[WORKING DRAFT] COGA-Silver Clear Language Method 2:

Tense and Voice

Silver breadcrumb:

Guideline: Clear and Understandable Language → Outcome: Clear and Understandable Language (written and audio) → **Method: Use the tense and voice that is easiest to understand in context**

About this document:

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Maps to [COGA Pattern 4.4.2: Use a Simple Tense and Voice](#) and https://github.com/w3c/wcag21/issues/30

https://rawgit.com/w3c/coga/master/extension/plain-language-a.html

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](#)).

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Other methods for this outcome:

- Method 1: [Use contextually established, familiar, and accurate words](#) (COGA pattern 4.4.1)

- 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)

- Method 5: [Use clear, unambiguous formatting and punctuation, including language tags and the symbols and letters necessary to decipher the words](#) (COGA pattern 4.4.6 and 4.4.7)

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Related outcomes

- 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}

- Use the tense and the voice that is easiest to understand. For example, in English, this is usually the present tense and active voice. See //COGA Wiki page// for simple tenses and voices in different languages.
- Speak directly to the user.
    - Differentiate between the system and the user. For example [example TBD]
    - Make information relevant to readers by addressing them as "you" or "your"
- Use the simplest form of verbs and sentence structure.

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

Using simple tense and voice benefits many people such as people with language impairments, dyslexia, or a memory impairment. For example, more people will understand "press the on button" (present tense and active voice) than "the on button should be pressed." (passive voice).

Active voice makes it clear who is supposed to take action. For example, "It must be done" is passive, and does not say who must act. "You must do it" is active, and clearly states who has the action.

Putting the aim of the sentence at the beginning can also make English sentences easier to follow. Local language experts may have additional linguistic advice that helps make content easy to understand.

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

{when the method should or should not be used}

- Use other voices or tenses when they will be easier to understand or friendlier.
- Where user testing can show that it is more clear, easier to understand, of course less stress, or other advantage to the user. For example when telling someone they made an error. "Your account is overdrawn" may seem friendlier than "you are overdrawn".
- 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. Consult local language experts. (See living document on the coga wiki on different languages.)
- If you are writing about past or future events, do not use the present tense. It will be confusing.

Tag: for latin based, or english languages, semitic languages

Exceptions:

- If the writing style is an essential part of the main function of the site, such as a game, a literary work, or teaching new terms.

-
- Maybe ? if it contradicts a style guide for this content, that the content owner can not control

Background

W3C Resources

- https://www.w3.org/TR/coga-usable/#use-a-simple-tense-and-voice -pattern
- https://github.com/w3c/wcag21/issues/30
-

Non-W3C Resources

- Some example resources are:
  - Plain Language International
  - European Union's booklet, "How to Write Clearly," (offered in 24 different languages)
- Plainlanguage.gov

Accessibility Support

{short paragraph on accessibility support considerations}

- *To be written after we reconnect with Silver. Unclear on how this should be answered in the context of this document.*
- *Supporting tools* https://hemingwayapp.com/, grammerly, ginger etc

Assumptions

- [assumptions]

Examples

- Simple tense and voice.
- Complex voice and tense

Passed {content usable term: use}

Simple tense and voice.

> "Your stocks went up this month."

{explanation}

Failed {content usable term: avoid}

Complex voice and tense

"Over the last month, we saw your stocks increasing."

{explanation}

Edge case

"You made an error" or "an error was made" (the first is clearer but less friendly)

Inapplicable

{Example Name}

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

Exceptions:

- If the writing style is an essential part of the main function of the site, such as a game, a literary work, or teaching new terms.
- When citing other works.
- Maybe ? if it contradicts a style guide for this content, that the content owner can not control

{explanation}

Tests

Tense and voice are objective, and hence are verifiable. Tools are able to confirm this automatically with reasonable accuracy.

Step 1 : Run a tool

Step 2 : Identify any :

- passive voicing or
- non present tense

Step 3 : Check if they fall under the exception . Ignore cases that fall under an exception

Step 4 : If they do not fall under the exceptions, this is a failure.

Also look at tests in github versions

Get Started

Start with instructions, labels, headings, navigational elements, and error

messages (was level a)

Then include and [important information](#) (AA?)(then do all text at AAA)

Scoring (to discuss)

	More then 100% success	More then 80% success >100%	More then 60% success >70%
Titles Headings, labels controls	Needed for A, AA,AAA	Fail all	Fail all
Instructions	AA, AAA		
Important information	AA		
All text	AAA		

Summary

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

User testing question

The user tests work at an outcome level (in this model), they are less helpful at a method level (someone may not understand the button because the the words used is complex, and not the tense/voice)

Glossary

[term]

definition

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

Introduction

Functional categories

Critical errors