

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

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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



Center for Plain Language

— Make it clear. —

Outside non-profit





Plain Writing Act of 2010

Loud cheers from both groups!

Next year: 10-year anniversary!

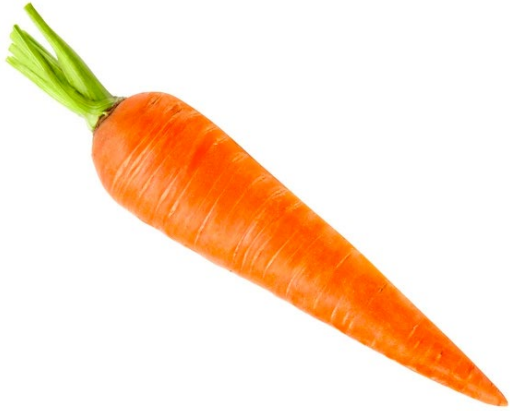


Main Problem: No Teeth or Support

“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)

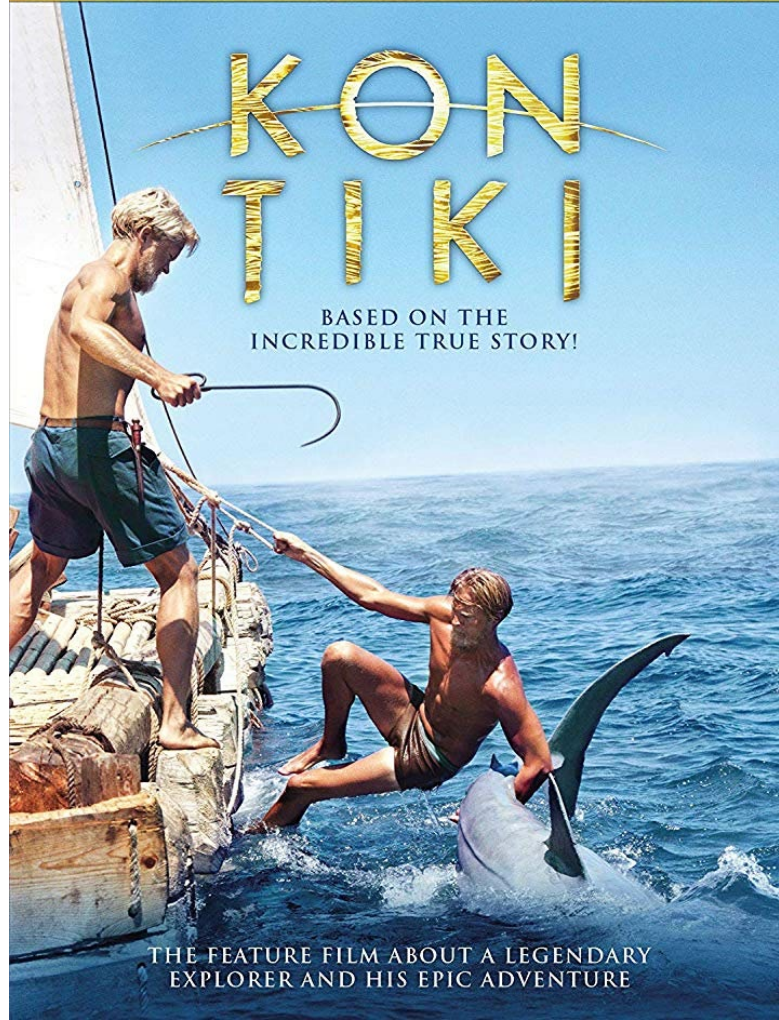




ACADEMY AWARD® NOMINEE 2012 BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM

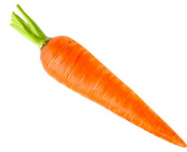
KON TIKI

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



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- Maintains federal guidelines
- Trains federal workforce
- Holds meetings, summit



Center for Plain Language

— Make it clear. —

- 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

Federal Plain Language Report Card - 2015 Prepared by the Center for Plain Language

Department	Compliance	Writing & Information Design
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	A	A
Department of Agriculture	A+	A-
Department of Commerce	A	B-
Department of Defense	A	C+
Department of Education	A-	A-
Department of Energy	A	B+
Department of Health and Human Services	A	B
Department of Homeland Security	A+	A
Department of Housing and Urban Development	C	A
Department of Justice	A	B
Department of Labor	B+	A

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

Compliance

- **Staffing**
- **Training**
- **Reporting**

Susan Kleiman
Chair, Center for Plain Language

17 Nov 2015
Date



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!