

[WORKING DRAFT] COGA-Silver Clear Language Method 5:

Use clear, unambiguous formatting and punctuation, including language tags and the symbols and letters necessary to decipher the words

Silver breadcrumb:

Guideline: Clear and Understandable Language → Outcome: Clear and Understandable Language (written and audio) → Method: Use clear, unambiguous formatting and punctuation, including language tags and the symbols and letters necessary to decipher the words

About this document:

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Maps to [COGA Pattern 4.4.6: Use clear, unambiguous formatting and punctuation](#) and [COGA Pattern 4.4.7: Use symbols and letters necessary to decipher the words](#)

Reference documents:

- [☰ COGA Silver Structure draft](#)
- [Silver revised method template \(October 2021\)](#)
- [☰ Writing Testable WCAG 3.0 Outcomes](#)
- Earlier drafts:
 - [☰ Complete list of Clear Language methods and \(DRAFT\)](#)
 - [☰ \[From Lisa\] Use Clear Language Method](#)
 - [☰ \[ARCHIVED Nov 2021\] Use Clear Language Method](#)
- [Archive of COGA Github Issues](#) (May help with finding supporting research)

Introduction

Outcome {content usable term: objective}

This method supports the outcome **Clear and Understandable Language (written and audio)**, which belongs to the guideline, **Clear and Understandable Content** (reference: [COGA's thinking on structure](#)).

<p>Other methods for this outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Method 1: Use contextually established, familiar, and accurate words (COGA pattern 4.4.1)• Method 2: Use the tense and voice that is easiest to understand in context (COGA pattern 4.4.2)• Method 3: Use a simple sentence structure and avoid double negatives or nested clauses (COGA pattern 4.4.3)• Method 4: Use literal and concrete language and explain implied content (COGA pattern 4.4.4 and COGA pattern 4.4.12)	<p>Related outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outcome 2: Chunked information and clear visual presentation• Outcome 3: Math concepts
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Platform

- All, this method is platform independent

Technology

- All, this method is technology independent

Input aspects for testing

- *To be written after we reconnect with Silver. Unclear on how this should be answered in the context of this document.*

Summary {content usable term: what to do}

Words can be deciphered and pronounced to have the correct meaning. To ensure this happens:

- **Use language tags.** Language tags are the key means to achieve the goal of unambiguous text formatting. See [HTML language tags](#) and [BCP 47 Language Codes](#).
- **Include vowels, letters, or diacritic marks that users need to decipher words correctly.** This is often needed in languages like Arabic and Hebrew. (See [COGA pattern 4.4.7](#))
- **Avoid the use of Roman Numerals and unfamiliar symbols in text where possible.** These can confuse readers and are likely to be read incorrectly by text-to-speech tools. If these symbols are necessary then ensure they are marked up correctly, using techniques such as MathML and abbreviation expansions to provide additional support. Roman Numerals should be presented in upper case if used in isolation as they are likely to be read as individual letters.

How it solves user need {content usable term: how it helps}

[TODO: revise language and ensure that these are brought together more elegantly]

For some readers, decoding words, numbers, and symbols does not happen automatically and can be demanding on working memory and executive functions. If they find content too demanding they are at risk of losing its meaning.

Some users may use assistive technology or personalization tools to help understand content such as text-to-speech that reads aloud the content. However, sometimes the punctuation or format makes it more likely that the screen reader will read it incorrectly. For example, Roman numerals may be read as text.

A user with a learning disability may be unable to manipulate letters, numbers, and words to correct mistakes that occur because of formatting or punctuation errors. They also need to focus on understanding the meaning of the content in order to use it.

For example, a user with a communication disability may listen to content using text-to-speech. If the content is phrased correctly, they can understand it. Sometimes they hear content read incorrectly or skipped, particularly numbers and symbols, and they cannot understand it. If text, numbers or symbols are in an unfamiliar layout, the user may become confused.

In contrast, a blind person listening to the content, is likely to be able to figure out the correct meaning even when words are not pronounced correctly. However, the word manipulations necessary to work out the correct meaning are not achievable by someone with a communications or language impairment.

Some languages, such as Hebrew and Arabic, have optional vowels and diacritic marks. Without these marks, most words with the same characters have between two (Hebrew) and seven (Arabic) different ways of being pronounced with different meanings. Most readers can read the word based

on the context, and use their visual memory to guess the correct pronunciation. People with impaired visual memory, slow readers, and text-to-speech may often guess the incorrect term or pronunciation.

For example, a user with a language disability is trying to sound out a word. They guess three different pronunciations until they find one that makes sense. Unfortunately, many people with language impairments cannot work out the meaning as words out of context may only provide an idea rather than a specific meaning. Text-to-speech often requires these characters to speak the correct word.

Note that not all diacritic marks are necessary to pronounce the word correctly. Only letters and diacritic marks that are necessary for the unambiguous pronunciation need to be included.

This is how far I (Rain) was able to get in creating this initial draft.

When to use {content usable term: more details (sometimes)}

{when the method should or should not be used}

- ?User longer words when they are easier to understand ?
- Use other voices or tenses when they will be easier to understand or friendlier.
- In languages where present tense and active voice do not exist or are not the clearest option, use the tense and the voice that are easiest to understand.
- If you are writing about past or future events, do not use the present tense. It will be confusing

Background

W3C Resources

- {related resources}

Non-W3C Resources

- {related resources}

Accessibility Support

{short paragraph on accessibility support considerations}

Assumptions

- [assumptions]

Examples

- {list of examples, unless using sub-sections, then delete this list}

Passed {content usable term: use}

Common, clear, and easy to understand words and definitions of terms.

For example:

Your landlord must follow the law.

- Your landlord can only use your security deposit (promise money), for certain things, such as unpaid rent (rent that you owe) and to fix things that you damage.
 - Your landlord must return your security deposit (promise money) to you by a clear date. This is usually 30 days after you leave the apartment.
2. Abbreviations that are explained the first time they are used, unless the abbreviation is more common than the full term. Abbreviations are in an abbreviation tag with a title after the first use.
 3. Acronyms that are not in common use, are explained the first time they are used, and are in an acronym tag with a title after that.
 4. Jargon that is avoided or explained.

5. Simple tense and language. For example: “Your stocks went up this month.”
6. Short text without double negatives. For example: “Write clearly”.
7. Literal text and concrete language. For example:
 - a. If you are experiencing anxiety disorders before starting take a deep breath, tell yourself you can do it and get started. Anxiety can include nervousness, fear, dizziness, or shortness of breath.
8. Short chunks of text. For example:
 - a. Calgary will have a lot of snow and hail this weekend. Try not to drive. If you must drive:
 - i. Use the rules for driving in winter to keep safe.

Before you leave, check what roads are safe at the When using uncommon words, provide an explanation by:

adding a simple language term in brackets next to it,

providing a pop up definition, or

using supported markup (see [easylang](#)). Note that [easylang](#) is being introduced into the new personalization specifications [[personalization-semantics-help-1.0](#)]. At the time of publication more support is needed.

{Example Name}

{Use a copy of this section for each example if not using a bullet list of examples}

{explanation}

<

Failed {content usable term: avoid}

{Example Name}

{Use a copy of this section for each example if not using a bullet list of examples}

{explanation}

1. Uncommon words without explanations. For example:
A Landlord's Right to Deduct. When a tenant moves into a rental property, he or she will pay the landlord a security deposit. Depending on the jurisdiction, this deposit will be returned to the tenant within a specific time period at the cessation of the lease term, as long as the tenant follows all the terms and tenants of the lease agreement or contract. Select links below to read the laws that pertain to your situation.
2. Abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon that the user may not know and are not explained.
3. Complex language and tense. For example: "Over the last month, we saw your stocks increasing."
4. Double negatives that can be replaced by a positive. For example:
 - a. Do not write unclearly.

- b. Time is not unlimited.
- 2. Long sentences with lots of commas and conjunctions. For example:
 - o Usually, clauses will be separated by two commas, one before and one after or the word "or", or the word "and", so you could replace the sentence with a list of options or even more than one paragraph.
- 5. Non-literal text. For example:
 - a. If you are experiencing cold feet before starting, take a deep breath and jump in.
- 6. Long chunks of text. For example:
 - a. DOTD Issues Winter Weather Travel Advisory for Calgary. With the possibility of snow and rain in the forecast throughout the holiday weekend, the Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) announced that department staff is prepared to deal with winter weather. Maintenance forces will be on standby to apply sand and salt over any affected bridges and roadways, to remove fallen trees from the roadway, and to close any roads as needed. Interim Secretary Jane Doe urges motorists to take the threat of winter weather seriously. "In the event of adverse weather conditions, the department will strive to maintain access to highways and interstates; however, we encourage the motoring public to avoid traveling during snow and ice, if at all possible," said Doe.
- 7.

Inapplicable

{Example Name}

{Use a copy of this section for each example if not using a bullet list of examples}

{explanation}

Tests

(do at least of of the use, and do not do any of the avoid)

Also look at tests in github versions

Get Started

{Tips or link to information for beginners in testing.}

Summary

Check the following are not in the test

2. Uncommon words without explanations
3. Abbreviations, acronyms, and jargon that the user may not know and are not explained.

8. Complex language and tense.
9. Double negatives that can be replaced by a positive.
10. Long sentences with more than two commas and conjunctions.
11. Non-literal text without explanations.
12. Long chunks of text (sentences with more than x words, paragraphs with more than y sentences).

If the content fails any bullet point, it is not conformant to this method. If it passes all of the bullet points, it is conformant.

Testing for exceptions

- Testing for exceptions:

If present tense and active voice have not been used, the tester will need to confirm if one of the exceptions is relevant. If an exception is not relevant; and present tense and active voice have not been used; then the content fails this success criterion.

- Simple and clear words: Use words or phrases most frequently used for the current context, unless this will result in a loss of meaning or of clarity. Where word frequencies are known for the context, they can be used. This includes not using abbreviations, words, and phrases, unless they are the common forms to refer to concepts for beginners.

Even languages with a small number of users have published lists of most-frequent words (such as Hebrew). If there is a natural language that does not have such a list, algorithms exist that calculate these lists for languages, or for specific contexts. Testing content against these word lists can be done manually. However, it is expected there will be a natural language processing testing tool by the time this goes to CR. (It is already integrated into a tool by IBM.)

Applicability

This outcome applies to any [element names] element that is [condition] and for which one of the following is true:

{excluded, ignored, exception}

[element]

Expectations

[detail of the expectation]

USER TESTs

- 1. A wide group of users are included including: intellectual disability, autistic, age- related forgetfulness and specific learning disabilities includes numeric and literacy**
- 2. The following is tested for in well measured metric(needs discussion)**

Testing for : Is the Content Clear and Understandable

- Can the user find a segment or a piece of key information quickly?**
- Does the user understand the text?**
- Does the user understand text immediately?**

- **Does the user know ambiguous language?**
- **Is the content usable without understanding math concepts?**
- **Is there any representation of math by words instead of numbers?**
- **Is the support for slow readers helpful?**

User testing question

Glossary

Common words

definition

[term]

definition

Missing elements in revised method (these are in the outcomes):

Introduction

Functional categories

Critical errors