

## How to write in plain English

**About:** This guide outlines some basic tips to follow when you are writing press releases, articles, copy for your website or any other written communication.

**Who is this guide intended for:** Sports Development Teams, County Sports Partnerships and sports clubs

**Why write in plain English:** The popularity in electronic media and email makes written communication more important than ever. By planning what you want to say before you start writing, and following the tips outlined in this guide, your key messages have a better chance of being 1) read, 2) understood), and 3) acted upon.

## 1. Plan what you're going to write

Rather than start typing straight away, use a blank sheet of paper to capture key ideas which can then be worked up into sentences.

What are you trying to say? Write your first sentence at the very top of the page and never lose sight of that. This is the sentence that has to capture your audience.

Who are you writing to? Be careful with jargonistic language, keep things simple, clear and concise.

How much space or time have you got to make your point? Research says that people make a decision about whether or not they want to finish reading an article or watching a news bulletin in the first eight seconds, so they are critical to encouraging people to continue.

## 2. Outline key messages

Write four or five bullet points about the key things you want to get across in the piece of writing. If there were four messages you wanted your reader to walk away with what would they be?

### 3. Start writing

Now it is time to add meat to the bones of your article. If you are struggling to write an introduction, then leave it and come back to that bit at the end. You often come up with a better intro when you have written the whole article.

When writing, keep referring to your key points, be ruthless!

Do not write the headline until the article is finished. Do not try to be clever with headlines, that is the job of journalists. Think of a line that sums up the article. A headline should be no more than eight words.

## Writing tips

Keep your sentences short. This is the most important tip. Make simple, bald statements.

Make sure your short sentences follow on from one another and that they do not jump about from issue to issue.

It is now acceptable to start sentences with conjunctives (but, and, however)  
Plain language is key.

It is okay to use bullet points in articles, to take away from using the word "and" too much.

## Writing tips

If you are struggling to think of another word to use instead of the obvious one, don't forget that Microsoft Word has a built in thesaurus. Or you could write the word at the top of a page and write a list of similar words underneath it. Don't be afraid to ask colleagues for examples of better words.

Go with your instinct. If in doubt leave it out.

Sometimes it's helpful to work with someone when putting articles together, either getting them to check your work or to spend 10 minutes together working on it. Two heads are better than one.

If you cannot fit all your key messages in the article, you can use them in quotes.

## Writing tips

If you cannot fit all your key messages in the article, you can use them in quotes.

Quotes should be plausible and sound like something the person would actually say.

Quotes should be well linked and relevant to the sentence directly above it.

For an article it is not very imaginative if all quotes sit at the bottom of the page. If you try to work quotes into the copy then journalists will find it harder to remove the quotes.

## Writing tips

Rather than just having one key message on its own, try to work them into the middle of a sentence.

For feature articles for magazines etc, try to give the article a theme and always end the article with repetition of the beginning of the article and a final thought, something for the reader to take away with them.

### Check List

<b>1</b>	<b>What are trying to say?</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Who are you writing to?</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>What are your key messages?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪</li><li>▪</li><li>▪</li><li>▪</li><li>▪</li></ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>What is your headline?</b>	