

Appendix 4

Accessible Information.

What's in a name? Easy English, Easy Read. Does it matter?

Introduction

Accessible written information is being developed in many countries now. In Australia there are labels Easy English or Easy Read. In the UK it is Easy Read, Easy to Read or Communication for All. New Zealand has Easy Read. European and Scandinavian countries often use their language plus Easy to Read, eg: German Easy to Read. The USA have Easy Read. Those working with people following a stroke may use the term Aphasia Friendly.

Reading information that you need to stay safe should never be a communication test. The easier content is written the easier it is for the reader to understand, but even more critically be able to use that information meaningfully.

I was involved in the earliest research in Australia on Easy English and Easy Read. in the mid 2000's. At the time, the analysis suggested the content from the UK on Easy Read was too complex for the many people who do not have the literacy to manage a range of day to day reading tasks. Consequently, Easy English was developed using Easy Read as a springboard to creating even simpler content to read and understand. Easy English takes into account the specific needs of people with very low literacy skills. In the 18 years since that time the development of Easy English has time and again shown it is simpler and less complex than Easy Read.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability (2006)* is useful to bring to the attention of people who write for the public.

Article 9, *Accessibility*, and

Article 21, *Freedom of Expression, Opinion and access to information both recognise the importance of access to information the person needs, in the way the person understands, in the way they can use it meaningfully, in the same timeframe as the rest of the community.*

Buell (2019)¹ as part of her research on how people with intellectual disability comprehended UK Easy Read was the first to quantify there was a wide range of different reading skills required depending on the document the reader was using for Easy Read. The analysis showed the UK Easy Read ranged in reading equivalence age from grade 2 to grade 14. (Early primary age to early years university level reading) with an average of grade 5 reading level. Across the breadth of 60 people involved in her research their vocabulary level was equivalent to 9 years of age, with a reading level of 7 years old. It must be noted that these were people with an intellectual disability but most importantly with adult life experience and needs requiring adult topics to read and understand.

There are 3 critical issues raised here.

- The wide range of possible reading skills required to read any Easy Read. This does not appear to be related to the topic or type of content or which organisations have written the content. From a functional point of view you do not know whether you are going to have potentially easy to read content, or something that is not possible to read. This has been further evidenced in the most recent Chinn (2019)² study.
- The high level of reading required to read an average Easy Read document, being equivalent to an upper primary school person. This reading level suggests an ability to use your reading skills to learn;
- The people who need and want something they can read and understand do not have the vocabulary or reading skills of upper primary level or higher.

‘For **some** people Easy Read may be useful. For example, someone who may be a skilled self-advocate, yet still has a mild intellectual disability. However, this still leaves many **more** people who have even less of a voice, reduced access to meaningful written information in a way they can read, understand and know what it means for themselves.

A personal conversation with a self-advocate from Tasmania who had just completed a Plenary at a national conference in 2017 highlighted this. The speaker sits on a number of Boards, both open Boards and intellectual disability specific Boards.

¹ Buell, S. (2019) An open randomized controlled trial of the effects of linguistic simplification and mediation on the comprehension of “easy read” text by people with intellectual disabilities. J Appl Res Intellect Disabil. 2019;00:1–13

² Chinn (2019) Talking to producers of Easy Read health information for people with intellectual disability: Production practices, textual features and imagined audiences. J IDD Vol 44. No. 4 pp 410-420.

In her paper she said ‘...people need Easy English or Easy Read.’

On further interaction, she indicated

- ‘They are different.’
- Often I still do **not** understand things when they are written in Easy Read.’

A further conversation in 2020 with the same advocate elicited the comment

‘there are far less words in Easy English.’

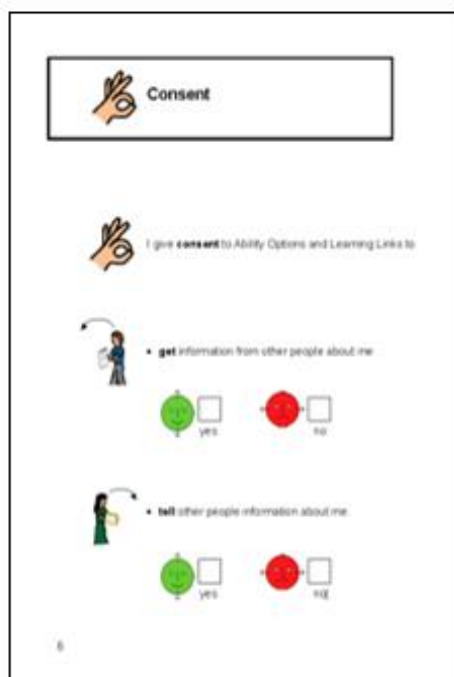
In Australia

You may hear that some accessible information practitioners indicate something can be called Easy Read or Easy English, i.e. the label does not matter – it is all the same.

My analysis and research in 2019 indicate this is **not** the situation. Further analysis in 2020 confirmed these findings.

Below is a summary of the 2019 research presented at IASSIDD 2019, Scotland Basterfield, C (2019) What’s in a name. Easy English; Easy Read. Does it matter?

Firstly, a visual comparison.



Easy English



Easy Read

Visual review of Easy English verses Easy Read documents

1. Title of page or headings

Easy English	Easy Read
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Uses an image for every title or heading; - Main heading in line (tab) with body of text; - All text is Left aligned with same indented margin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No image for any title or heading; - Main heading Centre aligned; - Topic setting - Left aligned with no indented margin as per body of text.

2. Format

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lots of white space around text. Critical for thinking and processing for reader; - Spacing is double line space throughout; - At least 3 double line space is left between paragraphs; - All text is Left aligned with same indented margin; - Indented Left margin for body of text is 4- 5cm from original left tab(margin); - Contents pages always have images to support the text or topic. These are matched to the heading on the page in body of text; - A list of complex words is rarely used. A complex or unfamiliar word is broken down to its specifics. A new everyday word is then substituted into the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White space minimal around text; - Uses 1.5 line space in paragraphs; - Uses less line space between paragraphs; - 3 tabs/margins for the reader to work with. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Centre align ii. Left align iii. Central margin - Indented Left margin for body of text is ½ way across width of page; - Contents pages never have images to support the text or topic; - Provides a list of words that need to be defined. The complex word is then used throughout.
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3. Text

- Minimal text.	- Text dense
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4. Images

Easy English	Easy Read
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small images – now are bigger; - Specific image; - Images for the intended audience. Eg: for this project any women with disabilities with low literacy (not just women with an intellectual disability) - Directional. i.e. image faces Left when it is past tense, faces right for future tense; - Logos as appropriate; - Do use images from different sets; to get specific meaning when required; - Images placed beside paragraph; - Spacing of images down page is consistent. - Maximum 4 images down left side of page; - Images always on left side of page. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Large images. Often ½ page wide. - Can be general or have lots of detail in the image; - Images for all projects are of people with intellectual disability only - Logos as appropriate; - Use images only from 1 set; - Images placed beside paragraph; - Images can merge into others above and below (reduced space between images). - Can be 5 or 6 images on the left side of the page; - Images generally on Left ½ of page. Some practitioners put the images on the Right side of the page. -
<p>Never have words in images.</p>	<p>Have words incorporated into the images (not this example).</p>

5. Other

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reference to original on last page. - Every day words used not complex words. May add 'We call it XXX' Still use every day words. - No glossary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction 1 -2 page at front in most documents. People read the same in every document. It includes in part 'This is in Easy Read. You can get someone to help you read it. It is based on XXXX.' - Talks about 'hard blue words' (in bold). Use more complex word throughout. - Explanation in glossary list – 3-4 pages.
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Language Analysis of the 5 documents developed into

- **Easy English (Australian) and**
- **Easy Read (UK).**

10 documents in total.

All documents less than 500 words;

Different topics.

Measurement	Easy English	Easy Read	Implication
Percentage of different words to total words	36 %	42 %	There are fewer different words in Easy English
Average number of sentences per document	38	38	No difference
Average length of sentences across all documents	7.6	10.8	30% difference Indicating less complex sentences used in Easy English
Average morphemes across all documents	8.3	12.7	35% difference. Indicating less complex language used in Easy English, eg: use 'quick', not 'quickly'.
Percentage of 1 and 2 syllable words across all documents	96%	90%	6% difference. Indicating more 1 and 2 syllable words in Easy English compared with Easy Read.
Specific word 'if'	3	18	'if' is a complex language construction. It requires significant cognitive skills to use meaningfully
Consonant- vowel construction, eg: C-V-C = cat	16%	7.5 %	46 % difference. More shorter and less complex words in Easy English.

In summary,

Visually, Easy English has a front page with little text and an image to help the person with low literacy consider what the content may be about, without being overwhelmed with text as with the Easy Read version. In Easy English images are critically included, are specific to the text, and there is significant white space around them. Easy English always have images for headings and subheadings. There are images on the contents page when used. These are never part of Easy Read. Easy English has little text, compared with the Easy Read which is often text dense. All these assists readability.

Easy English do **not** use a repeated introduction across all documents developed. When a reader sees repeated introduction content, as in Easy Read, they do not recognise it is a new document. No glossary is required in Easy English

As noted in the analysis above, Easy English uses fewer words, written at a simpler reading level, uses shorter sentences and more short words. This suggests someone could have a smaller word vocabulary and be able to more meaningfully engage with an Easy English document.

A random selection of 7 Easy English documents and 7 Easy Read Federal Government documents on COVID19 created since January 2020 found significant differences in their Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level scores. The Easy English were on average of Grade 2 reading equivalence level. (Range Grade 0.6 – Grade 3.0). This is a learning to read phase of reading.

Compared with the Australian Easy Read which was significantly higher with an average of Grade 5 reading equivalence level. (Range Grade 3 – Grade 10). This was consistent with the earlier 2019 findings.



Podcast

Speak Up podcast with Speech Pathology Australia.

<https://bit.ly/3Eq7pjE>

Released 27 October 2021.

More evidence of difference. Easy English. Easy Read.

3 page poster presented at the Virtual International Scientific Study of Intellectual and Development Disabilities (IASSIDD) Conference. Amsterdam. July 2021. (IASSIDD

More evidence of difference. Easy English - Easy Read.

Example documents - Masks. Front page and sample page

Australian
Easy English
21 July 2020
www.accesseasyenglish.com.au



UK
Easy Read
26 Aug 2020
www.mencap.org.uk



Australian
Easy Read
30 July 2020
www.health.gov.au



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Language comparison of the 3 mask documents

	Australian Easy English	UK Easy Read	Australian Easy Read
Breadth of topic	Specific to the title/topic	Wide ranging on the topic	Wide ranging on the topic.
Action Orientation	High – tells reader what to do	Medium/low – lots of information to find what to do	Medium/low – lots of information to find what to do
Number of different words/total words	119 different 371 total	175 different 531 total words	225 different 739 total
Length of sentences	5.4 words	12.3 words	10.3 words
Flesch reading grade level equivalent	Grade 0 Range grade 0 - 3; Ave grade 2	Grade 5 Buell, 2019. Grade 2- 14. Ave grade 5	Grade 4 Range grade 3 -10; Ave grade 5
Passive sentences	0%	4.7%	3.9%
Use of the word 'if'	0 occurrences	4 occurrences	17 occurrences

Findings similar and within average range from IASSIDD paper in 2019 (Glasgow) and UNCRPD paper (IASSIDD) 2021, and other documents analysed on COVID19.

Visual Comparison

	Australian Easy English	UK Easy Read	Australian Easy Read
Front cover	Always	Only for long documents	Only for long documents
Contents page	Always supported with images	Never supported with images	Never supported with images
Images	4 per page. Rarely 5	5 per page. Sometimes 4 or 6	5 per page. Sometimes 6 or 7
Headings	Always with image Text in line with other text	This example has image. Most – no image. Text starts at left margin not aligned with other text	No image with headings. Text starts at left margin not aligned with other text
White Space	A lot of white space	Little white space May use boxes in visual space	Little white space
Line spacing	Double line space throughout	Single line or 1.5 line spacing with space between paragraphs	1.5 line spacing with space between paragraphs

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