

How to make written documents easier to read

Format



Try to keep everything on **one page**, but also don't try to fit too much information on one page.

Line spacing can really help make it easier to read

Use **1.5 or 2.0 line spacing** to make it easier to read.



Make sure the **layout is the same** throughout the document.



Use two columns so that you can add pictures or icons on the left and words on the right.



Use pictures or images to support the words in the document.

A simple picture or diagram may be more helpful than words.

**Arial
16 point**

A larger print will be easier to read. **Try Arial font – at least size 16.**

Bold

Use **bold text** to emphasise a word.

Do not underline words.



Simplify a number of key points by using **bullet points** to list things. This will make it easier to read rather than needing to search through dense text.

ABC

The main idea

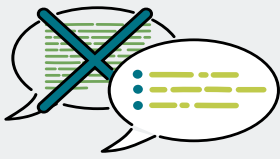
Use **boxes** to help information stand out.

Make the **headings** a different colour.

% ^ { #
@ ~ &

Reduce the use of **symbols** or **uncommonly used punctuation** as much as you can.

Language

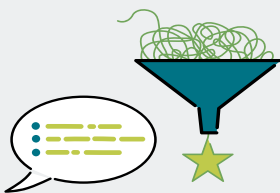


Write in **short** sentences, no longer than 15-20 words.

If a sentence has 'and' in it break it into two sentences.



Make sure each sentence only has **one main idea**.



Write as if you are **speaking**. This will have the effect of making what you write less formal and easier to understand.



Use common, **everyday words**.

Replace complex words with a simpler word. E.g. *happen* instead of *occur*.



Do not use **jargon** or **acronyms** or **italics**.

Use a common everyday word instead.



Use **full names** not abbreviations.

Road, not *Rd* / Ministry of Health, not *MoH*.

ABC ❌

Write in lower case.

Abc ✅

Do not write in upper case.

don't ❌

Do not use abbreviations like '**don't**' or '**can't**'– use the full words like '**do not**' or '**can not**'.

123 ✅

Always write **numbers** as digits (7,9).

Do not write numbers in words (*seven, nine* etc).



Keep the language **personal** e.g. you, we, I or use first names.

Example



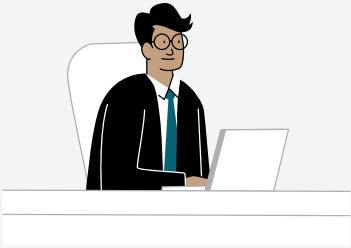



Family Group Conference

	<p>John, you need to go to a Family Group Conference. This is to talk about custody of Sam. Custody means who Sam will live with.</p>
	<p>When?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:30pm • 5th April 2024
	<p>Where?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oranga Tamariki office • 22 Smith Street, Nelson
	<p>Who will be there?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You • Ann Smith • Your lawyer • The lawyer for Sam • Oranga Tamariki Social Worker
	<p>What will be talked about?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's been happening • A plan to keep Sam safe and happy • XXXXX
	<p>How long will it take?</p> <p>The Family Group Conference might take 1 - 2 hours.</p> <p>You can take a break if you need to.</p>

Example

Dear John,

This is a summary of what we talked about at our meeting on Thursday.

	<p>We talked about the Police charges.</p>
	<p>You said you did not do those things. You said you want to plead 'not guilty' to all the charges.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means that you will need to go to a Judge alone trial • There will not be a jury • The Judge will make the final decision
	<p>You are on electronically monitored bail. This means you must wear an ankle bracelet.</p>
 <p>Home</p>	<p>You must live at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 125 High Street, Lower Hutt • You must stay home from 7pm - 7am every night
	<p>You need to be at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower Hutt District court • 9:30am • Monday 17 November 2024