



Checklist for EDF style and clear writing

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Clear writing

- I do not use acronyms.

Examples:

1. The European Disability Forum should be written in full the first time it's used. After that it can be referred to as 'the Forum' or 'the organisation'.
2. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can be referred to as 'the UN Convention' or 'the Convention'.
3. The Multiannual Financial Framework can be referred to as 'the Framework' or 'the EU's seven year budget'.
4. When I can't avoid acronyms, I write them in full the first time they appear in a text.
5. This includes European Disability Forum (EDF), European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN)!

- I write short sentences – maximum 25 words.

- I vary the sentence lengths within a text.

Example: Your sentences should not be all the same length. Be punchy. Vary your writing by mixing short sentences (like the last one) with longer ones (like this one). Follow the basic principle of sticking to one main idea in a sentence, plus perhaps one other related point.

- I cut out unnecessary words.

Example: We urge the EU to **protect and safeguard** funding for social inclusion.

- protect or safeguard – not both

- I use verbs instead of nouns.

Examples:

1. The reduction of funds could mean the weakening of programmes for the improvement of the lives of people in the EU.
2. Reducing the funds could weaken programmes that improve the lives of people in the EU.

In the second sentence nouns are replaced by verbs – this makes it shorter and more impactful.

- I use everyday language as much as possible.

Examples:

1. Replace 'stakeholders' with people affected, groups, consultees, people with most to lose/gain, groups who need to be consulted, etc
2. Replace 'actors' with people, groups, people involved, people with a say, groups active on, etc
3. Replace 'harmonise' with bring together, make the same, reduce differences between, etc

- I connect with the reader of my text by using 'you' and 'we'.

Examples:

1. Join **us** at **our** event.
2. Do **you** know what **your** rights are in the European Union as a person with disabilities?

Grammar

- I use active sentences, rather than passive.

Examples:

1. EU law protects you against discrimination. (active)
2. You are protected against discrimination by EU law. (passive)

I start my sentences with the most important idea, action or piece of information.

Examples:

1. To contribute to the debate, we have written this position paper.
2. Our position paper contributes to the debate.

In the first sentence the main idea (the position paper) is left until last. In the second sentence it is given prominence at the start.

I limit sub-clauses to one per sentence.

Example:

Emphasising diversity, inclusion, and collaboration within our membership ensures that all voices, **especially those of the most marginalised**, are represented in our initiatives.

I use the Oxford comma - The so-called Oxford comma is the comma before the last item in a list.

Examples:

1. We will support members at national, EU, and global levels. (Oxford comma)
2. We will support members at national, EU and global levels. (no Oxford comma)

I use British English spelling, rather than US English.

Common examples:

Organisation – not organization

Labour – not labor

Centre – not center

I write numbers as digits – 1, 2, 10, 99, etc.

I use a comma (,) to separate decimals.

Example: 99,99 euros is ninety-nine euros and ninety cents

I use a dot (.) to separate big values.

Examples: 1.010.230 is one million ten thousand two hundred and thirty. 1.000,25 euros is one thousand euros and twenty-five cents.

I use a capital letter for all proper nouns - These are words that name a specific person, place, organisation, or thing.

Examples:

1. The Australian Government passed a new Gender Equality Law. (a specific government and a specific law, therefore use capitals)
2. Many governments are addressing gender equality. (not specific, so do not use capitals)

I avoid symbols when I can write the word in full instead.

Examples:

1. And – not &
2. euros – not €, EUR or Euros
3. More than – not >

I use double quotation marks for reported speech – Something somebody said.

I use single quotation marks to indicate names of things or to highlight individual words.

Examples:

1. The speaker urged the audience, "Don't talk about us without us". (double quotation marks – reported speech)
2. Our tour is called, 'The Future is Accessible'. (name of something – single quotation marks)

I use a hyphen (-) to make compound words

Examples: self-employed, part-time, re-establish.

I use a dash (-) to break up parts of a sentence, in a similar way to commas and brackets.

Example: Our statement calls on EU institutions – especially national governments – to protect the amount that will go into Cohesion.

Document styles

- I use font Arial, size 12, black in the main body of the text.
- I use left alignment.
- I use the official EDF headings or the 'Heading' function in Word (Home, Styles).
- If I don't use official headings, I use high-contrast colours and size 16 or over.
- I use endnotes to reference my sources. I write the endnote in this order: Author, (Year) Title. If it is an online source I make the Title a hyperlink to the URL.

Examples:

1. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (2021). [Policy monitoring and evaluation](#).
2. European Commission (2025). [Commission work programme 2025](#).

- I use footnotes to add detailed explanation or clarification of something in the text that I want to keep out of the main body text.

Useful structures

- I think about the important information my readers need to know.
- I think about the order I present the information. I put the most important information at the top, and less important information lower down.
- I use bullet points to structure information in lists.

Learn

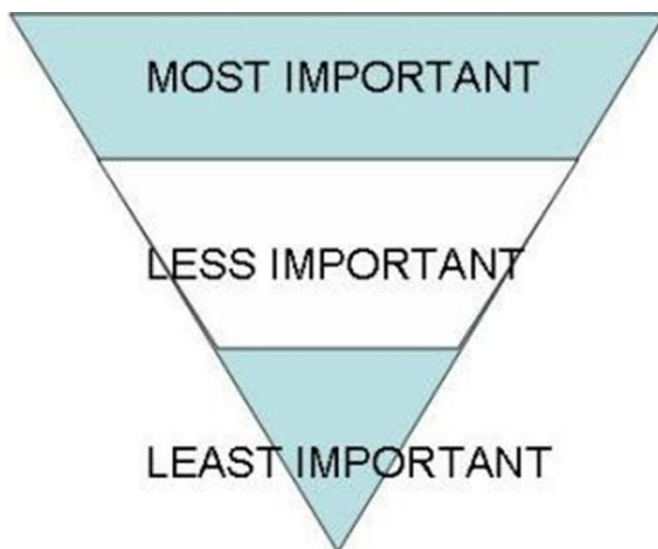
Important information

Does my text answer all these fundamental questions?

- What is going on?
- Who is doing something (to whom)?
- When?
- Where?
- How?
- Why?

Order of information

I approach my writing like an upside-down triangle. I know that not all readers will read to the end.



Bullet points to structure lists

There are two types of lists:

1. When a list is a continuous sentence broken up into separate bullet points. Then, start each point with a lower-case letter use a semi-colon after each point and put a full stop at the end.

Example:

Persons with disabilities should have the right to:

- live independently;
- access inclusive and quality education;
- receive support services without discrimination.

2. When each bullet point is a complete sentence then start each point with a capital letter and end with a full stop.

Example:

- Persons with disabilities have the right to vote and be elected.
All public buildings must be made accessible by law.

Accessibility

- I do not use italics.
- If I use complex words, I explain them.
- I use descriptive link text. I add links directly into words to create clickable text – I don't add the URL separately.

Example: Do: [European Disability Forum](#)

Don't: <https://www.edf-feph.org/>

- My linked text is descriptive, and I avoid words like 'Click here' or 'Link here'.
- I do not use different colours in the text body.
- I use the built-in tools for making headings, instead of manually (selecting text and increasing font or putting it in bold every time I want to do a heading).
- I use the built-in accessibility checker in Microsoft Word to review the accessibility of my document.

Terminology

- We recognise that disability-first (disabled people) and person-first (persons with disabilities) languages are valid. We also recognise that disability-first language is increasingly widespread. However, the **language of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be employed**: persons with disabilities.
- However, if a person or collective prefers to be identified as 'a disabled person', we use their terminology.
- 'Disability' used in its singular form refers to the concept of disability.
- Otherwise, it should be used in the plural form 'persons with disabilities', 'persons with physical disabilities', etc.
- We make sure that our terminology never implies that persons with disabilities are not normal or are of less value than others.
- We avoid metaphors about disability, especially those that underestimate the impacts of disabilities, e.g. "I clean my desk because of my OCD", "I am so ADHD today", etc
- We avoid using people with disabilities as objects of pity, help, special measures, etc.

Preferred	To Avoid
Persons with disabilities (Disabled is also fine, especially if the person refers to themselves as such)	Handicapped people, differently abled, handicap, handicapable, special needs (while these are used in certain contexts they can also be offensive to some).
Assistive devices	Empowering devices, etc.
Person with intellectual disabilities / person with learning disability (for UK context)	Confusing/incorrect: mentally disabled, mental disabilities, delayed Offensive: Retarded,
Little person, someone of short stature, person with achondroplasia,	Dwarf, midget

Person without disabilities	Normal, able-bodied, healthy
Person with disabilities from birth	Birth defects/deformity
Person in or who uses a wheelchair, wheelchair user	Handicapped, wheelchair-bound, confined to wheelchair
Person living with a specific condition	Stricken with..., suffers from..., victim of
Blind Person; who is blind or partially sighted / Visually impaired persons	Sightless
Deaf person / Person who is deaf / hard-of-hearing / deafblind	Deaf person, deaf-and-dumb, deaf-mute
Person with a brain injury	Brain damaged
Person with a mobility impairment / person who uses crutches / a cane / a mobility scooter / a walking frame....	Cripple/crippled
Person with a speech impairment	Speech impediment
Person living with mental ill-health, persons with psychosocial disabilities, users and survivors of psychiatry	Mentally-ill, hyper-sensitive, insane, crazy, psycho, emotionally disturbed
Person with physical disabilities	
Autistic people (currently preferred terms) / Persons with autism	Savant / Rain man / Genius – be especially careful not to use the common stereotype of autistic people as super smart, obsessively focused, socially inept

Annex

Annex 1 – Writing about an event

Title: not more than 10 words. Quote or exciting conclusion from the event

First two sentences: what, who, where, when, why.

First heading: Summary

The meeting discussed/panellist concludes:

- Main conclusion 1
- Main conclusion 3
- Main conclusion 3 (maximum)

Second heading: name of panel

The panel discussed the [topic], with the following panellists [insert names and titles, without Mr or Ms].

Main conclusion included:

- Main conclusion 1
- Main conclusion 3
- Main conclusion 3 (maximum)

[Insert quote of expert if needed]

[repeat as necessary]

Final heading: [what participants raised]

During the Questions and answers, participants raised the following topics:

- [topic]. [Insert short sentence with panellists answer if relevant]

Example

Warning: this is a fictional text.

Artificial Intelligence experts warn against excluding persons with disabilities

The event 'AI & Disability: we do it because it's cool' united experts to discuss the dangers and opportunities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) for persons with disabilities. The event took place online on 11 March and concluded with a clear message: we must include persons with disabilities in all stages of AI development.

Summary

Conclusions from the meeting included:

- Artificial Intelligence can pose barriers to persons with disabilities. The main causes are the inaccessibility of systems and the exclusion of persons with disabilities from data used to train Artificial Intelligence systems.
- There are opportunities for AI systems to support persons with disabilities if used well. Two examples include enhancing accessibility and automating routine tasks that would require assistance.
- Developers and tech executives must directly engage with and employ employees with disabilities so their needs are taken into account.

Artificial Intelligence: main barriers for persons with disabilities

The first panel focused on the need to ensure general systems are also able to help persons with disabilities.

The panellists included Eva Policius for the European Institute for the Best Technologies; MEP Martin Easton Polius, and Prof. Verias Smartus from the University of Technologies. It was moderated by Rita Slowlus, EDF Moderator Officer.

Main conclusions included:

- Accessibility of software and technologies using Artificial Intelligence remains a big barrier;
- Main conclusion 2
- Main conclusion 3 (maximum)

MEP Martin Easton Polius summarised the discussion: "Hi, I am not the problem, it's AI."

Accessibility and routines: Artificial Intelligence supporting persons with disabilities

The second panel focused on how this technology can help persons with disabilities.

The panellists included Kovi Kool, the European Disability Forum's AI Expertus; Chaterina Gipotus, Head of Policy at Geta; and Hanna Rita, Human Rights Lead at Watch the Human Rights.

Main conclusions included:

- Support with accessibility is the biggest opportunity identified.
- Tech companies should refrain from collecting sensitive data when supporting with disability-related tasks.

- Research shows that automatising routine tasks like cooking an egg helps everyone. However, the systems are still not accurate enough, as the omelettes did not meet the FES (French Egg Standard).

Kovi Kool stated: "AI cannot do omelettes even when breaking the egg."

Competitive salaries and assistive technologies

During the Questions and Answers session, participants raised the following topics:

- Qualifications to be employed at tech companies;
- Artificial Intelligence supporting assistive technologies;
- Concerns regarding overlays and changes to website to make them more accessible that are entirely done through AI;
- The need for better datasets.

Annex 2 – Writing a policy document

- **Title:** not more than 10 words.
- **First sentence (or two)** focus on our opinion of what happened: what, who, where, when, why.
- **First heading:** Summary
- **Second (third, etc) heading:** salient points (positives and negatives if it's an external law; important points if it's our document)
- **Last sentence:** what we expect next.

Document credits

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