Do We Make the Grade?
U.S. Federal Report Card
plainlanguage.gov
Speakers

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One goal: to promote the use of plain language in U.S. government communications.

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Inside the U.S.
Federal Government

Outside non-profit

Center for Plain Language
Make it clear.
Plain Writing Act of 2010

Loud cheers from both groups!

Next year: 10-year anniversary!
Main Problem: No Teeth or Support

“No provision of this Act shall be construed to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by any administrative or judicial action.”

- Plain Writing Act, 2010
Two ways to promote the Plain Writing Act: Carrot/Stick (Reward/Punish)
KON-TIKI

Based on the incredible true story!

The feature film about a legendary explorer and his epic adventure.
2 ways to promote the Plain Writing Act

Inside the U.S. Federal Government

Center for Plain Language
Make it clear.

Outside non-profit
- Maintains federal guidelines
- Trains federal workforce
- Holds meetings, summit

- Advocates for additional legislation
- Grades government agencies’ writing with annual report cards
What is the Federal Report Card?

Every year, the Center for Plain Language evaluates how well federal agencies

● Write

● Comply with the Plain Writing Act of 2010
Writing

- Understanding audience needs
- Style and voice
- Structure and content
- Information design and navigation
- Pictures, graphics, charts

Compliance

- Staffing
- Training
- Reporting

Prepared by the Center for Plain Language

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<th>Department</th>
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<th>Writing &amp; Information Design</th>
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Problem #1: Not My Job

“good for government”

“other duties as assigned”
Problem #2: Staff Turnover

- PL trainers change jobs or bosses, and lose permission to teach
- PL agency contacts leave and aren’t replaced
  - Agency grades dropped to a C average
  - Six cabinet agencies had no PL contact in August 2016
The Future? More Interest

- Agencies request training and reviews
  (PLAIN: 19 trainers 800 federal employees)
- Job descriptions beginning to include PL as part of the job and performance expectations
- PL part of customer service, user experience
We hope Plain Language continues to make the grade!