

A Plain Language Handbook

Write For Your Reader



Do you write or edit reports, letters, memos, minutes, brochures, or other documents?

This handbook gives you the tools to write or edit your documents in plain language.



The NWT Literacy Council wrote and produced this handbook. The Department of Education, Culture, and Employment, Government of the Northwest Territories funded the project.

Thanks to the people who reviewed the handbook. Your comments were very helpful.

The project also produced a **Plain Language Audit Tool** as a separate document. Do an audit to find out if documents use plain language.

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The NWT Literacy Council offers plain language services.

- Write or edit documents with plain language.
- Assess documents for plain language.
- Provide literacy profiles to help writers understand readers' needs.

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Intro to Plain Language

Plain language is writing for the readers.

Plain language means writers think about the readers and pay attention to:

- ☑ How to organize the information.

Tell the readers what the document is about. Help them find the information they need.

- ☑ What to write.

Include only the information the readers really need.

- ☑ How to write.

Use words and grammar the readers understand. Speak directly to the reader.

- ☑ How to present the information.

Use design techniques to help people read more easily.

Why write in plain language?

People need to be able to use written information to participate fully in society. Plain language helps people read, understand, and use written information.

Government, business, and nonprofit groups use different types of documents:

- Forms and applications: income support, jobs, funding, legal aid, licences, housing.
- Reports: land use or economic plans, environmental assessments, discussion papers.
- Legal documents: land claims, insurance, wills, custody, impact benefit agreements, contracts, adoption, sentencing, unions.
- Brochures and booklets: health, social wellbeing, education, sports and fitness, employment, housing, daycare.
- Instructions and manuals: workplace health and safety, hazardous waste, elections, firearm safety, prescriptions.
- Internal documents: memos, briefing notes, decision-papers, reports, meeting minutes, policies.
- Letters and memos.

Government, business, and nonprofit groups use different documents to:

- Give people information.
- Change people's behaviour or thinking.
- Help people make decisions.
- Consult with people.
- Register people for programs or services.

When we talk, we get a direct response. We can use that response to choose words and a style and tone of speaking that help people understand.

When we write, we don't get the same direct response. But we can choose to write in plain language. Plain language guidelines are based on research about what helps people read and understand.

We all have a responsibility to produce written information that people can read, understand, and use so they can fully participate in society.

Myths and Facts

Myth: Plain language is simple-minded and talks down to people.

Fact: Plain language includes and respects people. People understand what they read. They get the information they need and not a lot of extras.

Myth: Plain language takes too long and costs too much.

Fact: Plain language saves time and money. When people understand what they read, they ask fewer questions, complain less, and make fewer mistakes. Their health and safety are more assured.

Myth: Plain language isn't necessary for people who read well.

Fact: Plain language helps everyone understand what they read. Even people with good literacy skills skip over information, understand less, or just do not read a document that is too complex, wordy, or technical.

Myth: Plain language isn't good for legal and technical terms.

Fact: Plain language guidelines can work with any document. Define legal or technical terms so that people can understand and use the information.

Plain Language Process—Five Basic Steps

Use this process to write a new document or to edit an existing document.

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.	→ ←	Step 4: Design the document.
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Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 1

Plain Language Process

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.



Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 1: Know the Readers and the Purpose of the Document



Use this checklist to help define the audience and purpose.

- Who are the readers?
- Where and when will the readers use this document?
- What is the purpose of the document?
- What do the readers need to know?
- What type of document do I need?

Who are the readers?

- Am I writing to one person or a group?
- If a group, do individuals have the same or different experiences and skills?
- Is there anything specific about the age, gender, or culture of the readers?
- Do I need to translate the document into other languages?
- What literacy skills do the readers have?

About 66% of Aboriginal adults and 31% of non-Aboriginal adults need better literacy skills for daily living.

These people might not be able to:

- Read a medicine bottle.
- Help children with homework.
- Fill out a housing application.

About 50% of NWT adults have the literacy skills needed for daily living.

These people may not understand:

- Land claims or impact benefit agreements.
- Medical information.
- Environmental assessment report.

What grade reading level should I aim for?

If the document is ...	Aim for ...
Essential information for people who have less than eight years of school or whose first language is not English.	Grade 5 to 6
Public information that has new terms and concepts or specialized subject matter.	Grade 7 to 8
Specialized information for people who are familiar with the topic and who have good literacy skills.	Grade 10+

When and where will readers use this information?

- Will readers be comfortable or under stress?
- Will readers be in an office, at home, or outside?
- Will readers have lots of time or be rushed?

What is the purpose of the document?

- What do I want to happen when people read the document?
- What do I want the readers to be able to do after they read the document?
- Do I want or need something specific? Do I want to achieve or prevent something? Do I want to change people's behaviour?
- If I want to 'inform' people, what do I want them to do with the information?

What do the readers need to know?

- What do people already know about this topic?
- Do they use other documents related to this topic? Do I need to use the same terms as other documents?
- What information do I need to include?
- What information can I leave out?
- What is the most important thing the readers need to know so they can respond?

What type of document is best?

Look at the information about the readers and the purpose of the document. Ask:

- What type of document is best for the readers, to achieve the purpose? Is it a brochure, booklet, report, letter, form, poster, or other format?

Should an existing document be a different type of document?

- How many documents are best for the readers, to achieve the purpose?

Should an existing set of two or more documents become one? Should an existing document become two or more different documents?

- How long should the document be? What is the upper and lower limit?

Plain Language Process

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.



Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 2: Make an Outline



Use this checklist to plan an outline for the document.

- ☑ Introduce the document.
- ☑ Organize ideas in a logical order.
- ☑ Divide the document into short sections.
- ☑ Put the most important information first.
- ☑ Use headings and subheadings.
- ☑ Include a Table of Contents for longer documents.

With a good outline, writers may spend less time writing and rewriting.

Step 2

Introduce the document

- Tell readers right away what the document is about.
- Tell the readers how the document is organized.

Organize ideas in a logical order

Organize ideas in a way that makes sense for the readers. Choose one way to organize the document and be consistent throughout:

- Step by step.
- Chronologically.
- From general to specific or from specific to general.
- From what people already know to new information or from new information to what people already know.

Divide the document into short sections

- Put all the information about one thing in the same section.
- Organize each section in the same way the whole document is organized.

Put the most important information first

- Start with the most important information so people don't miss it.

People often read only the first lines of a document or of each section of a document.

Use headings and subheadings

- Help readers find information.
- Make the document easy to scan.
- Organize the document in a way that is clear for the readers.
- Give useful information to the readers.

Do headings and subheadings accurately describe what the section is about?

Include a Table of Contents for longer documents

- Tell readers how the document is organized.
- Make it easy for readers to find the information they need.

Step 3

Plain Language Process

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.



Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 3: Write or Edit the Document



Use this checklist to guide writing or editing.

- Use simple, short, clear words.
- Write short sentences with just one idea in each sentence.
- Use a positive tone.
- Use an active writing style.
- Write short paragraphs.
- Use point form or lists where appropriate.

Step 3

Use simple, short, clear words

- Choose everyday words with one or two syllables if possible. Avoid jargon, chains of nouns, and double negatives.
- Change or take out wordy phrases.
- Choose concrete not abstract words.
- Use contractions such as don't and we'll.
- Use possessive endings: 's or s'.
- Define technical terms or leave them out.
- Identify acronyms in the text.

Write this	Not this
present	not absent
show	demonstrate
if	in the event that
plan	strategize
he won't	he will not
department's policy	policy of the department

Use an active writing style

- Use a simple form to write sentences.
Subject—Verb—Object.
- Make sure the subject of the sentence is the person or thing that does the action.
Write: ‘The government decided...’
Not: ‘It was decided by government ...’
- Speak directly to the reader.
Write: ‘People who need help ...’
Not: ‘People who require assistance ...’
- Look for nouns to change to verbs; rewrite the sentence. The sentence changes from a passive to an active style. And usually it is shorter.
Write: ‘We’ll notify you...’
Not: ‘You will receive notification...’

Write short sentences—one idea in each

- Write sentences with no more than 20 to 25 words. Mix shorter sentences with longer ones.
- If a sentence has more than one idea, break it into two shorter sentences.

Step 3

Use a positive tone

- Use a positive tone to engage people.
Write: ‘You can apply for a scholarship if you get 80% or more.’
Not: ‘If you don’t get at least 80%, you cannot apply for a scholarship.’
- Use a negative tone to indicate danger, to warn people, or to dispel a myth.
Example: a booklet might say **what to do** and **what not to do** with an oil spill.

Write short paragraphs—one idea each

- Keep paragraphs to four or five sentences. Put the most important information first.
- Break up complicated information. Use different paragraphs for different ideas.

Use point form and lists if appropriate

- Make a list for a group of similar things. Use bullets, arrows, or other small graphics to mark each item on the list.
- Give instructions in the order they need to be done. Use numbers if appropriate.
- Use the same verb or noun form throughout the list.

Write like this ...

We encourage you to use the Internet to make your work more effective. It is acceptable to use the Internet to:

- Do research.
- Correspond with colleagues, clients, or vendors.
- Develop your career.
- Provide public information.

It is not acceptable to use the Internet for personal interests not related to your job.

Not like this ...

Job related uses of the Internet include accessing external databases, libraries, newspapers, newsletters, magazines, bulletin boards or encyclopedias to obtain reference information or conduct research; corresponding with colleagues, government clients, and vendors; professional and career development; and provision of information to the public.

Using the Internet for any activities that are not job related (e.g. surfing or browsing for material of personal interest) is not acceptable.

Step 4

Plain Language Process

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.



Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 4: Design the Document



Use this plain language checklist as a design guide.

- ☑ Use white space to break up the text.
- ☑ Highlight important information.
- ☑ Use fonts that people can read easily.
- ☑ Use photos, charts and other graphics to show information more clearly.
- ☑ Use colour effectively.

Step 4

Use white space to break up the text

- Use white space to separate paragraphs and sections of the document.
- Use margins at least one inch wide. Justify the left margin. Leave the right margin ragged.
- Use columns if they work well. Text in two columns on 8 1/2 X 11 paper is easier to read than text across the whole page.

Highlight important information

- Use boxes around important information to make it more prominent.
- Use colour shading to add interest and set text apart.
- Use bullets, arrows, or other small graphics for point form lists.
- Use *italics* to emphasize a word or phrase, or for phrases in other languages. Italics are hard to read, so limit their use.
- Use **bold print** for titles or to add emphasis.
- Use all capitals only to draw attention to a heading or to make a brief statement, such as: KEEP OUT.

Use fonts that people can read easily

- Use a serif font for the main text. A serif font has hooks on each letter. This is a serif font. This is a non-serif font.
- Use a different type of font for headings and subheadings.
- Use the same style and size of font in the same way throughout the document.
- Use capitals only where appropriate.
ALL CAPITALS ARE HARD TO READ.

Use photos, charts and other graphics to show information more clearly

- Make sure the graphics are appropriate for the readers.
- Place graphics close to the text they refer to.
- Use graphics to enhance the text.

Use colour effectively

- Black ink on white paper is easiest to read.
- Coloured paper, ink, or shading can draw attention. Make sure there is good contrast and the text is clear.

Step 5

Plain Language Process

Step 1: Know the readers and the purpose of the document



Step 2: Make an outline of the document



Step 3: Write or edit the document.



Step 4: Design the document.



Step 5: Test and revise the document.

Step 5: Test and Revise the Document



Use this checklist to help test and revise the document.

- ☑ Read the document out loud.
- ☑ Ask a co-worker to read the document.
- ☑ Use computer checks for grammar and spelling.
- ☑ Do a readability test to assess the grade reading level of the document.
- ☑ Get feedback from a sample of the readers.
- ☑ Use the feedback to revise the document. Make a final draft.

Read the document out loud

- Writers can tell a lot about a document if they read it out loud. For example, does it flow well?

Ask a co-worker to read the document

- Writers miss things in a document they are familiar with.
- A co-worker with knowledge of plain language guidelines is ideal.

Use computer checks for spelling and grammar

- Computer grammar checks can help writers find passive sentences.
- Computer grammar checks have some ability to estimate grade-reading level.

Do a readability test

A readability test shows the grade reading level people should have to read and understand the document.

If the document is ...	Aim for ...
Essential information for people who have less than 8 years of school or whose first language isn't English.	Grade 5 to 6
Public information that has new terms and concepts or specialized subject matter.	Grade 7 to 9
Specialized information for people who are familiar with the topic and who have good literacy skills.	Grade 10 +

Test the main text, without titles, headings, and subheadings. Try to avoid sections done in point form or with step-by-step numbers.

Online readability tests are easy to use and free. Here are two examples.

- Readability – Score.com
<https://readability-score.com/> (Nov. 2015)
- Readability Test Tool
<http://read-able.com/> (Nov. 2015)

Get feedback from the readers

This is the most useful test.

- Find a sample of the readers.
- Decide what questions the readers should answer. Examples: Is the purpose clear? Is there too much or too little information?
- Make a schedule. How much time do readers need to review the document?
- Decide on a process to get their feedback: group or individual meeting; in person or on the phone?
- Contact readers. Be very clear about what they need to do, the schedule, and the process. Leave room for them to say no. Ensure confidentiality. Offer honoraria if appropriate and possible.

Use the feedback to revise the document.

Make a final draft.

- Test more than one draft if appropriate.
- Use information about printing costs to help make final design decisions.

Alternate Words and Phrases



Use this list to find a simple, short, clear word or phrase to replace a complex, long, abstract word or phrase.

Instead of ...	Try ...
accompany	go with
accomplish	do, carry out
accordingly	so
additional	extra, more
adequate number	enough
adversely affect	hurt
advise	tell, recommend
affirmative	yes
affix your signature to	sign
afford an opportunity to	let, allow
annum	year
anticipate	expect
apparent	clear, plain
approximately	about
as to, as per, as regards	about, concerning
as a consequence of	because of
as a means to	to
as prescribed by	under, in

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
ascertain	find out, learn
assist, assistance	help
at this point in time	now, right now
at the present time	now, right now
attached herewith is	here is
be in a position to	be able
benefit	help, payment
by means of	by, with
by reason of the fact that	because
capable	is able, can
causative factor	reason
commence	start, begin
compensate	pay
complete	fill out
comply with	follow
component	part
conclude	end, finish
concur	agree
consequently	so, as a result
consider	think about
constitutes	is, forms, makes up

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
contains	has
deem	think, believe
deficiency	lack
demonstrate	show, prove
desire	want, wish
determine	figure, find, decide
detrimental	harmful
disclose	show
discontinue	end, stop
disseminate	send out, spread
due to the fact that	due to, since
during the time	during
eliminate	cut, drop, end
endeavor	try
enumerate	count
equitable	fair
erroneous	wrong, false
excessive	too many, too much
exhibit	show
expedite	speed up
expend	pay out, spend

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
failed to	didn't
feasible	can be done
finalize	complete, finish
for a period of	for
for the purpose of	for
for the reason that	because
forfeit	lose, give up
formulate	work out, form
furnish	give, send
has the capability to	is able to, can
henceforth	from now on
herein	here
implement	start, carry out
in accordance with	following, by, under
in addition	also, besides, too
in an effort to	to
in association with	with
in a timely manner	on time, promptly
in lieu of	instead of
in order that	for, so
in regard to	about

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
in relation to	about, with, to
in the amount of	for
in the course of	during
in the event of	if
in the vicinity of	near
in view of the fact that	because
inasmuch as	since
initiate	start
locality	place
locate	find
maintain	keep
modify	change
monitor	check, watch
necessitate	need, cause
not later than	by
notify	tell, let know
notwithstanding	in spite of, still
on a daily basis	every day, once a day
on a regular basis	regularly
on the basis of	by, because of
on the grounds of	because of

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
operational	working
optimum	best, greatest, most
owing to	because
parameters	limits
participate	take part
perform	do
permit	let
personnel	people, workers
pertaining to	about, of, on
practically	almost, just about
preclude	prevent
premises	building
previously	before
prior to	before
proficiency	skill
prohibit	forbid
promulgate	issue, publish
provided that	if
purchase	buy
pursuant to	following, under
regarding	about, of, on

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
relative to	about, on
remainder	rest
remuneration	pay, payment
render	give, make
represents	is
request	ask, ask for, demand
require	need, must
reside	live
retain	keep
reveal	show
selection	choice
solicit	ask for
submit	give, sent
subsequent	next, later
statutory	legal
strategize	plan
submit	give, send
subsequent	later, next
subsequent to	after
substantial	large
sufficient	enough

Words and Phrases

Instead of ...	Try ...
supplementary	extra, added
terminate	end, stop
the manner in which	how
therefore	so
the month of	(name of month)
therein	there
the undersigned	I
thus	so, that way
transmit	send
transpire	happen, take place
until such time as	until
utilize, utilization	use
validate	confirm, make sure
viable	workable, practical
warrant	call for
whereas	since, because
with reference to	about
with the exception of	except for
witnessed	saw



Nouns to Verbs

Change a noun to a verb and rewrite the sentence. The sentence changes from a passive to an active style. It may also be shorter.

Change this ...	To this ...
acceptance	accept
achievement	achieve
action	act
addition	add
adjustment	adjust
admiration	admire
agreement	agree
application	apply
approval	approve
assumption	assume
attention	attend
avoidance	avoid
calculation	calculate
certification	certify
comparison	compare
complaint	complain

Nouns to Verbs

Change this ...	To this ...
confusion	confuse
conservation	conserve
consideration	consider
contribution	contribute
creation	create
decision	decide
deduction	deduct
delivery	deliver
designation	designate, name
destruction	destroy
deterioration	deteriorate
determination	determine
development	develop
disclosure	disclose
discovery	discover
disposal, disposition	dispose, sell, give away
distribution	distribute
disturbance	disturb
education	educate
enforcement	enforce
examination	examine

Nouns to Verbs

Change this ...	To this ...
expectation	expect
explanation	explain
identification	identify
inclusion	include
information	inform
introduction	introduce
invention	invent
investigation	investigate
invitation	invite
justification	justify
leadership	lead
movement	move
objection	object
payment	pay
performance	perform
persistence	persist
persuasion	persuade
prevention	prevent
promotion	promote
protection	protect
qualification	qualify

Nouns to Verbs

Change this ...	To this ...
reaction	react
recurrence	recur
reduction	reduce
reliance, reliability	rely
remittance	remit
residence	reside, live at
resignation	resign
resistance	resist
significance	signify
specification	specify
statement	state
submission	submit
suggestion	suggest



Writing Samples

Writing samples show how writing can change if writers apply plain language guidelines.

This example is adapted from

<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/index.cfm>

Original

Dietary guidelines recommend a half hour or more of moderate physical activity on most days, preferably every day. The activity can include brisk walking, calisthenics, home care, gardening, moderate sports exercise, and dancing.

A plain language version

Do 30 minutes of exercise every day, such as brisk walking, dancing, gardening, and sports.

Original from an old Workers' Compensation Board brochure

HOW TO REGISTER FOR COVERAGE AS AN ARTIST OR CARVER

- 1. Contact the Workers' Compensation Board and register as an Independent Operator.**
Your application will be approved only after it is confirmed that you are an Independent Operator in good standing. (If your work is commissioned or if you produce your work as an employee of another individual or company, you may not qualify.)
- 2. Provide the Board with an estimate of your gross yearly income.**
You will be required to provide proof of your income.
- 3. Obtain Personal Optional Coverage by paying the appropriate assessment.**
If you choose not to have optional coverage, you will not be eligible for any of the benefits listed on this brochure.
- 4. Renew your coverage annually.**
This coverage is not continuous. An application for renewal must be made each year prior to December 31st.

A plain language version

Artists and Carvers can Register for WCB Coverage

- Call the Workers Compensation Board (WCB).
 - Tell them you work for yourself as an artist or carver.
 - Be ready to show them how much money you make in a year.
 - Pay the amount you owe once a year.
 - Renew the insurance every year.
-

Original from a brochure “Home Adaptations for Senior’s Independence”

WHAT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE?

Assistance in the form of a forgivable loan of up to \$2 500 is available. This loan does not have to be repaid provided that the homeowner agrees to continue to occupy the unit for the duration of the loan forgiveness period. If the adaptation work is being done on a rental unit, the landlord must agree that rents will not increase as a result of the adaptations. The loan forgiveness period is 6 months and may be reduced in extenuating circumstances. Repayable loans are not available.

A plain language version

Financial Assistance

You can get a forgivable loan for up to \$2,500.

- If the loan is for your own house, you have to live there for at least six months. This is the loan forgiveness period. If needed, that time can be shorter.
 - If you are a landlord, you can't increase the rent because of changes you made with the loan.
-

Original from a brochure “A Guide to the Labour Standards Act”

GENERAL HOLIDAYS

The Labour Standards Act establishes ¹⁰nine general holidays in the Northwest Territories. They are:

- New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Victoria Day
- Canada Day • National Aboriginal Day
- First Monday in August
- Labour Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Remembrance Day
- Christmas Day

The Act sets out conditions an employee must meet to be eligible to receive general holiday pay. An employee must have worked for that employer on 30 work days in the 12 months prior to the general holiday; have reported to work on the general holiday if called to work; have reported to work on both the last scheduled work day before the general holiday and the next regular scheduled day following the holiday; and not be on pregnancy or parental leave. Generally, if an employee meets the conditions and does not work on the general holiday, he or she is entitled to a regular day's pay. If the employee meets the conditions summarized above and works on the general holiday, he or she is entitled to either another day off work with pay, or a normal day's pay plus 1.5 times the regular rate of pay for the time worked on the general holiday.

If the employee meets the conditions and the general holiday occurs on what would be a non-working day, and the employee does not work, then he or she must be paid a normal day's pay. As an alternative, the holiday may be transferred to another day.

For example, where New Year's Day occurs on a Sunday (a non-working day for the employee) the employer may transfer the holiday to Monday or to another day.

A plain language version

General Holidays

Each year has **10 general holidays**.

- New Year's Day
- Victoria Day
- National Aboriginal Day
- First Monday in August
- Labour Day
- Remembrance Day
- Good Friday
- Canada Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

Employees who work on a holiday get either holiday pay or a day off work with pay if:

- They worked 30 days in the year before the holiday; and
- They worked the scheduled days before and after the holiday; and
- They are not on pregnancy or parental leave.

Holiday pay is 2.5 times regular pay for the hours people work on the holiday.

Employees who do NOT work on a holiday usually get their regular pay for that day.

Original
newspaper
ad—about
75% actual
size



Special Committee on the Implementation
of Self-Government and the Sunset Clause

PUBLIC HEARINGS

We want to hear from you!

The Special Committee on the Implementation of Self-Government and the Sunset Clause will be conducting public hearings to hear the different views of citizens on options for addressing the Sunset Clause. The Committee has been tasked with considering all options and providing its recommendations in a report to the Legislative Assembly. This is your chance to influence their report and recommendations.

The Sunset Clause was introduced by the previous Assembly to try and motivate the current Government to deal with representation issues brought on by the settlement of self-government negotiations. These negotiations have yet to conclude but the Sunset Clause, if left alone, will effectively dissolve the current electoral districts and prevent this government from holding any future elections. All powers and authority would then revert back to the Commissioner of the Northwest Territories.

Public Hearing Process

The public hearings will take place:

Wednesday, February 27 from 10:30 am - 12 pm and
from 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm and

Thursday, February 28 from 6:30 pm - 9:00 pm
in Committee Room 'A' of the

Legislative Assembly in Yellowknife.

Interested persons or organizations wishing to appear before the Special Committee should contact the Committee Clerk listed below, no later than **3:00 p.m., Friday February 22, 2002.**

To register as a witness, or to obtain further information, please contact the Committee Clerk.

Corey McLachlan, Assistant Committee Clerk
Special Committee on the Implementation of
Self-Government and the Sunset Clause
Legislative Assembly of the NWT
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9

Phone: (867) 669-2218 or toll-free: 1-800-661-0784

Fax: (867) 873-0432 or

toll-free fax: 1-800-661-0879

E-mail: corey_mclachlan@gov.nt.ca



A plain language version

If the Sunset Clause does not change, electoral districts will dissolve. And we need electoral districts to hold territorial elections.

How Many Electoral Districts Should There Be?

What are the options?

Come to a public meeting

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday	Feb. 27	10:30 to 12:00 noon
Wednesday	Feb. 27	6:30 to 9:30 p.m.
Thursday	Feb. 28	6:30 to 9:00 p.m.

To speak at the Public Meeting, register by 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 22

To register or get more information:

Phone: (867)-669-2218 or 1-800-661-0784

Fax: (867)-873-0432 or 1-800-661-0879

Email: corey_mclachlan@gov.nt.ca

Original

From the 2001-2002 Student Guide for the
NWT Student Financial Assistance Program

The NWT Study Grant for Students with Disabilities

The NWT Study Grant is available to assist students with permanent disabilities (visual or hearing impairments and other physical or learning disabilities are among the types of disabilities covered) who are studying in postsecondary institutions. You can apply for the benefit at any time during your academic year. Applications for the NWT Study Grant require medical or other appropriate documentation about your disability and the manner in which it limits your ability to participate fully in postsecondary studies.

Based on an assessment of your educational needs, eligible students may receive up to \$5,000 per academic year. You must enroll in courses that represent at least 40% of a full time course load. If your educational needs exceed the NWT Study Grant for Students with Disabilities you can also receive funding under the Repayable Loan.

The Study Grant may be used to cover exceptional educational expenses such as the cost of a tutor, an interpreter (oral, sign), note taker, transportation, attendant care or special equipment. The grant will also reimburse students for up to 75% of the cost of a learning disability assessment (up to \$1,000).

A plain language version

NWT Study Grant—Students with Disabilities

Who can apply	Postsecondary students with permanent disabilities who have at least a 40% full course load.
When to apply	Apply any time during your school year.
How to apply	Fill out the form. Include medical information about your disability; how it affects your studies.
How much is the grant	Get up to \$5000 a year. If you need more, apply for a Repayable Loan.
What to use the \$\$ for	Tutor, note taker, attendant care Oral or signing interpreter Transportation Special equipment 75% of the cost of a learning disability assessment, up to \$1,000

Original

From the “Excluded Employees’ Handbook”
GNWT, April 2001

EXCLUDED EMPLOYEES’ HANDBOOK

LEAVE

If you do not return to work, the amount of SUB Plan benefits must be reimbursed to the Government. If you return to work for less than six months, the SUB Plan benefits will be pro-rated. An exception is made for death, disability and lay-off.

The SUB Plan provides a "top up" of Employment Insurance benefits to a maximum of 17 weeks at 93% of your last weekly rate of pay.

The Employer is not responsible for any consequences of an employment insurance benefit overpayment nor is it responsible for providing any additional payments in respect of maternity leave should the employee's benefits be affected by tax, employment insurance, or legislative provisions.

Parental Leave (Without Pay)

If you will have actual care and custody of a newborn child of whom you are the natural mother or natural father, or an adopted child, parental leave without pay may be granted to you for up to 26 weeks in the 52 week period immediately following the birth of the child or, in the case of an adoption, the time that the child comes into your care and custody.

Parental leave may be shared by an employee couple, but the total amount of parental leave cannot exceed 26 weeks for both employees combined.

If you intend to request parental leave you must make every effort to provide reasonable notice to the Employer. In the case of an adoption, you must notify the Employer as soon as the application has been approved by the adoption agency or legal guardianship or custody papers have been drawn up.

If you are taking maternity leave, you may also take parental leave, in which case, it must be taken immediately following the maternity leave. The total amount of maternity and parental leave combined cannot exceed 52 weeks.

A plain language version

Parental Leave without Pay

If you just had a baby or adopted a child, you can take time off work without pay.

- ▶ Take 26 weeks off work in one year.
- ▶ Starts when the baby is born or when the adopted child comes to live with you.
- ▶ Share parental leave with your partner.
- ▶ Give your employer lots of notice.

Pregnant women can combine parental leave with maternity leave for a maximum of 52 weeks combined leave.

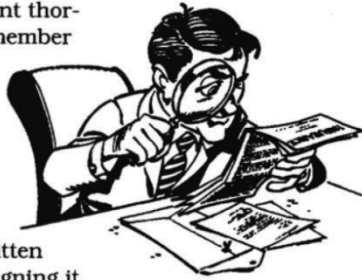
If you adopt a child, tell your employer when the adoption is official.

Original

From the booklet "Information for Landlords and Tenants"

TENANT TIPS

- Carry out an incoming inspection of the rental premises with the landlord and complete in duplicate the condition report at the commencement of your tenancy.
- Read the tenancy agreement thoroughly before signing. Remember you are responsible for that which you agree to if it is not in contravention of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.
- Ensure the landlord has given you a copy of the written tenancy agreement after signing it.
- Ensure you are given a receipt for the security deposit and all rental payments.
- After moving out and cleaning the rental premises, complete the "Outgoing" portion of the inspection report.
- All notices to your landlord should be in writing keeping copies for your records.
- Request for maintenance and or repairs should be made to the landlord in writing keeping copies for your records.
- Ensure that your personal property is totally insured as the landlord's insurance covers the building and his or her personal property.
- Determine before you sign the tenancy agreement if it is a month to month agreement or for a fixed term.
- Read through this booklet and especially the tenant's obligations section of the *Residential Tenancies Act*.



A plain language version

Tenant Tips

- Inspect your home when you first move in. Do this with your landlord. Write down what you see during the inspection. Make a copy for yourself and your landlord.
- Read your rental agreement before you sign it. You are responsible, unless the agreement breaks the law.
- Make sure your rental agreement is the terms you want. It can be month-to-month or for a fixed term, like a year.
- Get a copy of your rental agreement from your landlord after you sign it.
- Get a receipt when you pay the security deposit and every time you pay rent.
- Get insurance for your personal property.
- Keep a written record if you ask your landlord to fix something or if you notify them about something.
- Clean your home when you move out.

Inspect the place with your landlord to make sure you agree it is okay and get this in writing.

Summary Checklist of Plain Language Guidelines

- State the purpose clearly.
- Know the readers.
- Introduce the document.
- Organize ideas in a logical order.
- Divide the document into short sections.
- Put the most important information first.
- Use headings and subheadings.
- Include a Table of Contents for longer documents.
- Use simple, short, clear words.
- Write short sentences with just one idea in each sentence.
- Use a positive tone.
- Use an active writing style.
- Write short paragraphs.

- Use point form or lists where appropriate.
- Use white space to break up the text.
- Highlight important information.
- Use a font style and size that people can read easily.
- Use photos, tables, charts, and other graphics to show information more clearly.
- Use colour effectively.

