

Plain language alternatives

Use your knowledge of your subject matter and your audience when substituting simpler forms—in some cases, you may have to use the more complex word.

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
absolutely essential	essential
absolutely sure	sure
absolutely unique	unique
accede to	grant, allow
accelerate	speed up
accomplish	do, finish, carry out
accord (verb)	give
accordingly	so
acquire	buy, get
activate	start
active participation	participation
actual experience	experience
add an additional	add
additional	extra, more
additionally	also
addressees	you
adequate number of	enough
adjacent to	next to, near
administer	manage, control
admissible	allowed, acceptable
advance planning	planning
advantageous	useful, helpful
adverse	harmful
afforded	given
aforementioned	<i>(omit)</i>
all of the	all, all the
alleviate	ease, lessen, reduce
alphabetical character	letter
alteration	change
alternative	choice, other
alternatively	or
annually	yearly
anticipate	expect
any and all	all
apparent	obvious, clear, plain
appear	seem
applicant	you
application	use, program
appropriate	proper, right, suitable
approximately	about, roughly
as a consequence	consequently

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
as a consequence of	because, because of
as a general rule	generally, usually
as a matter of fact	in fact <i>(or omit)</i>
as a means of	to
as of the date of	from
as prescribed by	in, under
ascend	rise
ascertain	find out
assist, assistance	help
at a later date	later
at all times	always
at an early date	soon
at present	now
at regular time intervals	regularly
at the moment	now
at the place	where
at the present time	now, currently
at this point in time	now, currently
at this time	now, currently
attempt (verb)	try
attributable to	due to, because of
authorise	allow, let, approve
authority	right, power
autonomous	independent, free
based on the fact that	due to, because
basic fundamentals	fundamentals
be able to	can
be in a position to	can
be in possession of	have
be of importance	be important
be of the opinion	think, believe
be present	be at, be there
be unable to	cannot
because of the fact that	because
beneficial	helpful, useful, good for
benefit	help
blend together	blend
by means of	by
by the use of	by, with
capability	ability
capacity	ability, size, space
category	kind, class, group

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
cease	end, finish, stop
cf.	compare
circumstances in which	when, where
clarification	explanation, help
close proximity	proximity, near, close
cognisant of	aware of, knows
come to a stop	stop
come to an end	end
commence	start, begin
communicate	tell, write, talk, phone, contact, email
compile	make, collect
complete	Fill in
completely identical	identical
completely new	new
completely surrounded	surrounded
comply with	keep to, meet, follow
component	part
comprise	make up, include
comprised of	comprised
compulsory	you must
conceal	hide
conceive	imagine, think up
concerning	about, on, for
concerning the matter of	about
condition	state
conduct	carry on, do, run
conduct an analysis	analyse
consequence	result
consequently	so
considerable	many, much, great, important
constitute	make up, form
construct	build, make
consult	ask, talk to, check with, meet, read
contain	have
contiguous to	next to
convenient	handy, useful
conversion	change
cumulative	added up
current status	status
currently	(right) now
curtail	limit, reduce, shorten
customary practice	practice
de facto	actual, real
deactivate	close, shut off, stop
decrease	drop, cut back

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
deduct	take away from, take off
defective	broken, faulty
defer	put off, delay
deficiency in / of	lack of
demonstrate	show, prove
depict	show
descend	fall
desire	wish, want
despite the fact that	though, although, despite
detailed information	details
detect	find
determination	choice
determine	decide, set
diagnose	find out
difficulties	problems
diminish	lessen, reduce, decrease
disclose	tell, show
disconnect	cut off, unplug
discontinue	stop, end, give up
discrete	separate
discuss	talk about
disintegrate	break up, fall apart
dispatch	send
display	show
distribute	spread, hand out
do an inspection of	inspect
does not operate to	does not
dominant	main
donate	give
due to the fact that	because, as, due to
duplicate	copy, repeat
during the course of	during
during the time that	while
during which time	while
each one	each
elevate	lift, raise
eligible	qualified, allowed
eliminate	remove, get rid of
elucidate	explain
emphasise	stress
employ	use
empower	allow, let
encounter	come upon
end result	result
endeavour (verb)	try
ensure	make sure

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
entirely complete	complete
envisage	foresee, imagine, see
equilibrium	balance
equivalent	equal, the same
erroneous	wrong, false
establish	show, find out, set up
evaluate	test, check
evident	obvious, plain
evinced	show
exactly alike	alike
excessive number of	too many
exclusively	only
execute	run, launch
exhibit	show
exit	leave
expend	spend
expire	end
explicit	plain, clear, exact, precise
extend	lengthen, offer, reach, stretch
extensive	large, broad, wide
exterminate	destroy, wipe out
facilitate	ease, help, make easy
factor	reason, cause
feasible	possible, can be done
few in number	few
final result	result
finalise	complete, finish, end
firstly, secondly, ...	first, second, ...
following	after
for a period of	for
for the duration of	during, while
for the purpose of	to, for
for the reason that	because
forthwith	immediately
fortunate	happy, lucky
forward	send
fracture	break
frequently	often
from time to time	occasionally
fully compatible	compatible
function	act, work
functionality	features
fundamental	basic, real
furnish	give, send
furthermore	then, also, and
future plans	plans
general public	public

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
generate	produce, make, give, create
give an answer to	answer
give authorisation	authorise
give due consideration	consider, think
gives you the opportunity to	lets you, gives you the chance to
grant	give
great deal of	much, many
has a negative impact	harms, hurts
have a preference for	prefer
have knowledge of	know
hazardous	dangerous, risky, unsafe
hence	so
hereafter	after this takes effect
herein	here, within
hereof	of this
heretofore	until, now
highly innovative	innovative
hitherto	until now, so far
identical	the same
if at all possible	if possible
if that were the case	if so
illuminate	light up, make clear
illustrate	how, explain, draw, show
illustration	picture
immediately	at once, now
immovable	firm, fixed, set
imperative	pressing, urgent, vital
imperceptible	hard to see, hidden, slight
implement	do, carry out, program, build in, set up
imply	suggest, hint at
in a case in which	when, where
in a way so that	so that
in accordance with	by, under, keeping to
in addition (to)	and, also, as well as
in advance of	before
in all cases	always
in an X manner	Xly, e.g. 'hastily' instead of 'in a hasty manner'
in case	if
in close proximity	near, close
in excess of	more than
in lieu of	instead of, in place of
in light of the fact that	because, given that

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
in many/most cases	often, usually, mostly
in order that	so that
in order to	to, for, so as to
in other words	or, that is
in point of fact	in fact (<i>or omit</i>)
in reference/regard/ relation/respect to	about, concerning
in respect of	for
in some cases	sometimes
in the absence of	without
in the course of	during, while
in the event of/that	if
in the majority of cases/instances	usually, mostly, generally, in most cases
in the near future; in the not too distant future	soon
in the proximity of	about, near, close to
in the vicinity of	near, close to, around
in view of the fact that	because
incorrect	wrong
increase	gain, go up, grow, rise
indicate	show, suggest, say, tell, mean
indication	sign
indispensable	essential, vital
individual (noun)	person
inform	tell
initial	first
initially	at first
initiate	begin, start
input	comments, opinion
inquire, enquire	ask
insert	put in
inside of	inside
inspect	check
instances	cases
instrument	means, tool
insufficient	not enough
integral part	part
intention	aim, goal, plan
invoke	start, run
irregardless/irrespective of	regardless of, despite
is able to	can
is binding on	binds
is compliant with	complies with
is provided with	has
is unable to	cannot

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
issue	give, send
it has been determined	(<i>omit</i>)
it is apparent that	clearly, apparently (<i>or omit</i>)
it is clear that	clearly (<i>or omit</i>)
it is evident that	evidently (<i>or omit</i>)
it is likely that	likely
it is mandatory to	you must
it is obligatory to	you must
it is obvious that	obviously (<i>or omit</i>)
it is often the case that	often
it is probable that	probably
it should be noted that	Note:, (<i>or omit</i>)
it will be necessary to	you will need to
keep an eye on	watch
large number of	many
large number of	many
last of all	last
left hand; left-hand side	left
lengthy	long
leverage	take advantage of, use
lift up	lift
little less than	almost, fewer
locate	find
location	place, spot, site
magnitude	extent, size
major	main
major portion of	most of
majority of	most
make a decision	decide
make a distinction	distinguish
make a payment	pay
make a recommendation	recommend
make a suggestion	suggest
manifest	show
man-made	artificial
manner	way
manufacture	make, produce, build
marginal	small, slight
maximum	most, largest, longest, greatest
methodology	method
might possibly	might
minimal	least, small, smallest
minimum	least, smallest
mix together	mix
modify, modification	change

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
monitor	check, watch
month of June	June
nature of	<i>(omit)</i>
navigate to	go to
necessitate	require, need
negatively affect	hurt, harm, decrease
never at any time	never
nevertheless	but, however, even so
new innovation	innovation
notification	notice
notify	tell, let ... know
notwithstanding	even if, despite, still, yet, although, even though
null and void	void
number of	some, several, many <i>(or something more precise)</i>
numerous	many
objective (noun)	aim, goal
observe	see, watch
obsolete	out-of-date
obtain	get, gain, receive
obvious	clear, plain
occur	happen, take place
of a technical nature	technical
offer	give
on a <daily/weekly/monthly/annual> basis	daily, weekly, monthly, yearly or annually <i>(omit 'basis')</i>
on a few occasions	occasionally, sometimes
on a number of/numerous occasions	often, sometimes
on account of	because
on an ongoing basis	continually
on behalf of	for
on receipt of	when (we/you) get...
on request	if you ask
on the grounds that	because
on the part of	by
one and the same	the same
operate	run, work
optimum	best, ideal, most, greatest
option	choice
other alternatives	alternatives
outcome	result
owing to the fact that	because
paramount	main, chief

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
partially	partly
participate	join in, take part
particulars	details
past experience	experience
per annum	a year
per day	a day
percentage of	some
perfectly clear	clear
perform	do, carry out, make
period of time	period, time
permanent	lasting
permissible	allowed
permit	allow, let
personal opinion	opinion
personnel	people
persons	people
pertaining to	of, about
philosophy	idea, system, view
place (verb)	put
point in time	time, point
portion	part, piece, share
possess	have, own
potential hazard	hazard
practically	almost, nearly
pragmatic	practical
precisely the same	the same
prerecorded	recorded
presently, currently	now
preserve	keep, protect
previous, previously	last, before, earlier
principal	main
prior	earlier
prior to	before
prioritise	rank
probability	chance, likelihood
proceed	go, go ahead, start
procure	buy, get, purchase
proficient	skilled
prohibited	forbidden
projected	estimated
proportion	part
provide	give, offer, send, supply
provided that	if, but, as long as
provisions	terms, rules
provoke	cause
proximity	nearness, closeness
purchase	buy

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
rate of speed	speed
rationale	reason, thinking
reach an agreement	agree
really important	important
reconsider	look again at, think again about
reduce; reduction	cut
refer (back) to	see
referred to as	called
regarding	on, about
register	sign up
regulate	control
related to	of
relating to	about, on
remain	stay
remainder	rest, others
render assistance	help
repeat again	repeat
represent	be, stand for, show
request	ask for
request (verb)	ask
require	need
requirement	need, demand, wish
reservation	doubt
reside	live, be
respecting	about
respond	answer, reply
restriction	limit, limitation
retain	keep
return again	return
reveal	show, uncover
review	check, go over
right; right-hand side	right
segment	part
seldom if ever	rarely
shall	will
should it appear that	if
should you wish	if you want
significant	big, important, serious
small number of	a few
so as to	to
sole, solely	only
sophisticated	complex
stakeholder	<i>(specify person or group)</i>
start off with	start with
state	say
status	state
stringent	strict, tight

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
subject matter	subject
subsequent	next, following, after, later
substantial	big, large, great, significant
substantiate	prove
suffice	is enough
sufficient number	enough
sufficient; sufficient number of	enough
supplementary	extra, more
supply	give, send
take a look at	look at
terminate	stop, end
termination	end
that is to say	that is
the fact that	that
the majority of	most
the manner in which	how
the only difference being	except
the question as to whether	whether
the reason is because	the reason is
the very same thing	the same
therefore	so
through the use of	with, by
time period	time
to date	so far, up to now
to the effect that	that
totally new	new
transfer	change, move
transform	alter, change
transformation	change
transmit	send
ultimate	final, last
ultimately	in the end, finally
unavailability	lack of
under the provisions of	under
unoccupied	free, empty
until such time as	until
upon	on
utilise	use
validate	check
velocity	speed
verify	check, find out if
very	<i>(omit)</i>
very final	final
very precise	precise
via	by, with, through

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
viable	possible
virtually	almost
visible to the eye	visible
voluminous	bulky, big
was aware	knew
whatsoever	whatever, what, any
whether or not	whether
while, whilst	although, when

Instead of ...	Use the simpler ...
with regard to	about, concerning, for
with respect to	for, on, about
with the exception of	except, except for
with the result that	so that
you can also	you can
you're requested to	you must

(Based on examples from plain language websites and Achtelig, Marc. *Writing plain instructions*. Indoition Publishing, Germany, 2012. ISBN 978-3-943860-08-5)