

# Clear Language Outcomes Aug 2023 (PR 9)

This document is locked to prepare for the 22 August 2023 meeting

## 2.3 Clear language

Guideline: Content uses clear language

### EDITOR'S NOTE

- **Internationalization:** Several outcomes for Clear Language will need conditional tests by language. Our subgroup will build tests and methods after we get feedback on our current approach for WCAG 3.
- **Clustering outcomes under a handful of headings:** Testable outcomes need to be narrow. But we have so many outcomes that we are grouping them under headings like “Word comprehension” and “Sentence structure” to provide context for users.
- **Requesting directional feedback:** Does AG have concerns about the general direction of this early draft of the Clear Language guidelines, such as the number or scope of the outcomes?

### 2.3.1 Word Comprehension

Outcome: **Uncommon words:** Provide definitions of uncommon or new words using either an inline definition, one-click to a glossary, or a pop-up glossary. Determine which words are uncommon based on core/high-frequency words as well as context-specific vocabulary, as noted in [draft conditional test by language](#). See [COGA pattern 4.4.1](#) and techniques in [SC 3.1.3: Unusual Words](#).

Outcome: **Acronyms and abbreviations:** Provide expanded versions of acronyms and abbreviations using one of the techniques in [SC 3.1.4 Abbreviations](#). See [COGA pattern 4.4.1](#).

Outcome: **Ambiguous pronunciation:** Make available the characters, such as accent marks, needed to phonetically read words. Conditional tests TBD for Hebrew, Arabic, and possibly other languages; see slide 15 in [Clear Language’s proposed tests for TPAC 2022](#). See also [COGA pattern 4.4.7](#) and [SC 3.1.6 Pronunciation](#).

### 2.3.2 Sentence structure

Outcome: **Tense:** Use the verb tense that is easiest to understand in context. For example, in English, simpler verb tense also aids comprehension. Compare “They wanted” to “They would have liked.” Conditional test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.2](#) and [G153: Making the text easier to read](#).

Outcome: **Voice:** Use the voice that is easiest to understand in context. For example, in English, active voice identifies the subject and the object more clearly than passive voice. Compare “You must do it” to “It must be done.” Conditional test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.2](#).

Outcome: **Number of ideas in a sentence:** Aim to express one idea per sentence by avoiding multiple dependent clauses. [See “before” and “after” examples](#). Test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.3](#).

Outcome: **Unnecessary words or phrases:** Avoid filler words, such as “that,” or phrases, such as “needless to say,” “and so forth,” and “going to go,” unless they are essential to aid understanding. Conditional test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.1](#).

Outcome: **Double negatives:** Don’t use double negatives to express a positive unless it is standard usage for that language or dialect. Conditional test info TBD; see Slide 22 in [Clear Language’s proposed tests for TPAC 2022](#) and [COGA pattern 4.4.3](#)

### 2.3.3 Implied Meaning

Outcome: **Implied meaning in written words such as jokes, sarcasm, hyperbole, metaphors, similes, and idioms:** Explain figurative language or non-literal language using one of the following methods:

1. Use brackets next to any non-literal text, such as “If you are experiencing cold feet [feeling anxious] before starting, take a deep breath and jump in.”
2. Provide a pop-up definition.
3. Use supported markup such as personalization semantics that are being developed by [WAI-ADAPT](#). Test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.4](#) and [COGA pattern 4.4.12](#) and [SC 3.1.3 Unusual words](#) (which focuses on “idioms” and “jargon”).

Outcome: **Nonverbal cues in audio or video media such as tone of voice, facial expressions, body gestures, or music with emotional meaning:** Explain in captions or audio descriptions. Test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.4](#) and [COGA pattern 4.4.12](#).

### 2.3.4 Chunking information

Outcome: **Summary of long documents or media:** Provide short, plain-language summary for long pieces of content such as articles or videos, similar to abstracts for scientific papers or executive summaries for business reports. Test TBD. See [COGA pattern 4.4.8](#) and [G86: Providing a text summary](#).

Outcome: **Section length:** Organize content in manageable sections, such as five or six paragraphs per section in an article or chapters in a long video, to make the information easier to understand and to avoid overwhelming users. Test info TBD about using section headers, dividing lines, or other means to separate sections. Weighting process TBD. See [COGA pattern 4.4.5](#) and [WCAG 2.2 definition of ‘section’](#).

Outcome: **Descriptive section headers:** Use section headers such as H1, H2, H3, to separate each section so that users can skim the page and find what they need. Weighting process TBD. See [COGA pattern 4.4.5](#) and [plainlanguage.gov's "Add useful headings"](#).

Outcome: **Paragraph length:** Break long text into short paragraphs that focus on one idea. Weighting process TBD that rewards content creators for having fewer sentences per paragraph and fewer words per sentence: X for Bronze, Y for Silver, etc. [COGA pattern 4.4.5](#).

Outcome: **Topic sentence:** Put the aim or purpose at the beginning of each paragraph. This is especially important in sections with more than one paragraph. See [COGA pattern 4.4.5](#) and [Plainlanguage.gov's "Have a topic sentence."](#)

Outcome: **Lists:** Use bulleted or numbered lists to present text in a more scannable format and help users focus on important information. Test TBD. [COGA pattern 4.4.5](#)

Outcome: **Instructions:** Use numbered steps to identify all the steps in a process and the order in which they happen. Test TBD. [COGA pattern 4.4.9](#)

Outcome: **White spacing:** Use whitespace (also called "negative space" or "blank spacing") to separate chunks of content. Test TBD. [COGA pattern 4.4.10](#), [SC 1.4.12 \(White spacing \(Level AA\)\)](#), and [U.S. Web Design System Typography](#).

Outcome: **Clear background:** Help users focus on the text by avoiding distracting backgrounds such as subtle floral designs or photos. Test TBD. [COGA pattern 4.4.11](#).

Outcome: **Supplements to aid understanding of text:** Help users understand text using images, diagrams, video clips, etc. Weighting process TBD. See [COGA 4.8.2](#) and [G103: Providing visual illustrations, pictures, and images to help explain ideas, events, and processes](#).

### 2.3.5 Numerical concepts

Outcome: **Supplements to aid understanding of numerical concepts:** Help users understand numerical concepts, such as weather forecasts that pair low temperatures with descriptions like "very cold." Test info TBD; see [COGA pattern 4.4.13](#).

Outcome: **Ambiguous numerical formatting:** Avoid or mark up ambiguous numerical formatting such as Roman numerals, dates, and long numbers to aid user understanding and also pronunciation by text-to-speech and screen readers. Test info TBD; see [Slides 12 and 13 in Clear Language's proposed tests for TPAC 2022](#) and [COGA pattern 4.4.6](#).

### 2.3.6 Typography

Outcome: **Line height, line width, font size, etc:** Waiting for AG to confirm that these will be covered elsewhere in WCAG 3. If not, we can look into developing typography outcomes as part of Clear Language guidelines.

