

Checking your own material for access, assumptions, and tone

You wrote something and want to check it yourself in three passes before it goes out: whether people can read and reach it, whether it assumes knowledge or norms people may not share, and whether it invites rather than warns.

Outcome: By the end, you will have a three-part check of your material: what you found and changed for access and plain language, for assumed knowledge and representation, and for tone, along with what remains and when you will look again. You can run this check on your own writing routinely, and you know when to ask a colleague to review a draft instead.

Situations that may fit this path

- A notice, email, web page, slide deck, or training material you wrote
- A job posting or staff guidance you are about to send
- Anything that will reach staff or the public and that you can still change

Six steps to work through in order

1. **Get a first read** — Paste your text into Ask and choose Review my draft. You will receive findings in the same three passes, with the limits of the review stated. · **Ask: review my draft** — program page / ask?path=gp-13&mode=review
2. **Consider community context** (If relevant) — If your material is for or names particular Minnesota communities, read the relevant brief for naming, language, and access. · **Explore Minnesota Communities** — program page /minnesota-communities
3. **Choose practical resources** — Use the plain-language and language access checklists, and the two short courses on accessible content and inclusive communication. · **Plain language and accessible documents** — program page /resources/ja-plain-language · **Language access checklist** — program page /resources/ja-language-access-checklist · **Accessible content and digital learning** — program page /courses/di-accessible-content-and-digital-learning · **Inclusive communication** — program page /courses/di-inclusive-communication
4. **Run the three passes** — Record what you found and changed in each pass. Do not paste confidential material. Use the downloaded checklist to write your answers in a tool you normally use. This page does not save them.
5. **Review your check** — Confirm each pass names specific changes, you noted what you assumed, you know who else should look, and you have a date to send or revisit it.
6. **Ask a colleague to review it (optional)** — A second reader catches what the writer cannot. If you would like someone to review your draft, the draft review path gives them a structure, and the right office can help with language access or accessibility questions. · **Reviewing a draft for equity, access, and plain language** — program page /practice/gp-9 · **Find the right person** — program

What a useful result looks like

Still needs work

- A reading-level number with nothing changed
- "Everyone knows what we mean"
- A warning rewritten in friendlier words that still threatens

Ready to use

- Specific sentences you shortened, terms you defined, and images you described
- One assumption you made explicit
- A sentence that now tells people how to succeed instead of what happens if they fail

Privacy

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Three-pass check of your material

Privacy

This is a blank published checklist. If you complete a downloaded copy, store and share that file according to DHS requirements. Nothing you write in that file is saved back to this page.

Item	Detail
What you wrote, and who it is for (required)	The notice, message, page, or material, and its audience.
Pass one: access and plain language (required)	Sentence length and reading level. Acronyms defined the first time they appear. Headings that use real heading styles. Alternative text for images. Color contrast. Links that say where they go. Note what you found and what you changed.
Pass two: what you assumed people already know (required)	Deadlines, formats, places, and processes stated in full. Dates that avoid major religious observances or offer an alternative. Languages people may need. Examples that show a range of people without stereotypes. Note what you made explicit.

Item	Detail
Pass three: tone (required)	Invitational rather than punitive. Person-first or identity-first language as the community prefers. Acknowledges that we are still learning. Strengths and goals rather than deficits. Note the sentences you rewrote.
Changes you made (required)	One line each. Specific and short.
Who else should look at this, and why (required)	Language access, accessibility, communications, or the owner of the process you describe.
Who owns each remaining change (required)	One line for each change that is not yet done, including who does it.

Review your notes against

- Every follow-up has a named owner
- A next review date is set
- This is connected to your specific work
- Language, disability, and communication access were considered for this work
- You named who was involved and the role they had
- You noted what you chose not to assume
- No names of employees, clients, or complainants are included

Questions to bring to Ask

- Can you check this announcement for reading level, acronyms, and tone before I send it?
- What am I assuming people already know in my guidance?
- How do I say this so it invites people instead of warning them?