

Policy Toolkit: Writing Tips

- Remember that policies have different audiences and that readers are generally not subject-matter experts.
- Use the standard Policy Template.
- Use a clear and intuitive policy title.
- Use a logical structure and appropriate headings and sub-headings.
- Consider your audience and edit your policy to reduce unnecessary words and information.
- Use present tense and positive tone.
- Use gender neutral and inclusive language.
- Use single idea sentences and avoid complex sentence structures.
- Use definite rather than vague language.
- Select words carefully. Words like “should” and “may” imply a choice. Use the words “must” or “will” rather than “should.”
- Avoid using jargon, technical or legal terms, acronyms or abbreviations.
- Define all unique, technical or unfamiliar terms. Ensure that definitions are clear, concise, and consistent.
- Make sure terminology is consistent in the draft policy and across related policies.
- Refer to titles, positions, and units, not specific individuals.
- Avoid using contact information that may change such as a person's name, phone number, or email address.
- Make sure all titles, groups, committees, related documents, legislation, forms and similar items in the policy are accurate.
- Avoid using hyperlinks. Where hyperlinks are necessary, ensure that each one works.
- Avoid footnotes as all essential information should be included in the policy text.
- Use lists to help your user focus on important material. Vertical lists highlight requirements or other information in a visually clear way.
- Ensure that spelling is thoroughly checked.