

Plain Language Process Guide

Step-by-
Step Guide!

1. Write for your audience



Who is your primary audience?

Make an outline of what they need to know

- What is happening?
- Why is this important?
- When do they need to act?
- Where do they need to go?
- Who is writing to them?

2. Organize the information



Order sections with important information at the top.

Add headings so people can scan

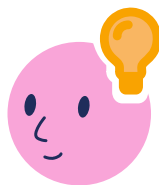
- Write headers in question format

Format for easy reading:

- Bullets (when the order doesn't matter)
- Lists (when the order does matter)
- Tables (to compare information)



3. Review for plain language



Keep it short and sweet

- Use shorter paragraphs, sentences, and words

Choose your words carefully

- Use simpler words
- Don't add extra verbs: "If you can't pay...", not "If you can't make the payment..."

Keep it conversational

- Use active voice: "Our agency created...", not "It was created by..."
- Use contractions: "won't" or "you're"

Avoid or define jargon



4. Test your draft

Use online tools like Hemingway Editor

- Use 6th grade reading level for public facing documents

Get feedback from a human

Plain Language Example

Add **bold** headings to draw the reader's attention

Use active voice

Use bullet points for lists that do not need to be ordered

Use friendlier language like "home" instead of "residence"

School Tax Relief Program (STAR)

What is STAR?

If you're a homeowner and live in New York, you can lower your property taxes through the **School Tax Relief Program (STAR)** program. Every year, you'll get a STAR check in the mail that you can use to help pay for property taxes.

There are two (2) types of STAR benefits:

- **Basic STAR** reduces your property taxes by an estimated \$293.
- **Enhanced STAR** reduces your property taxes by an estimated \$650.

Am I eligible for STAR?

To apply, you must meet these criteria:

	Basic STAR	Enhanced STAR
Age	18+ is welcome!	All owners <i>must</i> be at least 65 in the year that you apply
Primary Residence	An owner must live on the property as their primary home	At least one owner who's 65 or older <i>must</i> live on the property as their primary home
Income	The total income of only the owners and their spouses who live at the house <i>must</i> be \$500,000 or less	The total income of all owners and their spouses <i>must</i> be \$93,200 or less

How do I apply?

There are two ways to apply as a new home-owner:

- Apply online at tax.ny.gov
- Call 518-457-2036

Spell out acronyms

Address the reader with "you"

Use simple words like "types"

Word your headings in question format to grab the reader's attention

Use tables to organize information by criteria

Use italics for emphasis

