

HOW TO USE  
**PLAIN LANGUAGE**  
IN YOUR ONLINE COURSE

**KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE**

Write for your audience (your students), and write directly to one person in the class. Use "I" to refer to yourself and "you" to refer to your reader.

**USE DETAILED HEADINGS**

Use detailed headings, so your reader understands how your document is organized. Consider writing headings as questions or statements.

**USE SIMPLE VERBS & PRESENT TENSE**

Tell your reader what they should do and keep it simple. Write in the present tense, and use "must" to communicate anything your reader is required to do.

**KEEP SENTENCES & PARAGRAPHS SHORT**

Use one idea per sentence and one topic per paragraph. Put your subject, verb, and object close together, and keep any modifying information concise.

**USE EXAMPLES, TABLES, & LISTS**

Use examples to clarify abstract concepts, tables to break up and organize complex information, and lists to highlight important tasks.

**FORMAT CAREFULLY**

Only use bold for emphasis, and use it sparingly. Avoid all caps or underlining, which can be distracting or confusing. Only use underlining for links.