3) math symbols like the greater than (>) or less than (<) sign to replace the words “more than” or “less than”
 - 4) a slash (/) to replace the word “and,” “or,” or “both,” such as in “X and/or Y,” which could mean “either X or Y, or both”
- d) You should use capitalization only in the following ways:
- i) capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence, heading, and title of a communication;

Note: This type of capitalization is known as sentence case. Most text uses this case, so most audiences will find it familiar and easiest to read. It clearly signals where sentences start and end. In contrast, too much capitalization, especially when it needlessly draws attention to generic terms and when it distracts, makes text harder to read.

- ii) [Specific to English] capitalize the first letter of proper nouns such as names, places, and titles of office, rank, or role;

Note: Example: Capitalize the title “Minister of Finance” but not “the minister.”

- iii) [Specific to English] capitalize the first-person singular pronoun “I”;

- iv) [Specific to English] capitalize the first letter of the days of the week and months of the year;
- v) capitalize the letters in abbreviations. See also Clauses [13.1 i\)](#), [13.1 j\)](#), and [13.1k\)](#);
- vi) capitalize the first letter of each word in hashtags for social media (also called Camel Case); or

Note: Example: #PlainLanguageDay

- vii) [Specific to French] capitalize the first letter of the names of places and institutions established by law, but do not capitalize the generic names that precede them. Use lowercase letters of the names of positions, ranks or titles, except in forms of address and greetings in correspondence.

Note : Example- write "le collège André-Laurendeau", "le Musée de la civilisation", and use lower case letters for "ministre des Finances" or "ministère des Finances", except for titles in correspondences such as "Ministre des Finances"

13.5 Titles and headings

- a) When using titles and headings, you shall construct them using these strategies:
 - i) use words and expressions the intended audience easily understands. See Clauses [13.1 a\)](#) to [13.1 g\)](#);
 - ii) use titles and headings that are brief and accurately describe the topic or purpose of what is to follow;
 - iii) use a new heading for each new section or topic;
 - iv) use only as many levels of headings as needed to help your intended audience find and understand your information;

Note: Too many heading levels can make the structure of the document hard to follow.

- v) use only as many headings as needed to help your intended audience find and understand your information. See Clause [12.7](#).

Note: Test whether the number of headings in your communication is right for your intended audience. For example, if testers say that the communication seems too broken up or choppy, or a heading is unnecessary, reduce the number of headings. See Clause [11.4](#).

- vi) use a consistent grammatical structure across headings;
 - vii) in English and French, use sentence case for both titles and headings. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word and any proper nouns. See Clause [13.4 d](#));
 - viii) present titles and headings so they are easily recognized, such as with a larger font, a text effect like bold, or other visual cues. See Clause [14.4 j](#)); and
 - ix) leave off all punctuation at the end of a title or heading, unless it is a question.
- b) To address language and comprehension barriers when using headings, you shall limit heading levels to at most 3 levels.
 - c) To address digital and interactive accessibility barriers in titles and headings, you shall conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.

13.6 Paragraphs, sections, and lists

- a) You shall construct clear and concise paragraphs or sections.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) put the most important information first;
- ii) keep paragraphs or sections to one main theme, idea, or grouping of information;
- iii) use a topic sentence to tell the intended audience what the rest of the paragraph or section will be about;
- iv) show the relationships between the sentences in the paragraph or section; or
- v) break up long complex paragraphs or sections into smaller groupings of information, actions, or steps.

Note 1: When you start paragraphs or sections with familiar or related information from elsewhere in the communication before introducing new information, it can help your intended audience understand the relationships between them.

Note 2: Vertical lists can help break up complex paragraphs. See [Clause 13.6 d\)](#).

- b) To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when constructing paragraphs or sections, you should do the following:
- i) break information into short, clear sections with headings;
 - ii) provide clear, direct instructions with examples;
 - iii) offer summaries or key takeaways; and
 - iv) allow extended time limits for online forms and tasks.

- c) To address information access and navigation barriers when constructing paragraphs or sections, you should use icons or visuals to help guide the intended audience. See Clause [14.6](#).
- d) You should present a series of two or more related ideas or words as a vertical list when it helps the intended audience to easily find and understand the information. See Clause [12.6 c\)](#).

The following are possible strategies:

- i) start the vertical list with either a lead-in sentence or a heading;

Note 1: For example, “The committee decided on these actions.” or “Actions of the committee.”

Note 2: A lead-in sentence, also known as the stem of a list, can end in either a colon or period. Headings do not need final punctuation.

- ii) use a lead-in sentence to explain your list if your list is comprehensive, with options, conditional, or ordered in some way;

Note: Examples:

- 1) comprehensive: “Please submit each of these documents”
- 2) with options: “Please bring one of these forms of identification”
- 3) conditional: “If you have any of these concerns, call our office”
- 4) ordered: “To apply for the grant, follow these steps”

- iii) use a consistent grammatical structure within vertical lists;

Note: For example, start each item in the list with the same part of speech in the same form, such as a verb ending in “-ing” or a noun.

- iv) use an ordered list using numbers or letters when presenting items that are sequenced, ranked, in ordered priority, or for future reference to a part;

Note: For example:

- 1) use an ordered list when providing steps to apply for a service
- 2) use an ordered list when the intended audience might want or need to refer to an item in the list by the number or letter, such as in a policy

- v) use an unordered list when presenting items that are equal in importance;

Note 1: For example, use an unordered list when providing a short, simple list of documents to have ready for an appointment and each is of equal importance.

Note 2: Unordered lists are also known as dotted, bulleted, or point-form lists.

- vi) put unordered lists in a sequence that is the most logical for the intended audience;

Note: For example, even though the items are equal in importance, the order might be alphabetical or most common to least.

- vii) use nested vertical lists only if the relationship of the main list item to the nested list is clear to the intended audience;

- viii) break up long lists into separate groups or categories; or
- ix) use the least amount of punctuation needed to help the intended audience understand the list. See Clause [13.4](#).

Note 1: Lists can make it easier for the intended audience to scan and navigate the information and identify the important information.

Note 2: Whether ordered or unordered, lists can be full sentences, words, phrases, or fragments of sentences.

Note 3: When items in the list are full sentences, it is best to capitalize the first letter of each sentence and end with a period. When the items are single words or phrases, it is best to use lowercase unless it is a proper noun and not to capitalize the first letter or use any punctuation at the end.

Note 4: For lists to be accessible digitally, refer to clause 9.1.3 of the CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024 standard.

- e) To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when using vertical lists, you should do the following:
 - i) express list items as complete sentences; and
 - ii) limit lists to at most five items.

13.7 Writing style and tone

- a) You should write in a straightforward, easy-to-understand way using a conversational tone.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) write as if you are speaking with your intended audience;

- ii) use first-person and second-person pronouns to help your intended audience connect with the communication;

Note: Pronouns can help make your communication be more relatable. The following are examples of first-person and second-person pronouns:

- 1) referring to the intended audience as “you” and “your”
- 2) referring to your organization as “we” and “our”
- 3) if using a question-and-answer structure, referring to the one asking the questions as “I” and the one answering the questions as “we”

- iii) write with your intended audience’s specific needs, experiences, and prior knowledge in mind;
- iv) focus on what matters to your intended audience; or
- v) define pronouns clearly when referring to many subjects in a sentence or when addressing many audiences.

Note: Caution – When you have many subjects in a sentence or many audiences, using pronouns might confuse your intended audience. In this case, it is better to repeat the noun.

Note 1: Sentences are usually shorter and simpler when written in a straightforward, easy-to-understand way.

Note 2: A conversational tone helps your intended audience focus on the message and is easier to understand, but it is not always appropriate for the context. For example, your audience might associate a more formal tone with authority and trustworthiness.

- b) You should use a positive tone and positive phrasing wherever possible following these strategies:
 - i) focus on what something is rather than what it is not;
 - ii) focus on what your intended audience is permitted to do rather than what they are not permitted to do; and
 - iii) use words that express a positive meaning.

Note: Positive phrasing is easier to understand, more straightforward, more concise, and more likely to be well received. The intended audience might emotionally react and be confused by negatives, double or multiple negatives, and exceptions to exceptions. Negative phrasing also makes your communication more complicated.

Example of positive and negative phrasing:

- 1) positive phrasing: “Please contact us if you have any questions”
- 2) negative phrasing:” Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions”

Example of positive and negative tone:

- 1) positive tone: “After you pay off your mortgage, you will own your home outright”
- 2) negative tone: “If you do not pay off your mortgage, you will not own your home”

- c) You may use a negative tone in these situations:
 - i) to indicate danger or warning;
 - ii) to correct inaccuracies or misinformation;

- iii) when something is prohibited; or
 - iv) when there is an exception to a general rule.
- d) You should write inclusively to represent the diversity of all people in your communications, regardless of their identity, orientation, or social class.

Note: Caution – Your goal is to make your communication easy to find, understand, and use. If some inclusive writing practices hinder this goal for your intended audience, choose practices that prioritize clarity for that audience.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use words and expressions that the intended audience prefers when referring to their identity, orientation, or social class. See [Clause 10.4](#);
- ii) when writing to or about a specific, identifiable person, use the pronouns, titles, and other gendered terms that person prefers and uses;
- iii) when writing to or about a person and you do not know their gender or preferences, try to make your communication gender-neutral;

The following are ways to do this:

- 1) use the gender-free pronoun “you”
- 2) [Specific to English] use “they” or “their” as a singular pronoun
- 3) leave out third-person pronouns “he,” “she,” “him,” “her,” “his,” and “hers”
- 4) use the person’s name or role

- 5) use generic titles, words, and expressions
 - 6) leave out titles that indicate gender
 - 7) change the sentence into the plural
- iv) [Specific to French] include the feminine gender; or

The following are ways to do this:

- 1) apply the feminine gender to the names of functions, professions, ranks; or

Note: For example, “maire” or “mairese”; “enseignant” or “enseignante”, “président” or “présidente”.

- 2) use complete pairings;

Note 1: For example, “les avocates” and “les avocats”; “les étudiantes” and “les étudiants”.

Note 2: Complete pairings lead to problems with the agreement of past participles and adjectives. The proximity principle recommended in those cases. The agreement is made with the noun in the closest position to the word to be conjugated. The suggestion is to write the feminine noun first, then the masculine. For example, “Les citoyennes et les citoyens sont heureux de leur nouvelle mairesse.”

Note 3: The use of abbreviated pairings is only possible in a restricted space, such as in a table. Parentheses or brackets are preferred. For example, “un(e) ingénieur(e)”.

- v) [Specific to French] make your communication inclusive by writing in gender-neutral terms.

The following are ways to do this:

- 1) use gender-neutral terms: nouns, adjectives, pronouns, determiners. A gender-neutral term is written in the same way in the masculine or feminine, without changing its form;

Note 1: Examples of gender-neutral names: “compagnon de travail” or “compagne de travail” replaced by “collègue de travail”; “collaborateur” or “collaboratrice” replaced by “partenaire”.

Note 2: Examples of gender-neutral adjectives: “Plaisant” or “plaisante” replaced by “aimable”; “posé” or “posée” replaced by “calme”.

Note 3: Examples of gender-neutral pronouns: “Aucun” and “aucune” replaced by “personne”; “ceux et celles” replaced by “quiconque”.

- 2) use neutral, generic or collective words;

Note: For example, “les citoyens” and “les citoyennes” replaced by “la population”; “les employées” and “les employés” replaced by “le personnel”; “le père et la mère” replaced by “les parents”.

- 3) use plural. Some words that are gendered in the singular become gender-neutral in the plural;

Note: For example, “un” or “une journaliste” replaced by “les journalistes”; “le” or “la médecin” replaced by “les médecins”.

- 4) rephrase your content to make it gender-neutral; or

Note: For example, “Inscrit(e) depuis le” replaced by “Date d’inscription”; “Êtes-vous propriétaire d’un véhicule?” replaced by “Avez-vous un véhicule?”

- 5) use the names of functions or administrative units.

Note: For example, “directeur” or “directrice” replaced by “la direction”; “coordonnateur” or “coordonnatrice” replaced by “la coordination”.

14 Design

"A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended audience can easily do each of the following:

- a) find what they need;
- b) understand what they find; and
- c) use that information."

See Clause [6.1](#).

Use what you have learned about the needs and preferences of your intended audience, and the barriers they face to design your communication. Consider the purpose of your communication and how your communication will be used by your intended audience to determine the design. Consider how design principles such as contrast, consistency, and position help to develop accessible communications for your intended audience. Design makes the structure of the communication clear and helps the intended audience find the information they need.

As defined, plain language involves design. The design of your communication is as important as its structure and wording. They function together to make it easier for your intended audience to find, understand, and use your communication.

This means doing the following:

- a) designing your communication to be readily usable by most;
- b) creating a design that addresses barriers;
- c) making your communication adaptable to different audiences; and
- d) making your communication compatible with assistive technology.

Design works best and is the most cost-effective when it is considered when you start planning your communication.

14.1 Overall design

- a) You should consider working with a designer who is experienced in developing accessible communications and using the principles of plain language.
- b) To make a communication digitally accessible, you shall conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.
- c) When a digital format allows the intended audience to make choices for themselves, you should set the default to conform with the following clauses:
 - i) type size. See Clause [14.4 f\)](#);
 - ii) spacing between lines. See Clause [14.4 a\)](#); and
 - iii) contrast. See Clause [14.5](#).

14.2 Format

- a) You shall choose the format that best meets the needs and preferences of your intended audience. See Clauses [10.1](#), [10.2](#), [10.3](#), [10.4](#), [10.5](#), [10.6](#), and [10.7](#) on audience needs and Clause [11.4](#) on testing.

Note: Different audiences might need different formats. Members of your intended audience might request alternate formats.

- b) You shall design your communication in a way that does each of the following:
 - i) motivates your intended audience to pay attention to your communication;

- ii) motivates your intended audience to interact with your communication; and
- iii) helps your intended audience find their way through the communication. See Clause [12](#).

Note: Your design helps to clarify each of the following:

- 1) what is most important and less important
- 2) what to pay attention to first, next, and later
- 3) what is related and not
- 4) how to scan the title and headings

14.3 Layout

- a) You should create margins that are wide enough for the intended audience to easily read and use the information in your communication.

Note 1: Example: In print communications that are bound, define the margins so that the information near the binding is fully visible and easy for the intended audience to read.

Note 2: Consider defining the margins to be at least 15% of the width of a text column on all sides of a communication. See Clause [14.3 c](#)). Test with your intended audience to determine what works for them. See Clause [11.4](#).

- b) You should create text columns that help your intended audience use your communication.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use a consistent column width for all body text;

- ii) if using more than one column, allow enough space between columns so that the intended audience can easily distinguish between them; or
- iii) keep paragraphs whole in a single column.

Note: The amount of text on each line can affect how easy it is to read. Lines that are too short or too long can make the text hard to follow. For body text, consider defining a text column width of 50 to 75 characters, then test your communication with your intended audience (see Clause [11.4](#)) to determine what works for them.

- c) You should create white space in your communication using these strategies:
 - i) use white space to separate blocks of unrelated information and improve readability;
 - ii) aim for 40 to 50% of the space to be white space;
 - iii) use extra line spacing between paragraphs instead of indenting;
 - iv) use only one column of text when using larger font sizes or wider margins; and
 - v) consider starting new topics on a new page or column.

Note: White space makes it easier for the intended audience to scan and navigate your communication. These are some examples of white space:

- 1) wide margins
- 2) space between sections, columns, blocks of text, or paragraphs
- 3) space around headings, text, boxes, and other visual elements

- 4) space between lines of text
- 5) space around special items such as lists and tables

14.4 Typography

- a) You shall use enough space between lines of text so that your intended audience can easily distinguish between characters on different lines.

Note: Caution – Whereas too little space between lines can make text hard to read because the characters overlap or interfere in ways that obscure their shape, too much space between lines can make text harder to follow across line breaks. Test your line spacing with your intended audience to identify the spacing they prefer. See Clause [11.4](#).

- b) You shall use enough space between paragraphs or sections so that your intended audience can easily distinguish between paragraphs and sections.
- c) You shall align similar elements of text consistently so that the intended audience can easily find, understand, and use your communication.

The following are possible strategies.

- i) align titles to the left;

Note: For those who use magnification, it is easier to find the title when it is aligned left.

- ii) align headings so that each level of headings has a straight and consistent left-hand edge. This is known as setting text flush-left. Different heading levels can have different left-hand edges;

- iii) align the body text, including the first line, so that a block of body text has a straight and consistent left-hand edge. In other words, set the body text flush-left; or
- iv) align data and numbers in tables to the right.

Note 1: The left-hand edge of the body text could be different from the left-hand edge of headings. Setting the body text indented from the left-hand edge of the headings can help the intended audience distinguish body text from headings and more easily scan the headings.

Note 2: A layout might have many vertical lines of left-hand alignment. For example, the communication might have one line along which all paragraphs are aligned to the left and another line along which all vertical lists are aligned.

- d) You shall not align text to both the left and the right at the same time.

Note: Aligning text to both left and right at the same time is called justified.

- e) You should not break words across lines with hyphens if doing so reduces the intended audience's understanding of the communication.
- f) You shall choose a typeface and font size that your intended audience can easily read from a comfortable distance within the context of the situation.

Note: This standard uses the term “typeface” to refer to the overall style and design of a set of letters, numbers, and symbols. The term “font” refers to a specific member of a typeface. For example, Helvetica is a typeface, but 12-point italic Helvetica is a font.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) choose a typeface that has distinct shapes for different characters;

Note: For example, choose a typeface where the capital letter “I” looks different from a lowercase letter “l” or the number “1,” where the zero looks different from a capital “O,” and where the letter “m” can be distinguished from an “r” and an “n” close together.

- ii) choose a typeface with a medium weight or medium thickness of its stroke;

Note: Consider choosing a typeface where the thickness of the stroke is about 0.1 times the height of a capital “X,” then test your communication with your intended audience (see Clause [11.4](#)) to determine what works for them.

- iii) choose a typeface with simple shapes and patterns with balanced proportions;

Note: Consider choosing a typeface with these characteristics, then test your communication with your intended audience (see Clause [11.4](#)) to determine what works for them:

- 1) the width of the capital “X” is 0.65 to 0.95 times its height;
and
- 2) the height of the lowercase “x” is about 0.65 to 0.75 times the height of the capital “X”;

- iv) limit the number of typefaces in your communication to at most three;

- v) use the same typeface for the same purpose, such as the same typeface for all headings;
- vi) choose the font size of the title to be at least two times the size of the body text and each level of heading to be smaller than the previous level but still larger than the body text; or
- vii) use regular text most of the time. Regular text is also known as roman or upright text.

Note: Text in italic or ALL CAPS is harder to read than regular text, especially when the text is longer than a few words.

- g) To address language and comprehension barriers with fonts, you should choose a typeface where mirror-image letters, like “p” and “q” or “b” and “d,” have distinct shapes.
- h) You shall use enough space between letters so that the intended audience can easily distinguish individual letters.

Note: Consider setting letter spacing, also known as tracking, to at least 0.12 times the font size, then test your communication with your intended audience (see Clause [11.4](#)) to determine what works for them.

- i) You shall use enough space between words so that the intended audience can easily distinguish individual words.

Note: Consider setting word spacing to at least 0.16 times the font size, then test your communication with your intended audience (see Clause [11.4](#)) to determine what works for them.

- j) You shall use simple visual cues to provide emphasis.

Note 1: Examples of simple visual cues include the following:

- 1) bold

- 2) boxes or coloured borders
- 3) arrows or other clear symbols
- 4) dots (bullets)
- 5) words such as “Note” or “Important”

Note 2: Your information needs to make sense without these visual cues. For example, some screen readers will not emphasize bolded text.

Note 3: Cautions – When adding emphasis:

- 1) reserve underlining for hyperlinks
- 2) use ways to emphasize in moderation
- 3) refrain from using ALL CAPS to emphasize text
- 4) refrain from using italics to emphasize text
- 5) refrain from using any special effects, such as adding shadow, outline, light, or drop caps

14.5 Contrast and colour

- a) You shall use contrast in visual communications to make organization, structure, and priority visible to your intended audience.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) choose a plain and clear background; or
- ii) choose a high contrast between the text and the background.

Note 1: Check the contrast between text and background using a contrast-checking tool (see Clause [11.1 b](#)) aiming for a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1. For example, try using black or dark blue text on a white background.

Note 2: Caution – Using visuals, including textures, behind text can make the text harder to understand and use.

- b) You shall use contrast to make headings clearly distinct from body text.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use a different typeface. See Clause [14.4 f](#));
- ii) use bold text. See Clause [14.4 j](#))
- iii) set headings in a larger type size. See Clause [14.4 f](#)); or
- iv) set headings in a colour that contrasts with the body text. See Clause [14.5 b](#)).

Note: Applying all of these strategies together maximizes contrast.

- c) You should use colour as a way to compare, identify, and differentiate.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use colours as one way to help the intended audience find the information they need;

Note: For example, using colour tabs to indicate different parts, repeating a colour to indicate related parts.

- ii) use colours that your intended audience can easily distinguish from each other when the colours convey or differentiate information;

Note: Ways to check that colour is not the only way you are conveying meaning are to print your communication in greyscale or use a colour blindness simulator. See Clause [11.1 b](#)). You can change hue, brightness, saturation, or a combination of these, to differentiate one colour in your communication from another.

- iii) choose colours that provide a high contrast between the text and the background;
- iv) choose colours that have meaning to the intended audience;
- v) reinforce colour meaning with a shape, visual, or text;
- vi) limit coloured text to titles, headings, or information you want to emphasize; or
- vii) refrain from using bright or fluorescent colours.

14.6 Visuals

- a) When using visuals, you shall use them to support the intended audience's understanding of the information in your communication.

Note: Visuals include photos, illustrations, graphs, charts, symbols, icons, and videos.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) use visuals that convey the meaning either alone or together with text or audio;
- ii) choose visuals that your intended audience can understand and use;
- iii) choose visuals that have meaning for your intended audience;

- iv) choose visuals that are clear and make sense to your intended audience;
- v) choose visuals that are familiar to the intended audience, such as visuals depicting situations from their everyday life;
- vi) choose visuals with the least amount of detail needed to convey the meaning;
- vii) use only enough visuals to convey the meaning while maintaining white space;
- viii) use visuals that give the intended audience a sense of the context;

Note: Examples:

- 1) when showing a body organ, also show it within the context of the body
 - 2) when showing an image of a tick, show it within the environment where it lives
- ix) choose visuals that convey or illustrate the action you want the intended audience to take;
 - x) limit visuals with a negative tone unless in either of these situations:
 - 1) when a negative visual showing what not to do is paired with a positive one showing what to do; or
 - 2) when the visual is intended to communicate danger or warning; or
 - xi) evaluate the effectiveness of the visuals. See Clause [11](#).
- b) You shall use a type and style of visuals that is accepted by your intended audience and appropriate for the purpose.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) choose visuals your intended audience can relate to;
- ii) choose visuals that represent the diversity of the intended audience;
- iii) consider using illustrations or flow charts to depict a process or approach;
- iv) consider using symbols or icons as ways to help your intended audience navigate or interpret your information;
- v) consider using simple line illustrations that do not give detail unnecessary to the purpose; or
- vi) consider using photos when needing to realistically represent places, people, objects, or events of daily life.

Note: Caution – When choosing visuals involving members of under-represented groups, consult with them to determine if the visuals and the context in which the visuals are used are acceptable.

- c) You may use visuals that are unfamiliar to your intended audience, uncommon visuals, or specialized visuals only in these situations:
 - i) when the intended audience needs to learn an unfamiliar visual to meet their needs, such as to recognize the visual that means flammable;
 - ii) when the intended audience understands and prefers the uncommon or specialized visual; or
 - iii) when the intended audience needs to use the visual to meet their needs.

- d) When using visuals to support the information in the text, you should relate the visuals to the text.

The following are possible strategies:

- i) position visuals so that the relationship to information in the text is clear;
- ii) based on the format and barriers to understanding that the intended audience faces, explain the visual in the text or accompany the visual with a caption or a legend; or
- iii) construct easy-to-understand, relevant, and concise captions, legends, and alternative text.

Note: Captions describe what a visual is about. Alternative text (alt text) describes what a visual is of. Refer to CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024 for more information about captions, legends, and alternative text.

- e) You should place visuals within your communication using these strategies:

- i) place visuals so that they do not distract your intended audience;
- ii) place visuals in a way that maintains white space. See Clause [14.3 c\)](#);
- iii) place visuals so that there is an obvious path for the eye to follow;

Note: If there is a sequence of visuals, place them in the direction of reading, from left to right and from top to bottom. Number them if necessary.

- iv) align visuals with the text they relate to; and

Note: For example, align the left-hand side of a visual with the left-hand margin of a block of text. See Clause [14.4 c\)](#)

- v) place visuals so that text does not run over the visual.
- f) You should use a consistent approach with visuals throughout your communication using these strategies:
 - i) choose the same visuals for the same meaning;
 - ii) choose different visuals for different meanings to make it clear which visual is related to each meaning; and
 - iii) choose visuals of the same style for the same purpose.
- g) You should emphasize important details in visuals using these strategies:
 - i) enlarge small objects so they are easily visible;
 - ii) show the size of an unfamiliar object beside a common object for comparison; and
 - iii) emphasize important details using elements such as circles, arrows, or colour.
- h) You should use high-quality visuals using these strategies:
 - i) use a resolution that is high enough for the intended audience to easily distinguish features in the visual that you want them to distinguish as they use the communication in context;

Note: Caution – Digital visuals with resolution that is higher than necessary can create digital and interactive accessibility barriers. For example, the visuals might be slow to load for people without high-speed internet access.

- ii) when using colour visuals, use the real colour of objects and people; and

- iii) if using visuals that include text, choose visuals with enough contrast between the text and background. See Clause [14.5](#).

Note: If the visual includes text, such as in a simple pie chart or a photo of a sign, transcribe the text into the alternative text (alt text).

- i) For visuals in digital communications to be accessible, you shall build in accessibility features that conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.

Note: Examples of accessibility features:

- 1) alternative text (alt text) in plain language for informative visuals
- 2) long descriptions for complex visuals when the information is not fully captured in the related text
- 3) audio or video alternate formats

14.7 Tables

You should use tables only if the intended audience can easily find, understand, and use the information in this format.

The following are possible strategies:

- a) choose the simplest structure possible;
- b) break up large, complex tables into several simple tables;
- c) consider converting a very simple table into a list;
- d) include a descriptive title;
- e) place the title outside the table;
- f) use short, specific labels and headings;

- g) make sure that all cells have information in them, even if they only indicate a lack of information.

Note 1: For example, when cells have no information:

- 1) explain why in notes, legend, caption, or surrounding text
- 2) enter in the cell “no data” or “0” (zero)

Note 2: Screen readers read every cell, and empty cells can cause confusion.

- h) choose the same design style for all tables in the communication;
- i) use a cell size and cell spacing that is large enough for the intended audience to easily read the cell contents;
- j) make sure rows, columns, and cells are consistent sizes and that each cell aligns with the column header above it;
- k) use built-in table tools within word processing or design software to insert the table;
- l) consider using lines to help differentiate between rows, columns, and other data elements;
- m) use colours only when there is enough contrast between the colour and the text. See [Clause 14.5](#); or
- n) when using colour:
 - i) explain what the colour means in a table note or legend; and
 - ii) make sure colour is not the only way you are conveying meaning.

Note: Caution – Using empty cells, rows, or columns to format the table, or using tables as a formatting tool for body text can create problems for people who use screen readers.

15 Annex A: Forms checklist (Informative)

15.1 Structure

- a) Choose a clear and precise title for the form.
- b) Clearly present the purpose of the form in simple terms.
- c) Clearly indicate the estimated time to complete the form.
- d) Include a table of contents, a list of essential abbreviations, or a glossary if needed.
- e) Place instructions where they are most helpful to the intended audience.
- f) For long or complex forms, provide a guide that explains the information needed to complete the form and the application process.
- g) Provide help to respondents when they are filling out the form.
- h) Give the intended audience the choice to complete the form on paper or electronically.
- i) Indicate what the intended audience needs before starting.

Note: Example: “Prepare the following documents before filling out this form.”

- j) Organize the form’s content logically and coherently.
- k) Group questions by theme and give each group of questions a unique heading.
- l) Highlight mandatory sections and those that are optional.
- m) Number each question to make navigation easier.

- n) Ask the most important questions first.
- o) Request only essential and useful information.
- p) Provide options, such as “Don’t know,” “Other,” or “Not applicable” when relevant.
- q) Provide versions adapted to the needs of different audiences.

15.2 Wording and expression

- a) Use simple, clear words familiar to the intended audience.
- b) Write abbreviations in full whenever possible.
- c) Write short, simple sentences: subject–verb–object.
- d) Prefer clear verb tenses (present, past, future) and avoid the conditional verbs.
- e) Write short and direct questions.
- f) Focus each question on one point of information.
- g) Write affirmative sentences for better clarity.

15.3 Design

- a) Use a readable typeface, without italics.
- b) Adjust the font size to suit the intended audience.
- c) Align text to the left for better readability.
- d) Leave enough space between each question for easier reading.
- e) Clearly differentiate the response options.

16 Annex B: Shall, should, and may clauses (Informative)

This informative Annex has been written in mandatory language to facilitate adoption by anyone wishing to do so.

The following tables present “shall,” “should,” and “may” clauses in the standard. For concision, these tables exclude the following:

- a) cross-references that are found in clauses;
- b) text that is preceded by the following statement: “The following are possible strategies:”; and
- c) examples.

As well, these tables do not include notes, which are informative and not normative.

16.1 Shall statements

In this standard, the word “shall” expresses a requirement or a provision that the user is obliged to satisfy to comply with the standard.

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Identifying the intended audience	To develop a communication in plain language, you shall do each of the following: a) identify the intended audience for the communication;	10.1

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) identify if the intended audience consists of a primary audience for communication and one or more secondary audiences; and c) if there is more than one audience, identify if an audience needs a separate communication. 	
Learning about the intended audience	Throughout the development of your communication, you shall consult and engage with the intended audience about their information needs and any barriers they face except as identified in Clause 10.2 b).	10.2 a)
Learning about the intended audience	<p>Where consultation and engagement is not possible, you shall do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) ask for feedback from the intended audience after the communication is made public. See Clause 11.5; and 	10.2 b)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<p>b) use information from feedback and from information from audience engagement used in the development of similar communications or communications to similar audiences. See Clause 10.2 c).</p>	
Learning about barriers	You shall learn about the barriers that members of your intended audience might face in finding, understanding, and using your communication. See Clause 7.3.	10.3 a)
Learning about barriers	After you have identified barriers, you shall consult with people from the intended audience to find the best ways to address those barriers.	10.3 b)
Learning about self-identity	You shall consult with people with lived experience, including advocacy groups, about terms they use when referring to themselves.	10.4
Identifying the needs and considerations for the communication	You shall identify the following needs and considerations for the communication and develop your communication accordingly:	10.5

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) attitudes and concerns: the attitudes and concerns that the intended audience has about the information and about you as the organization delivering the communication; b) context: the context in which the intended audience will receive the communication; c) format: the format or formats the intended audience needs or prefers for the communication; d) information: what you want to convey in a communication, including these concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the information the intended audience needs or wants to know; ii) the information in the communication that the intended audience will find most important; and iii) the information you need the intended audience to understand; and 	

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<p>e) purpose and use: the intended audience’s purpose and motivation for engaging with the communication and your expectations for the intended audience’s use of the communication; and</p> <p>f) urgency: how quickly the intended audience needs the information.</p>	
Formats for the intended audience	You shall choose formats needed or preferred by the intended audience and best suited to the communication. See Clause 7.1.	10.6
Languages for the intended audience	You shall produce your communication in the language that your intended audience needs to understand it. See Clause 7.1	10.7
Communications in many languages	When developing a communication in many languages, you shall make sure that the communication is in plain language in each language.	10.8 a)
Delivery and cost of communications	You shall deliver communications following the draft standard CAN-ASC-5.2.1: Part 1.	10.9 a)
Contact and version information	To meet the intended audience’s needs, you shall state the following within the communication:	10.10

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<p>a) how to contact you, the organization that developed and delivered the communication, so that members of the intended audience can do any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) ask questions ii) ask for an alternate format; or iii) give feedback; <p>b) if the communication is available in more than one language, where to find each language version;</p> <p>c) if the communication is available in more than one format, where to find each format; and</p> <p>d) information about the version of the communication so that feedback can refer to the correct version.</p>	
Continuing to learn about, from, and with audiences	You shall repeat the process of identifying your intended audience and learning about barriers they face and their needs and considerations when updating material.	10.11

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Testing	As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you shall test your communication with members of your intended audience.	11.4 a)
Testing	You shall choose testing methods based on what you want to learn about your communication.	11.4 b)
Testing	You shall recruit testers who reflect the diversity of your intended audience to user test your communication.	11.4 c)
Testing	<p>You shall conduct testing in ways that respect your testers and that value their time and expertise using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) tell testers that you are testing the effectiveness of your communication, not your testers' knowledge or abilities; ii) compensate testers in some way for their time; and iii) offer testers ways of giving feedback that are accessible to them. 	11.4 d)
Testing	You shall test the communication in its final version and format unless doing so is impossible.	11.4 e)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Structure and audience	<p>You shall develop the structure of a communication using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) learn what structures and formats are accessible to the intended audience, familiar to them, and preferred by them. See Clauses 10.5 and 10.6; b) plan the structure to help the intended audience find information in the communication; and c) evaluate the structure of the communication with the intended audience and revise based on the evaluation. See Clauses 11.4 and 11.5. 	12.1
Structure and format	For digital communications, you shall conform to CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.	12.3 a)
Planning information and its parts	<p>After you have identified what information your intended audience needs (see Clause 10.5), you shall plan the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) how related information can be grouped together; and ii) how different information can be divided into parts. 	12.4 a)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Prioritizing information	<p>You shall identify the priority of information for your communication, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) information that is most important for the intended audience; b) information that is less important but needed; c) information that the intended audience already knows (see Clause 12.2); d) background or supplementary information; and e) information that is not needed. 	12.5
Organizing the information	You shall organize the information in a structure that is as simple as the intended audience needs.	12.6 a)
Organizing the information	You shall position the information that is most important to the intended audience early in the communication and where it is easy to find. See Clause 12.5.	12.6 b)
Organizing the information	You shall use a structure that is logical for the intended audience.	12.6 c)
Title and headings	In a communication with many parts, you shall use titles and headings as follows:	12.7

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) use a title that makes the subject and purpose clear to the intended audience; b) use headings to make the structure clear; c) use headings to help your intended audience find their way in the communication; d) use specific headings to help your intended audience scan for specific information they want; and e) use headings to help your intended audience predict the information after each heading. 	
Other elements of structure	In a long communication, you shall include a subject index to help the intended audience find information in the communication. A long communication is defined as a communication with 48 pages or more, or 16,000 words or more.	12.8 b)
Words	You shall choose clear and precise words that the intended audience already knows, understands, uses, and accepts, using these strategies:	13.1 a)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) choose clear and concise words that are acceptable to the intended audience; ii) use everyday words that are familiar to the intended audience; iii) use the simplest form of a word that expresses the meaning and is understandable to the intended audience; iv) if you need to choose between two or more words that are equally familiar, use the word with the fewest syllables; v) choose a word that has only one meaning in the context of the communication; vi) use the same word to mean the same thing; vii) use different words to mean different things; viii) use literal and concrete words that are relevant to the intended audience's concrete experience; 	

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ix) include concrete examples to explain abstract or complex ideas; x) remove words and phrases that are unnecessary for the intended audience to understand the information; and xi) use figurative words and phrases and figures of speech only when the intended audience knows and understands them. 	
Words	<p>You shall use words that are unfamiliar to your intended audience, uncommon words, or specialized words only in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) when the intended audience needs to learn the unfamiliar word to meet their needs; or ii) when the intended audience understands and prefers the uncommon or specialized word. 	13.1 b)
Words	<p>You shall help your intended audience learn words that are unfamiliar to them, uncommon words, or specialized words.</p>	13.1 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Words	To address emotional and distress-related barriers when choosing words, you shall use language that is acceptable to the intended audience when discussing sensitive topics or provide content warnings before difficult subjects.	13.1 d)
Words	<p>You shall use the full names, proper nouns, and special phrases instead of abbreviations using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="695 867 1211 1199">i) use a shortened word form to refer to the full name, proper noun, or special term such as “the program” or “the disease” only when preferred by the intended audience; <li data-bbox="695 1234 1211 1514">ii) place the shortened word form in parentheses after the first mention only when needing to be clear what the shortened word form is referring to; and <li data-bbox="695 1549 1211 1730">iii) restructure the information when it becomes unclear what the shortened word forms are referring to. 	13.1 i)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Words	<p>You shall use abbreviations, including acronyms and initialisms, only in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) when the abbreviation is well known and generally accepted by the intended audience; or ii) when space is limited such as on a form, in a table, or within a figure. 	13.1 j)
Words	<p>You shall follow these strategies when using abbreviations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) provide the full name, proper noun, or special term followed by the abbreviation in parentheses when it first appears except where the abbreviation is more familiar to the intended audience than the full name or special term; ii) use the full name or special term plus abbreviation in parentheses the first time it is used in each major section of longer communications, such as chapters; and 	13.1 k)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii) include a list of essential abbreviations and their meaning when used in forms, tables, and figures. 	
Numbers	You shall express numbers in the form that makes them clear and understandable for the intended audience.	13.2 a)
Sentences	You shall construct clear and concise sentences.	13.3 a)
Punctuation and capitalization	<p>You shall use punctuation marks that your intended audience understands and accepts, using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) common punctuation marks, such as the period, comma, colon, and question mark; ii) use hyphens only to clarify relationships within and between words, and refrain from using hyphens to break a word across lines. See Clauses 13.3 d) and 14.4 e); iii) [Specific to English] use punctuation to help make relationships between elements in sentences and between sentences clear; and 	13.4 a)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<p>iv) keep the punctuation consistent throughout the communication.</p>	
Punctuation and capitalization	<p>You shall not use punctuation marks or symbols to replace words except when they are used and understood by the intended audience.</p>	13.4 c)
Titles and headings	<p>When using titles and headings, you shall construct them using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) use words and expressions the intended audience easily understands. See Clauses 13.1 a) to 13.1 g); ii) use titles and headings that are brief and accurately describe the topic or purpose of what is to follow; iii) use a new heading for each new section or topic; iv) use only as many levels of headings as needed to help your intended audience find and understand your information; 	13.5 a)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<p>v) use only as many headings as needed to help your intended audience find and understand your information. See Clause 12.7;</p> <p>vi) use a consistent grammatical structure across headings;</p> <p>vii) in English and French, use sentence case for both titles and headings. Capitalize only the first letter of the first word and any proper nouns. See Clause 13.4 d);</p> <p>viii) present titles and headings so they are easily recognized, such as with a larger font, a text effect like bold, or other visual cues. See Clause 14.4 j; and</p> <p>ix) leave off all punctuation at the end of a title or heading, unless it is a question.</p>	
Titles and headings	To address language and comprehension barriers when using headings, you shall limit heading levels to at most three levels.	13.5 b)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Titles and headings	To address digital and interactive accessibility barriers in titles and headings, you shall conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.	13.5 c)
Paragraphs, sections, and lists	You shall construct clear and concise paragraphs or sections.	13.6 a)
Overall design	To make a communication digitally accessible, you shall conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.	14.1 b)
Format	You shall choose the format that best meets the needs and preferences of your intended audience. See Clauses 10.1,10.2, 10.3,10.4,10.5,10.6, and 10.7 on audience needs and 11.4 on testing.	14.2 a)
Format	<p>You shall design your communication in a way that does each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="695 1276 1203 1415">i) motivates your intended audience to pay attention to your communication; <li data-bbox="695 1444 1159 1583">ii) motivates your intended audience to interact with your communication; and <li data-bbox="695 1612 1203 1793">iii) helps your intended audience find their way through the communication. See Clause 12. 	14.2 b)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Typography	You shall use enough space between lines of text so that your intended audience can easily distinguish between characters on different lines.	14.4 a)
Typography	You shall use enough space between paragraphs or sections so that your intended audience can easily distinguish between paragraphs and sections.	14.4 b)
Typography	You shall align similar elements of text consistently so that the intended audience can easily find, understand, and use your communication.	14.4 c)
Typography	You shall not align text to both the left and the right at the same time.	14.4 d)
Typography	You shall choose a typeface and font size that your intended audience can easily read from a comfortable distance within the context of the situation.	14.4 f)
Typography	You shall use enough space between letters so that the intended audience can easily distinguish individual letters.	14.4 h)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Typography	You shall use enough space between words so that the intended audience can easily distinguish individual words.	14.4 i)
Typography	You shall use simple visual cues to provide emphasis.	14.4 j)
Contrast and colour	You shall use contrast in visual communications to make organization, structure, and priority visible to your intended audience.	14.5 a)
Contrast and color	You shall use contrast to make headings clearly distinct from body text.	14.5 b)
Visuals	When using visuals, you shall use them to support the intended audience's understanding of the information in your communication.	14.6 a)
Visuals	You shall use a type and style of visuals that is accepted by your intended audience and appropriate for the purpose.	14.6 b)
Visuals	For visuals in digital communications to be accessible, you shall build in accessibility features that conform with CAN-ASC - EN 301 549:2024.	14.6 i)

16.2 Should clauses

In this standard, the word “should” expresses a recommendation, or that which is advised but not required.

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Communications in many languages	When translating a communication into another language, you should work with translators who are familiar with plain language in the language they are translating into.	10.8 b)
Communications in many languages	When planning live or pre-recorded communications in sign and spoken languages, you should give interpreters enough time and resources to prepare.	10.8 c)
Desktop review	As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should do a desktop review using tools like checklists and software.	11.1 a)
Desktop review	You should review your communication to make sure that it conforms with this standard’s clauses about structure, wording and expression, and design. See Clauses 12, 13, and 14.	11.1 b)
Desktop review	You should use accepted software tools to evaluate your communication for accessibility in structure, wording, and design.	11.1 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Subject matter expert review	As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should work with a subject matter expert to review your communication to make sure that the information is accurate.	11.2
Plain language expert review	As you develop your communication and before you publish it, you should work with a professional with plain language training or expertise to review the communication to identify and remove barriers to finding, understanding, and using the information in your communication.	11.3
Testing	<p>If you expect that you might have to publish a communication urgently with no time to consult with the intended audience, you should plan for these situations using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="743 1192 1203 1444">i) As much as possible, develop and test these communications with your intended audience before you urgently need to use them. <li data-bbox="743 1472 1170 1766">ii) Develop and test templates for communications you might need during emergencies that you can customize based on the situation. 	11.4 f)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Testing	You should test the communication in an environment and context where the intended audience will use it.	11.4 g)
Ongoing evaluation	You should continue to evaluate your communication regularly after publication.	11.5 a)
Ongoing evaluation	If it was impossible for you to test your communication with members of your intended audience before publication, you should user test your document after publication and publish a revised version if the testing uncovers problems. See Clause 11.4 f).	11.5 b)
Ongoing evaluation	You should explicitly invite feedback from your intended audience about your communication. See Clause 10.10.	11.5 c)
Ongoing evaluation	You should keep a record of feedback from your intended audience.	11.5 d)
Ongoing evaluation	After you publish your communication, you should measure relevant outcomes to evaluate the communication's effectiveness at making its information easy for the intended audience to find, understand, and use.	11.5 e)
Structure and prior knowledge	You should use the intended audience's prior knowledge to develop the communication as follows:	12.2

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) when the intended audience knows and prefers a format and structure, consider using that same format and structure for a communication. See Clause 12.1; or b) when the intended audience has some knowledge about the subject, use a structure that builds on that prior knowledge to give more information that the intended audience needs. 	
Structure and format	<p>To address digital and interactive accessibility barriers in structure and format, you should do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) offer alternate formats (such as audio or video with captions); and ii) use options built into word-processing or desktop design programs to tag titles, headings, and other elements in the structure. 	12.3 b)
Structure and format	<p>To address language and comprehension barriers in structure and format, you should do the following:</p>	12.3 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) consider using a structure that combines text and visuals to convey meaning and to help the intended audience find, understand, and use information. See Clause 14 and 14.6; and ii) use a consistent structure of text and visuals. 	
Planning information and its parts	<p>If your communication has many audiences, you should do either of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) develop separate communications for each audience; or ii) structure the single communication in a way that clearly identifies what information is directed to each audience. 	12.4 b)
Other elements of structure	You should include an overview of the communication to help the intended audience find, understand, and use the information.	12.8 a)
Other elements of structure	You should use other strategies and include other elements in the structure to help the intended audience find, understand, and use the information.	12.8 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Other elements of structure	You should plan in the structure where to give your contact information, information about versions in other languages or formats, and version information. See Clause 10.10.	12.8 d)
Words	To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when choosing words, you should choose words of one to two syllables when possible.	13.1 e)
Words	To address language and comprehension barriers when choosing words, you should not use any figurative words or figures of speech. See Clause 13.1 a).	13.1 f)
Words	To address visual, hearing, and format barriers, you should present your information including examples in a way that a person can understand the information and context without having a particular visual or audio image in their memory.	13.1 g)
Words	[Specific to English] To address memory, attention, and processing barriers, you should use whole words.	13.1 m)
Words	You should not use words or abbreviations from another language, including Latin words and phrases, unless your intended audience knows and uses them.	13.1 n)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Words	You should not use jargon or slang unless the intended audience already knows and uses it or needs to learn it.	13.1 o)
Numbers	<p>To address language and comprehension barriers when using numbers, you should do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) use general expressions of magnitude or words such as “many”, “most”, “half”, or “few” instead of quoting percentages, numbers, and statistics; or ii) situate an event in time using simple benchmarks known to the intended audience. 	13.2 b)
Sentences	You should construct most sentences in the active voice.	13.3 b)
Sentences	To address language and comprehension barriers when constructing sentences, you should help the intended audience understand each sentence.	13.3 d)
Punctuation and capitalization	<p>You should reduce the use of these punctuation marks where possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) asterisk ii) exclamation mark iii) en dash 	13.4 b)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv) em dash v) ellipsis or suspension points vi) parentheses vii) slash viii) semi-colon 	
Punctuation and capitalization	<p>You should use capitalization only in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence, heading, and title of a communication; ii) [Specific to English] capitalize the first letter of proper nouns such as names, places, and titles of office, rank, or role; iii) [Specific to English] capitalize the first-person singular pronoun "I"; iv) [Specific to English] capitalize the first letter of the days of the week and months of the year; v) capitalize the letters in abbreviations; 	13.4 d)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> vi) capitalize the first letter of each word in hashtags for social media (also called Camel Case); or vii) [Specific to French] capitalize the first letter of the names of places and institutions established by law, but do not capitalize the generic names that precede them. Use lowercase letters of the names of positions, ranks or titles, except in forms of address and greetings in correspondence. 	
<p>Paragraphs, sections, and lists</p>	<p>To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when constructing paragraphs or sections, you should do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) break information into short, clear sections with headings; ii) provide clear, direct instructions with examples; iii) offer summaries or key takeaways; and iv) allow extended time limits for online forms and tasks. 	<p>13.6 b)</p>

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Paragraphs, sections, and lists	To address information access and navigation barriers when constructing paragraphs or sections, you should use icons or visuals to help guide the intended audience. See Clause 14.6.	13.6 c)
Paragraphs, sections, and lists	You should present a series of two or more related ideas or words as a vertical list when it helps the intended audience to easily find and understand the information. See Clause 12.6 c).	13.6 d)
Paragraphs, sections, and lists	<p>To address memory, attention, and processing barriers when using vertical lists, you should do the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="743 1031 1154 1146">i) express list items as complete sentences; and <li data-bbox="743 1178 1195 1251">ii) limit lists to at most five items. 	13.6 e)
Writing style and tone	You should write in a straightforward, easy-to-understand way using a conversational tone.	13.7 a)
Writing style and tone	<p>You should use a positive tone and positive phrasing wherever possible following these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="743 1598 1130 1713">i) focus on what something is rather than what it is not; 	13.7 b)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii) focus on what your intended audience is permitted to do rather than what they are not permitted to do; and iii) use words that express a positive meaning. 	
Writing style and tone	You should write inclusively to represent the diversity of all people in your communications, regardless of their identity, orientation, or social class.	13.7 d)
Overall design	You should consider working with a designer who is experienced in developing accessible communications and using the principles of plain language.	14.1 a)
Overall design	<p>When a digital format allows the intended audience to make choices for themselves, you should set the default to conform with the following clauses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) type size. See Clause 14.4 f); ii) spacing between lines. See Clause 14.4 a); and iii) contrast. See Clause 14.5. 	14.1 c)
Layout	You should create margins that are wide enough for the intended audience to easily read and use the information in your communication.	14.3 a)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Layout	You should create text columns that help your intended audience use your communication.	14.3 b)
Layout	<p>You should create white space in your communication using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="743 575 1166 785">i) use white space to separate blocks of unrelated information and improve readability; <li data-bbox="743 810 1208 932">ii) aim for 40 to 50% of the space to be white space; <li data-bbox="743 957 1175 1079">iii) use extra line spacing between paragraphs instead of indenting; <li data-bbox="743 1104 1198 1268">iv) use only one column of text when using larger font sizes or wider margins; and <li data-bbox="743 1293 1208 1415">v) consider starting new topics on a new page or column. 	14.3 c)
Typography	You should not break words across lines with hyphens if doing so reduces the intended audience's understanding of the communication.	14.4 e)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Typography	To address language and comprehension barriers with fonts, you should choose a typeface where mirror-image letters, like “p” and “q” or “b” and “d,” have distinct shapes.	14.4 g)
Contrast and colour	You should use colour as a way to compare, identify, and differentiate.	14.5 c)
Visuals	When using visuals to support the information in the text, you should relate the visuals to the text.	14.6 d)
Visuals	<p>You should place visuals within your communication using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) place visuals so that they do not distract your intended audience; ii) place visuals in a way that maintains white space. See Clause 14.3 c); iii) place visuals so that there is an obvious path for the eye to follow; iv) align visuals with the text they relate to; and v) place visuals so that text does not run over the visual. 	14.6 e)
Visuals	You should use a consistent approach with visuals throughout your communication using these strategies:	14.6 f)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) choose the same visuals for the same meaning; ii) choose different visuals for different meanings to make it clear which visual is related to each meaning; and iii) choose visuals of the same style for the same purpose. 	
Visuals	<p>You should emphasize important details in visuals using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) enlarge small objects so they are easily visible; ii) show the size of an unfamiliar object beside a common object for comparison; and iii) emphasize important details using elements such as circles, arrows, or colour. 	14.6 g)
Visuals	You should use high-quality visuals using these strategies:	14.6 h)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) use a resolution that is high enough for the intended audience to easily distinguish features in the visual that you want them to distinguish as they use the communication in context; ii) when using colour visuals, use the real colour of objects and people; and iii) if using visuals that include text, choose visuals with enough contrast between the text and background. See Clause 14.5. 	
Tables	You should use tables only if the intended audience can easily find, understand, and use the information in this format.	14.7

16.3 May clauses

In this standard, the word “may” expresses an option or that which is permissible within the limits of the standard.

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
Learning about the intended audience	<p>You may learn about the intended audience for the communication using these strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="730 672 1226 1008">i) Look at information from previous audience engagement used in the development of similar communications or communications to similar audiences. <li data-bbox="730 1029 1226 1717">ii) Learn about the intended audience and barriers through published research including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="795 1302 1226 1717">1) Statistics Canada or local census data for geographic, demographic, communications, cultural, and other information. 	10.2 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	2) Studies and research evidence for information about how to address barriers.	
Delivery and cost of communications	You may publish some alternate formats at the same time as when you publish the original documents. This would help you reduce the time and effort needed to meet some requests.	10.9 b)
Other elements of structure	You should include an overview of the communication to help the intended audience find, understand, and use the information	12.8 a)
Words	You may develop a word list and glossary of plain language equivalents for specialized words and phrases to make writing and editing more efficient and make communication consistent across your organization.	13.1 h)
Words	[Specific to English] You may use contractions when they are used and easily understood by your intended audience.	13.1 l)
Sentences	You may construct sentences in the passive voice only in these situations:	13.3 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) when you do not know who or what is doing the action; ii) when the receiver of the action is more important than the doer of the action; or iii) when the process (verb) is the focus and the doer is self-evident from the verb. 	
Writing style and tone	<p>You may use a negative tone in these situations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) to indicate danger or warning; ii) to correct inaccuracies or misinformation; iii) when something is prohibited; or iv) when there is an exception to a general rule. 	13.7 c)
Visuals	<p>You may use visuals that are unfamiliar to your intended audience, uncommon visuals, or specialized visuals only in these situations:</p>	14.6 c)

Clause title	Clause text	Clause #
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) when the intended audience needs to learn an unfamiliar visual to meet their needs, such as to recognize the visual that means flammable; ii) when the intended audience understands and prefers the uncommon or specialized visual; or iii) when the intended audience needs to use the visual to meet their needs. 	

17 Annex C: Bibliography (Informative)

Note: Research findings from Accessibility Standards Canada’s Advancing Accessibility Standards Research Grants and Contributions Program informed the background research and development of this Standard. Related research reports are listed in the Bibliography below.

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