Plain language is a variant of a national language recommended to authors and institutions producing texts for general public, so called “every citizen”. Plain language text is to be understood by an everyman, irrespective of his/her education and knowledge at first reading. Martin Cutts (1998), a research director of the Plain Language Commission in the United Kingdom, defines plain English as the writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding the document at the first reading, and in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood.

### Your Personal Glossary

**Term**: trial (noun)

**Definition**: the process of examining and deciding a civil or criminal case before a court

**Example**: Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty according to law in a public trial.

**Grammatical patterns**: to be on trial for sth.

**Collocations**: fair -, public -, to hold a-

**Translation**: to try

In this contract, all references to ‘dogs’ shall be deemed to be references to ‘cats’.

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### Study skills needed for developing writing for legal purposes:

- comprehension and paraphrasing
- defining (synonyms, opposites, plain English definitions)
- translating
- summarising
  + layouts and models
  + standard phrases (for letters, contracts, memoranda)

### Students need to know how to write:

- e-mails and letters
- legal opinions (letter of advice)
- contracts (lawyers use templates)
- law suits

This lawyer said the judge is a fool. This lawyer, said the judge, is a fool.

Woman without her man would be a savage. Woman – without her, man would be a savage

Alessandra Łuczak (MA, PhD)
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Use active voice, S-V-O structure in declarative sentences
Passive preferred only when the writer wants to divert attention from the real subject (the contract was signed) or to focus attention on the object in a case when it is more important than the subject (the meeting will be held)

1. The attorney and her assistant are in court.
2. My lawyer or nor my accountant is attending the meeting today.
3. Neither/either my lawyer nor/or my accountant is available.
4. The number of different companies involved in this process is five.
5. A number of different companies are involved in this process.
6. News, mathematics, dollars is...
7. Five years is a long time.

- clarity and simplicity (kiss)
- planning (IRAC model for letter of advice/legal opinion)
- use ordinary words (plain English equivalents), never use a long word when a short one can be used (notwithstanding/ despite)
- avoid negative structures: it is not impossible that this matter will have a not inconsiderable bearing upon our decision
- keep sentences short, about 20 words long
- new thought/topic – new paragraph
- active verbs instead of nominalisations (give consideration to/ consider, be in opposition to/ oppose)
- discourse markers (linking words)
- presentation and layout of the document


- questions
- passive voice
- collocations
- prepositions
- articles
- countable and uncountable nouns
- word order

3-step approach to efficient paraphrasing
1. Define the bolded words in plain English (bold the words/more words yourself)
2. Translate the clause into Polish
3. Write your paraphrase in plain English

Letter writing approach
1. Know the layout
2. Collect standard letter phrases
3. Start with redrafting or gap-fill activities
4. Draft letters using hints or standard letter phrases
5. Draft letters of advice which combine analysis of relevant legal documents and letter writing.

Terms and Conditions in Plain English
http://www.cambridgelawstudio.co.uk/register-online/terms-conditions/