

OUR HEALTH

CCSQ WORLD
USABILITY DAY

Plain Talk: Do People Get What You're Saying?

Rick Allen, Principal Content Designer
Coforma, LLC



“Personal health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the ability to find, understand, and use information and services to inform health-related decisions and actions for themselves and others.”

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

“According to research, inadequate **health literacy** more strongly predicts health status than age, income, education, or race.”

Geriatric Nursing
Volume 38, Issue 4

The purpose of **content** is...

The purpose of **content** is...
to communicate.

The purpose of **plain language** is...

The purpose of **plain language** is...
to help people understand.

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

George Bernard Shaw
Author

“[Our business] helps small businesses, associations, and nonprofits connect with their customers, clients, and members. Launched in 1998, [our business] champions the needs of small organizations and provides them with an easy and affordable way to build successful, lasting customer relationships.”

“**Constant Contact, Inc.** helps small businesses, associations, and nonprofits connect with their customers, clients, and members. Launched in 1998, **Constant Contact, Inc.** champions the needs of small organizations and provides them with an easy and affordable way to build successful, lasting customer relationships.”

Take two!

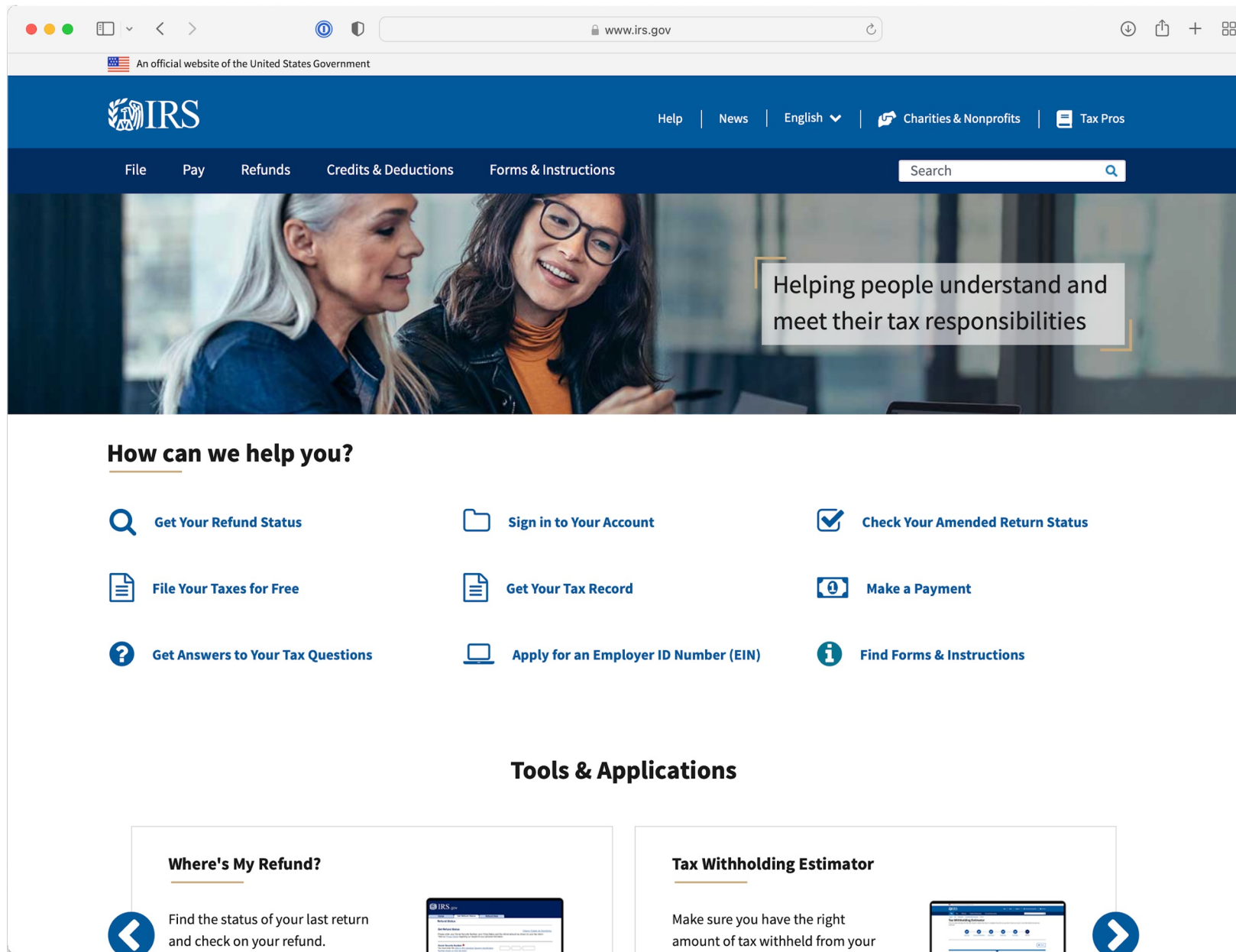
“We’re a team of about 110 developers, designers, professional problem solvers, tinkerers, and takeout critics, working around the clock to make [our business] the best email marketing service in the universe.”

Take two!

“We’re a team of about 110 developers, designers, professional problem solvers, tinkerers, and takeout critics, working around the clock to make **MailChimp** the best email marketing service in the universe.”

Take three!

We're a fun, helpful, modern email marketing company.




Internal Revenue Service website.



U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division website.

travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html



Travel.State.Gov
U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE — BUREAU of CONSULAR AFFAIRS

Search

U.S. Passports | International Travel | **U.S. Visas** | Intercountry Adoption | International Parental Child Abduction | Records and Authentications

Tourism & Visit | Business | Employment | **Study & Exchange** | Immigrate | Other Visa Categories | U.S. Visa: Reciprocity and Civil Documents by Country

Travel.State.Gov > U.S. Visas > Study & Exchange > Student Visa

Print | Email | Facebook | Twitter | More

Student Visa

Exchange Visitor Visa

Student Visa Overview

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa, either a nonimmigrant visa for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. You must have a student visa to study in the United States. Your course of study and the type of school you plan to attend determine whether you need an F visa or an M visa.

To enter the United States to attend:	You need the following visa category:
University or college	F
High School	
Private elementary school	
Seminary	
Conservatory	
Another academic institution, including a language training program	M
Vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution, other than a language training program	

Students cannot travel on the Visa Waiver Program or with Visitor Visas. A student visa (F or M) is required to study in the United States. Foreign nationals may not study after entering on a visitor (B) visa or through the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), except to undertake recreational study (non-credit) as part of a tourist visit. For more information on the VWP, see [Visa Waiver Program](#).

More Information

- [A-Z Index](#)
- [Lost/Stolen Travel Documents](#)
- [Denials](#)
- [SEVIS-ICE](#)
- [DHS-Study in the States](#)
- [Visa Expiration Date](#)
- [Automatic Revalidation](#)
- [Nonimmigrants in the United States—Applying for Visas in Canada or Mexico](#)
- [Find a U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#)
- [Student Advising Center](#)
- [Visa Applicants - State Sponsors of Terrorism](#)
- [Customer Service Statement](#)

FAQS: ABOUT VISAS - THE BASICS

Travel.State.Gov, U.S. Department of State—Bureau of Consumer Affairs website.

studentaid.gov/sites/default/files/2022-23-fafsa.pdf

FAFSA[®]

FREE APPLICATION for FEDERAL STUDENT AID

July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023

Federal Student Aid

PROUD SPONSOR of the AMERICAN MIND[®]
An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Use this form to apply free for federal and state student grants, work-study, and loans.

Or apply free online at fafsa.gov.

Apply by the Deadlines

For federal aid, submit your application as early as possible, but no earlier than October 1, 2021. We must receive your application no later than June 30, 2023. Your college must have your correct, complete information by your last day of enrollment in the 2022-2023 school year.

For state or college aid, the deadline may be as early as October 2021. See the table to the right for state deadlines. You may also need to complete additional forms.

Check with your high school counselor or a financial aid administrator at your college about state and college sources of student aid and deadlines.

If you are filing close to one of these deadlines, we recommend you file either online at fafsa.gov or via the myStudentAid mobile app. These are the fastest and easiest ways to apply for aid.

Use Your Tax Return

We recommend that you complete and submit your FAFSA form as soon as possible on or after October 1, 2021. The easiest way to complete or correct your FAFSA form with accurate tax information is by using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool either through fafsa.gov or the myStudentAid mobile app. In a few simple steps, most students and parents who filed a 2020 tax return can transfer their tax return information directly into their FAFSA form.

If you (or your parents) have missed the 2020 tax filing deadline and still need to file a 2020 income tax return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), you should submit your FAFSA form now using estimated tax information, and then you **must correct** that information **after you file** your return.

Note: Both parents or both the student and spouse may need to report income information on the FAFSA form if they did not file a joint tax return for 2020. For assistance with answering the income information questions in this situation, call 1-800-4-FED-AID (1-800-433-3243).

Fill Out the FAFSA[®] Form

Pay attention to any symbols listed after your state deadline.

States and territories not included in the main listing below: AL[♦], AS^{**}, AZ[†], CO[†], FM^{**}, GU^{**}, HI^{**}, KY[^], MH^{**}, NC[^], ND[^], NE[♦], NH^{**}, NM[♦], OK[^], PR[†], PW^{**}, RI^{**}, SD^{**}, UT[^], VA^{**}, VI^{**}, VT[^], WA[^], WI[♦] and WY^{**}.

State	Deadline
AK	Alaska Education Grant [^] \$ Alaska Performance Scholarship: June 30, 2022 # \$
AR	Academic Challenge: July 1, 2022 (date received) ArFuture Grant: fall term, July 1, 2022 (date received); spring term, Jan. 10, 2023 (date received)
CA	For many state financial aid programs: March 2, 2022 (date postmarked). Cal Grant also requires submission of a school-certified GPA by March 2, 2022. For additional community college Cal Grants: Sept. 2, 2022 (date postmarked). For noncitizens without a Social Security card or with one issued through the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, fill out the <i>California Dream Act Application</i> . Contact the California Student Aid Commission or your financial aid administrator for more information.
CT	Feb. 15, 2022 (date received) # ♦ *
DC	FAFSA form completed by Aug. 19, 2022 # For DC Tuition Assistance Grant, complete the DC OneApp and submit supporting documents by Aug. 26, 2022. #
DE	April 15, 2022 (date received)
FL	May 15, 2022 (date processed)
GA	Refer to Georgia Student Finance Commission's web site for additional information. [^] ♦ *
IA	July 1, 2022 (date received); earlier priority deadlines may exist for certain programs. *
ID	Opportunity Scholarship: March 1, 2022 (date received) # ♦ *
IL	Refer to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission's web site for the Monetary Award Program (MAP) renewal deadline. [^] \$
IN	Adult Student Grant [^] \$: New applicants must submit additional form. Workforce Ready Grant [^] Frank O'Bannon Grant: April 15, 2022 (date received) 21st Century Scholarship: April 15, 2022 (date received)
KS	April 1, 2022 (date received) # ♦ *
LA	July 1, 2023 (Feb. 1, 2022, recommended)
MA	May 1, 2022 (date received) #
MD	March 1, 2022 (date received)
ME	May 1, 2022 (date received)
MI	March 1, 2022 (date received)

STATE AID DEADLINE

FAFSA, Free Application for Federal Student Aid form.

The screenshot shows the MIT Admissions website. The header includes the MIT logo and 'Admissions' text, with navigation links for Discover, Apply, Afford, Visit, Help, Blogs, and a search icon. Below the header, there's a section for 'Latest from the bloggers' with 6,703 posts. The main content area features a list of blog posts, each with a profile picture, title, author, date, and comment count. The right sidebar contains a welcome message, an announcement about an info session, and featured content including a 'Tiny porch concert' video and an article about 'Designing for an aging society'.

MIT Admissions Discover Apply Afford Visit Help Blogs

Latest from the bloggers 6,703 posts and counting View

you can care about things revisiting stoicism
by Vincent H. '23 · July 18, 2022 · 4 comments

a day in my life as a MISTI student ft. research and friends
by Masha G. '24 · July 17, 2022 · 1 comment

feeling grown up walking in adult clothing
by CJ Q. '23 · July 17, 2022 · 2 comments

pole dancing and punching things trying out new classes in Copenhagen
by Amber V. '24 · July 16, 2022 · 1 comment

to now and forever
by Cami M. '23 · July 15, 2022 · 2 comments

a night in hannover one of the most chaotic travel experiences of my life
by Masha G. '24 · July 13, 2022 · 1 comment

welcome to new york

Welcome to MIT Admissions.
Here, you can [explore MIT](#), learn how to [apply](#), plan a [visit](#), read the [blogs](#), or get [help](#) from our staff.
By doing so, we hope you'll learn more about MIT, but also about yourself.

Announcements and deadlines
 Learn more about MIT through an info session and campus tour. [Sign up today!](#)

Latest from admissions

tiny porch concert SINGING GUITAR UKE wowzers!

Tiny porch concert
With his guitar and ukulele in hand, Julian '22 kicks off summer, and his post-MIT life, with a [tiny porch concert](#) full of some covers and some original songs. Enjoy!

Designing for an aging society
"A 100-year lifespan is the new normal for many of us," says Joseph Coughlin, director of the MIT AgeLab, who teaches [Global Aging and the Built Environment](#). That's why he has

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) admissions website.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People™

Search COVID-19

Languages | ASL Videos | Easy to Read

COVID-19

Your Health Vaccines Cases & Data Work & School Healthcare Workers Health Depts Science More

COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens

Learn about COVID-19 vaccines for young children.

[Learn More](#)

Highlights

- [Quarantine & Isolation](#)
- [Symptoms](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Boosters](#)

GUIDANCE
SCIENCE UPDATES
HEALTHCARE WORKERS
U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE (USA.gov)

COVID-19 County Check

Find community levels and prevention steps by county. Data updated weekly.

Select a Location (all fields required)

PREVENT GETTING SICK

- [Get vaccinated and boosted](#)
- [When to use masks](#)
- [Self-Testing](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens webpage.

Common Plain Language Definition

Plain language means your target audiences can:

- **Find** what they need
- **Understand** what they find the first time they read or hear it
- **Use** what they find to meet their needs

Source: <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/>

announced that it will be amending its Face Masks Order to not require people to wear a mask in outdoor areas of conveyances (if such outdoor areas exist on the conveyance) or while outdoors at transportation hubs, and that it will exercise its enforcement discretion in the meantime.

Who Are "At-Risk Workers"?

Some conditions, such as a prior transplant, as well as prolonged use of corticosteroids or other immune-weakening medications, may affect workers' ability to have a full immune response to vaccination. To understand more about these conditions, see the CDC's page describing [Vaccines for People with Underlying Medical Conditions](#) and further definition of [People with Certain Medical Conditions](#). Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), workers with disabilities may be [legally entitled](#) to reasonable accommodations that protect them from the risk of contracting COVID-19 if, for example, they cannot be protected through vaccination, cannot be vaccinated, or cannot use face coverings. Employers should consider taking steps to protect these at-risk workers as they would unvaccinated workers, regardless of their vaccination status.

COVID-19 and Prevention

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus that causes [COVID-19](#), is highly infectious and can spread from person to person, including through aerosol transmission of particles produced when an infected person exhales, talks, vocalizes, sneezes, or coughs. The virus that causes COVID-19 is highly transmissible and can be spread by people who have no symptoms. Particles containing the virus can travel more than 6 feet, especially indoors and in dry conditions (relative humidity below 40%), and can be spread by individuals who do not know they are infected.

Vaccines authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in the United States are highly effective at protecting most fully vaccinated people against symptomatic and severe COVID-19. OSHA encourages employers to take steps to make it easier for workers to get vaccinated and encourages workers to take advantage of those opportunities. However, CDC recognizes that even some fully vaccinated people who are largely protected against severe illness and death may still be capable of transmitting the virus to others. Therefore, this guidance mirrors CDC's in recommending masking and testing even for fully vaccinated people in certain circumstances.

OSHA also continues to recommend implementing multiple layers of controls (e.g. mask wearing, distancing, and increased ventilation). Along with vaccination, key controls to help protect unvaccinated and other at-risk workers include removing from the workplace all infected people, all people [experiencing COVID symptoms](#), and any people who are not fully vaccinated who [have had close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19 and have not tested negative for COVID-19 immediately if symptoms develop and again at least 5 days after the contact (in which case they may return 7 days after contact). Fully vaccinated people who have had close contact should get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after exposure and be required to wear face coverings for 14 days after their contact unless they test negative for COVID-19. Additional fundamental controls that protect unvaccinated and other at-risk workers include maintaining ventilation systems, implementing physical distancing, and properly using face coverings (or other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and respiratory protection such as N95 respirators when appropriate), and proper cleaning. Fully vaccinated people in areas of substantial or high transmission should be required to wear face coverings inside (or other appropriate PPE and respiratory protection) as well. Employees may request reasonable accommodations, absent an undue hardship, if they are unable to comply with safety requirements due to a disability. For more information, see the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's) [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#).

Finally, OSHA provides employers with specific guidance for environments at a higher risk for exposure to or spread of COVID-19, primarily workplaces where unvaccinated or otherwise at-risk workers are more likely to be in prolonged, close contact with other workers or the public, or in closed spaces without adequate ventilation.

Scope

OSHA provides this guidance for employers as recommendations to use in protecting unvaccinated workers and otherwise at-risk workers, and to help those workers protect themselves. This guidance also incorporates CDC's recommendations for fully vaccinated workers in areas of substantial or high transmission. Employers and workers should use this guidance to determine any appropriate control measures to implement.

While this guidance addresses most workplaces, many healthcare workplace settings will be covered by the **mandatory OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standard**. Pursuant to the Occupational Safety and Health Act (the OSH Act or the Act), employers in those settings must comply with that standard. All employers must comply with any **other applicable mandatory safety and health standards and regulations** issued and enforced either by OSHA or by an OSHA-approved state plan. In addition, the Act's General Duty Clause, Section 5(a)(1), requires employers to provide their workers with a safe and healthful workplace free from recognized hazards that are causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Employers who are not covered by the OSH Act (like public sector employers in some states) will also find useful control measures in this guidance to help reduce the risk of COVID-19 in their workplaces.

This guidance is not a standard or regulation, and it creates no new legal obligations. It contains recommendations as well as descriptions of existing **mandatory OSHA standards**, the latter of which are clearly labeled throughout. The recommendations are advisory in nature and informational in content and are intended to assist employers in recognizing and abating hazards likely to cause death or serious physical harm as part of their obligation to provide a safe and healthful workplace.

About COVID-19

SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes [COVID-19](#), is highly infectious and spreads from person to person, including through aerosol transmission of particles produced when an infected person exhales, talks, vocalizes, sneezes, or coughs. COVID-19 is less commonly transmitted when people touch a contaminated object and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth. The virus that causes COVID-19 is highly transmissible and can be spread by people who have no symptoms and who do not know they are infected. Particles containing the virus can travel more than 6 feet, especially indoors and in dry conditions with relative humidity below 40%. The [CDC estimates](#) that over fifty percent of the spread of the virus is from individuals with no symptoms at the time of spread.

More information on COVID-19 is available from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

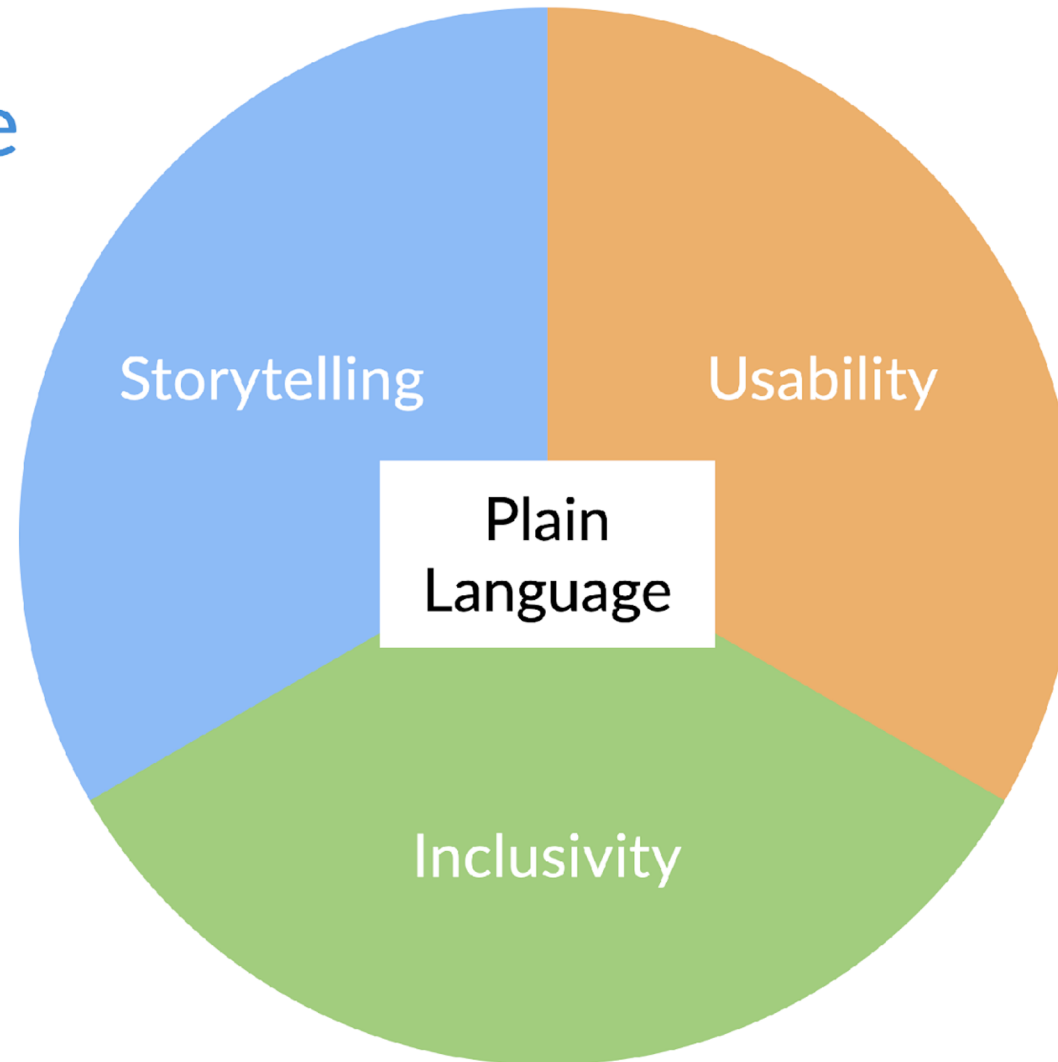
Ask yourself:

- Is it easy to find what I'm looking for?
- Do I understand what I find the first time I read it?
- Am I able to use what I find to meet my needs?

Source: <https://www.osha.gov/coronavirus/safework>

Elements of Plain Language

What we want to say



How people find and use information

Why we need plain language

Elements of plain language infographic: storytelling, usability, and inclusivity.

Inclusivity

Inclusivity, also referred to as “**universal design**” and “**design for all,**” addresses a broad range of issues, such as:

- Accessibility for people with disabilities
- Access to and quality of hardware, software, and Internet connectivity
- Computer literacy and skills
- Economic situation
- Education
- Geographic location
- Culture
- Age, including older and younger people
- Language

Source: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/fundamentals/accessibility-usability-inclusion/>

Plain Language Guidelines

1. Know your audience
2. Be helpful
3. Be straightforward
4. Use meaningful words

1. Know Your Audience

- What do they already know?
- What do they need to learn?
- What do they care about?

U.S. Literacy Skills Assessment

The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) is an international large-scale survey with:

- A direct assessment of literacy, numeracy, and digital problem solving
- A background questionnaire on education, work experience and training, skill-use at work and at home, demographics, income, health, and civic participation

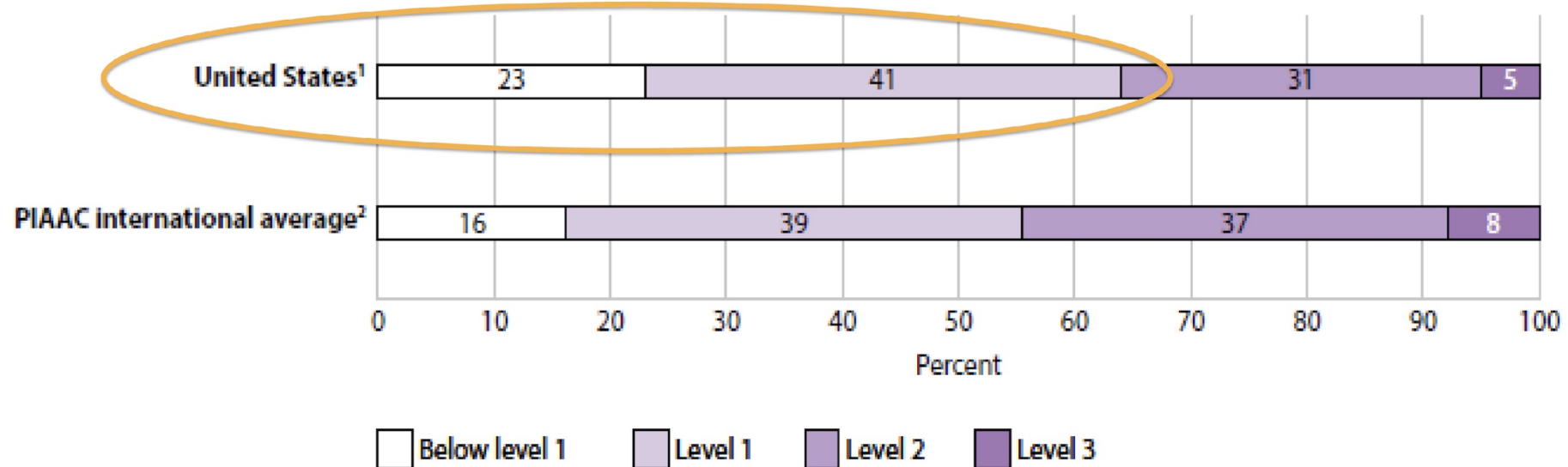
Source: <https://digital.gov/event/2020/05/13/average-american-reader-needs-you-write/>

“Literacy definition: understanding, evaluating, using and engaging with written texts to participate in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”

Institute of Education Sciences

The Skill Scales: Literacy & Numeracy

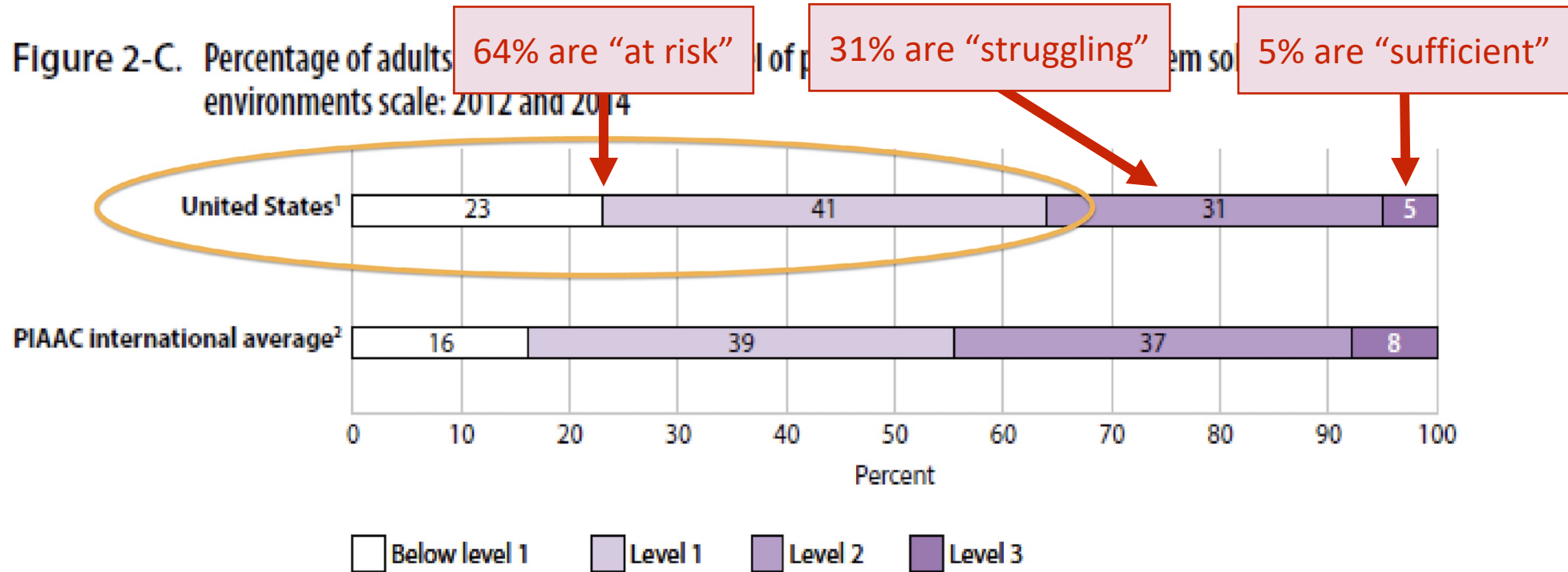
Figure 2-C. Percentage of adults age 16 to 65 at each level of proficiency on the PIAAC problem solving in technology-rich environments scale: 2012 and 2014



Infographic: Percentage of adults age 16-65 at each level of proficiency on the PIAAC problem solving in technology-rich environments scale: 2012 and 2014.

Source: <https://digital.gov/event/2020/05/13/average-american-reader-needs-you-write/>

The Skill Scales: Literacy & Numeracy



Infographic: Percentage of adults age 16-65 at each level of proficiency on the PIAAC problem solving in technology-rich environments scale: 2012 and 2014.

Source: <https://digital.gov/event/2020/05/13/average-american-reader-needs-you-write/>

U.S. Literacy Skills

Approximately 112.6 million adults are at or below Level 2 in literacy.

Of these, 40.2 million are at or below Level 1.

These stats spread widely across demographics, such as:

- Age
- Native/Non-native speakers
- Employment
- Education
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Region

Helping Low-Literacy Users Helps Everyone

Task Success %	Without Plain Language	With Plain Language
Low-literacy web users	46%	82%
High-literacy web users	68%	93%

Time Spent in Minutes	Without Plain Language	With Plain Language
Low-literacy web users	22:16	9:30
High-literacy web users	14:19	5:05

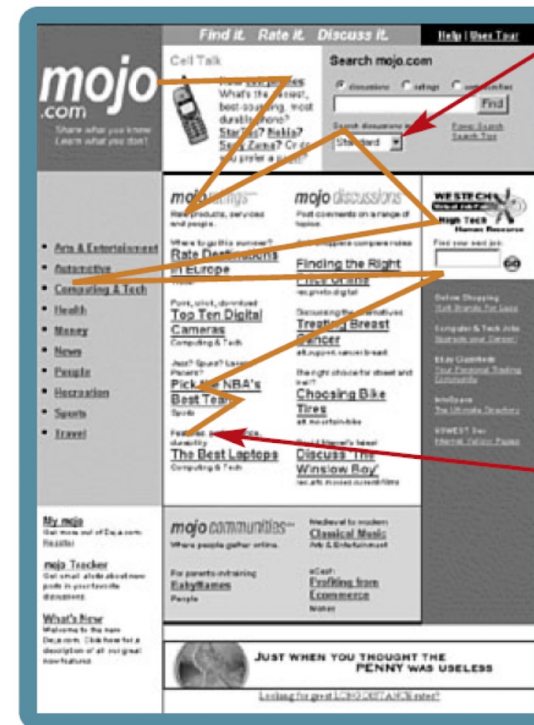
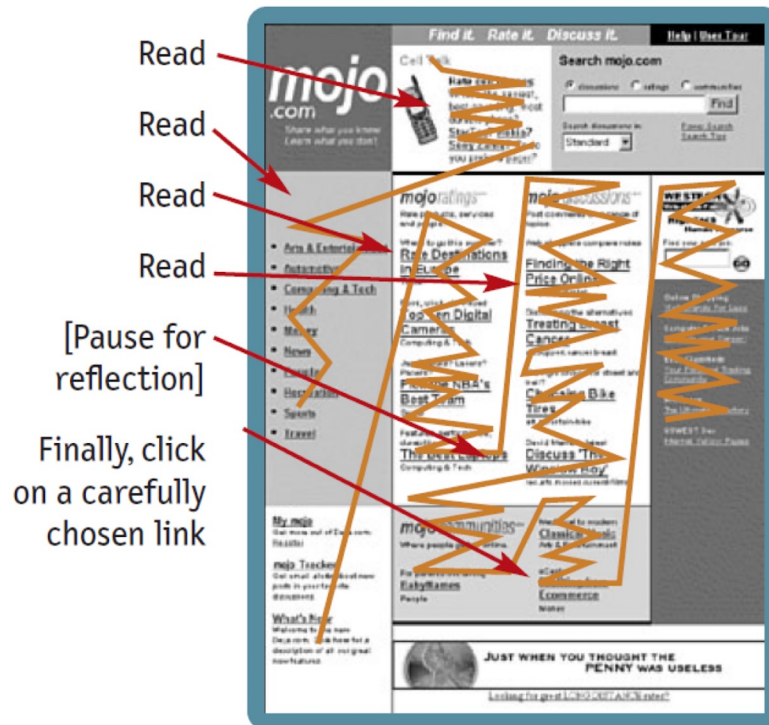
Source: Summers, K. and Summers, M., 2005, <https://asistdl.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/meet.1450420179>

2. Be Helpful

- Use a helpful tone
- Be a teacher and guide
- Organize and label content in a way that makes sense to your audience
- Make content scannable

Get Real About Organizing Content

WHAT WE DESIGN FOR... THE REALITY...



- Look around feverishly for anything that
 - a) is interesting, or vaguely resembles what you're looking for, and
 - b) is clickable.
- As soon as you find a halfway-decent match, click.
- If it doesn't pan out, click the Back button and try again.

Graphic illustrating the thorough reading patterns we design for and the brief reading patterns that are reality.

Source: *Don't Make Me Think, Revisited*, by Steve Krug

Write for User Tasks

Forget what your English teacher taught you in school about structuring content.

Narrative style

- History, background, rationale
- Information in the order that it occurs to the author
- Main point as conclusion

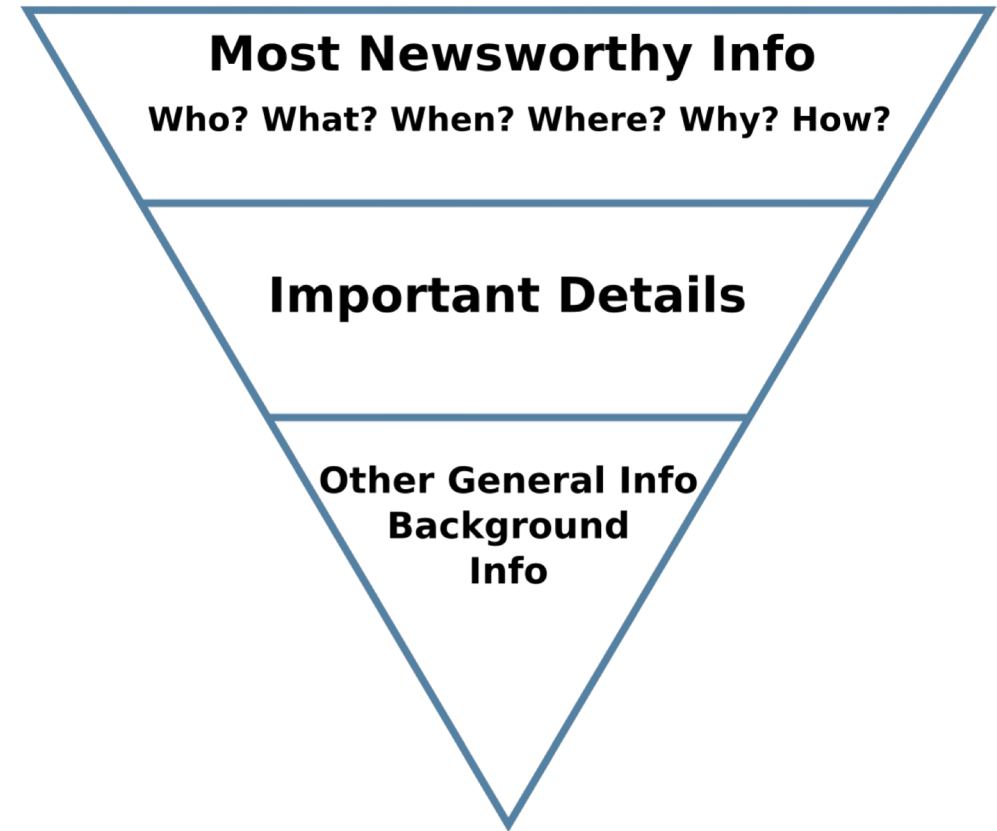
Task-oriented style

- Main point first
- Answer questions in an order that is logical to the users
- History, background may not be needed

Write Like a Journalist

Put the important information first so people know what to expect.

Inverted Pyramid



Inverted pyramid illustrating a journalistic approach to structuring content.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inverted_pyramid_%28journalism%29

People need to understand
before they can act.

Scanning Elements

- Titles
- Headings
- Links
- Bold text
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- Photos
- Graphics
- Captions
- Pull-quotes
- And more...

Quick Scannability Test

Read a page from a distance, while only looking at the scanning elements, and ask:

- Who is the target audience?
- What is the purpose?
- What information will I find here?
- What actions can I take?

3. Be Straightforward

- Be purposeful
- Be concise
- Be upfront and trustworthy
- Be professional and human
- Simplify complex ideas with visual and multimedia content

Wordy Phrases Add Complexity

More Complex	More Clear
at a later time	later
level of coverage	coverage
at this point in time	now
on a monthly basis	monthly
in order to	to
in the amount of	for
in the event of	if
be advised	(omit)
going forward	(omit)

“I believe the road to hell is paved with adverbs.”

Stephen King

Author, On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft

Limit Your Use of Adverbs

Wordy	Simple
very large	huge
very small	tiny
very happy	thrilled
argue strongly	insist

4. Use Meaningful Words

- Use common language and terms consistently
- Use active voice
- Write meaningful headings
- Use descriptive link text

Use Common Language & Terms

Everyday Business Jargon	What We Mean
alignment	agreement or understanding
deep dive	extensive exploration
level set	agree on expectations
leverage	use; take advantage of
socialize	share for review and feedback
synergize	cooperate
utilize	use

“[Writing is] littered with revolutionary, value-added, impactful, cutting-edge, best-of-breed, go-to ideated words designed to leverage and incentivize and synergize the current paradigm.”

Ann Handley

Author, *Everybody Writes*

Non-descriptive Link Text

- [Click here](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Homepage](#)
- [Learn more](#)
- [Download](#)

[Click here to learn more](#)

“Plainness is a step toward a more **understandable, trustworthy, and inclusive government.**”

Nicole Fenton
*Author, **Nicely Said***

Plain language is customer service.



Woman on laptop in kitchen at home with partner and baby.

Source: <https://thenounproject.com/photo/woman-on-laptop-in-kitchen-at-home-with-partner-and-baby-0vPX74/>

How can I help?

OUR HEALTH

CCSQ WORLD
USABILITY DAY

thank
you!



Learning Resources

- plainlanguage.gov
- *Letting Go of the Words*, by Ginny Redish
- *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk Jr. and E.B White
- *Accessibility for Everyone*, by Laura Kalbag
- *Nicely Said*, by Nicole Fenton and Kate Kiefer Lee
- *Trustworthy*, by Margot Bloomstein

