

## How to create easy read documents



### Literacy difficulties & legal proceedings

Legal proceedings and huge piles of paperwork go hand-in-hand. For clients with low literacy or conditions which make reading challenging, this can present a considerable barrier to accessing important information relating to their case.

Literacy difficulties may affect your client's understanding of:

- The case against them.
- The position of other parties in a case.
- Statements prepared on their behalf.
- Expert reports and evidence.
- Interview transcripts.
- Written judgments.
- Working agreements.
- The terms of any orders made (e.g., non-molestation orders).

From threshold documents to expert reports, the written information a client may be required to understand can be very lengthy, densely typed and contain a great deal of challenging vocabulary (e.g., “disguised compliance”, “mandatory”, “consecutive”).

Even clients who are able to read fluently and understand such terminology may have difficulty focusing on written information, ‘taking in’ information and drawing inference from documents relating to their case (reading between the lines to extract meaning).

You can learn more about [assisting a client who has literacy difficulties here](#), or read on to learn how to create easy read documents.

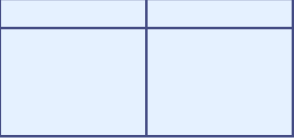



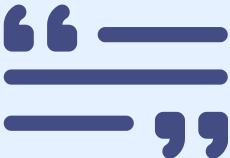

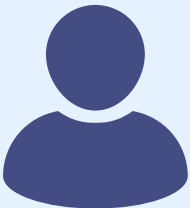
### What are easy read documents?

Easy read is a term used to describe written information which is presented in a more accessible format. It is designed to be easier to understand and uses lots of different features to achieve this goal.

These adaptations can be useful for clients with learning difficulties (like dyslexia), [learning disability](#), [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\)](#) and other communication needs.



# How to make easy read documents

	<p><b>Use a two column format</b></p> <p>Just like this one. This makes it easy to add pictures or icons and ensure documents are not visually cluttered.</p>
	<p><b>Use headings and bullet points</b></p> <p>This makes it easier for readers to pick out key points and process information. Try to divide information into clear topic groups.</p>
	<p><b>Add images or icons</b></p> <p>This can make it easier for readers to pick out information 'at a glance' and can support their understanding of the adjacent text.</p>
	<p><b>Use everyday words</b></p> <p>If more complex words can't be avoided, add a simple definition below. For example, if you need to use the word <i>guardian</i>...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The <b>guardian</b> is the person who speaks for your child at court.</li></ul>
	<p><b>Use short sentences</b></p> <p>It may be helpful to try writing the document in bullet points. If a sentence has an 'and' in it, try to break it down.</p>
	<p><b>Ask your client what helps them to read</b></p> <p>Incorporate these strategies in your document. Possible adaptations might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using a coloured overlay or coloured paper (if they are dyslexic).</li><li>• Presenting documents in a large, bold font.</li><li>• Using widely spaced text.</li><li>• Reducing documents to no more than one page.</li><li>• Using colour-coding and highlighting for key points.</li></ul>
	<p><b>Ask an intermediary</b></p> <p>With sufficient preparation time, the intermediary assigned to your client can often produce easy read versions of key documents.</p>

## Further reading

- Change People: [How to make information accessible](#) - a guide to easy read documents.
- North Yorkshire County Council: [A guide to producing written information in easy read](#)
- NHS England: [Make it easy! Making information easier to understand for people with a learning disability](#)

## From Communicourt

- [Easy read documents: not as simple as you might think](#) (blog including detailed guide including more tips and examples).
- [How to create visual aids](#)
- [Supporting literacy difficulties](#)
- [Intermediary assessments](#)
- [How can an intermediary assist at trial?](#)



## Intermediary services

If you are concerned about your client's ability to communicate effectively and participate in legal proceedings, Communicourt can help.

We will assess your client to understand their communication needs and how these might affect them in court. Your client does not need to have a diagnosis. Our reports will identify any particular communication issues and make bespoke recommendations to help you and your client throughout proceedings.

If intermediary assistance is recommended, one of our highly trained intermediaries can be there throughout proceedings to facilitate those recommendations.

**Intermediaries are mostly funded by HMCTS, with no charges or payments required by legal representatives.**

## How to book an intermediary

- 1 Refer online.** Refer your client for an assessment through [our online portal](#) (5 minutes).
- 2 Funding.** We send a quote for you to send to Legal Aid / HMCTS to approve (24 hours).
- 3 Book assessment.** Once funding is approved, please let us know. We will schedule an assessment (2-6 weeks).
- 4 Assessment will** take up to 3 hours and can be conducted in person or remotely. You will then receive a report (7 days).
- 5 Book dates** for hearings or conferences. We will send you booking forms to be signed by the court. Once signed, we will book the intermediary.