

Accessible Language for External Communications



It's time to get your message out so that all can understand it! Follow these guidelines so that your message can reach everyone. **"Accessible Language" is language everyone can understand!**

To begin, remember that **"everyone"** includes people with different education and literacy levels, some learning disabilities, and people for whom the language you are using isn't their first, most familiar language.

So, as you create your message:

- 1. Make your ideas clear:** bold key points, use headings with large, simple fonts, include white space to reduce clutter and confusion.
- 2. Connect simple visuals** (pictures, illustrations, symbols, graphics) **with relevant words** that add meaning to them.
- 3. Choose visuals that mirror your intended audience or a wide range of society.** Use the Special Olympics Canada Cultural Diversity & Inclusion Image Filter to guide your image choice.
- 4. Choose simple words with clear, single meanings** (e.g. use "list of volunteers" not "pool or bank of volunteers").
- 5. Keep sentences short and simple** (vs "When writing sentences, keep them brief and uncomplicated by avoiding complex sentence structures and multi-syllabic words." The first sentence of this paragraph in bold can be understood by someone with a Grade 5 reading level vs the second more complex sentence in quotation marks that conveys a similar message but requires higher than a Grade 12 level in reading). **You can find out the grade level (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level) of your specific text by checking the "readability stats" in Word or at www.readabilityformulas.com. The lower the grade level of your text, the more people who will be able to understand your message.**
- 6. Remember your Second Language Learners and translate** your writing into your audience's first language (even the title translated is better than nothing if translation costs are prohibitive).
- 7. Check your written message with an "expert":** have someone from your intended audience or cultural group review your words, symbols, colours and terms. You want to be culturally "with it"!
- 8. Check your spoken message with an "expert" from the intended audience, and enlist one to interpret in the language most will understand at events.** Investigate free or volunteer interpreters. Ensure confidentiality.
- 9. Get the word out!** Use paper copies, in-person promotion, and telephone contacts as well as on-line options and email to communicate with your audience. Not everyone has easy access to computers or knows how to use them.

For more information, please refer to the source document, *"Inclusive and Accessible Language Guidelines"*, by contacting info@specialolympics.ca

Make your message accessible to your audience, and understood by everyone in it!

