

Sample Plain Language Edit Checklist

Below is a customizable checklist to use with clients who've asked for a plain language edit. This is a good way to agree on the basics of the edit and potentially contentious issues. Have clients sign off on this *before* starting the work. This list can also serve as the start of the stylesheet if one is needed for the project.

Items	Yes	No
Punctuation		
Semicolons in running text		
Colons in running text		
Colons only in lead-in text to lists		
Conjunctions and end punctuation in lists (semicolons, commas, periods)		
Serial commas		
Contractions		
Parentheses		
En and em dashes		
Style		
1 st and 2 nd person		
Conversational language		
Start sentence with and, but, however		
Idioms or phrasal verbs		
Short sentences		
Complex sentences (if clauses)		
Singular they		
Simple verb tenses – simple present, past, future only		
Reading level – Grade X		
Acronyms/abbreviations		
Levels of lists		
Numbers		
Fractions (dumb versus smart)		
Decimals		
Digits (versus 0–10 spelled out)		
Frequencies (versus percentages)		
Convention with dates		
Formatting		
Adding white space		
Line space between paras instead of indent		
Font type		
Point size		
Bold for emphasis or headings (versus underline or italics)		
Bullet style		