

Plain Writing Act Compliance Report — April 1, 2025

This report outlines the progress towards implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010 within the Department of Defense.

I. Senior Agency Official

As the Performance Improvement Officer and Director of Administration and Management, Jennifer C. Walsh is the DoD Senior Official for plain language. In accordance with DoD Instruction 5025.13, “DoD Plain Language Program,” the Washington Headquarters Services, Executive Services Directorate, Directives Division (WHS/ESD/DD), oversees the implementation and administration of the DoD Plain Language Program through the plain language point of contact. The point of contact may be reached at whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.

II. Using Plain Language

The DoD received one plain language amendment request in 2024 regarding DoD 7000.14-R, “DoD Financial Management Policy.” This request was forwarded to the plain language representative (PLR) for the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Defense for resolution. Negotiations between the requesting Service member and OSD Component are ongoing.

The DoD received two requests for clarification regarding plain language use in Army specifications/engineering manuals. Both those clarification requests were forwarded to the Army’s PLR.

DoD agencies took the following actions to implement plain language requirements in 2024.

- Army Publishing Directorate (APD)
 - The team of editors, forms analysts, publishing technical designers, data collectors, program analysts and managers, and leaders:
 - Referred to the DoD Plain Language Website for guidance on clear and concise writing.
 - Promoted the use of select publications, style guides, and DoD plain language resources to revise and develop publications and correspondence content.
 - Tasked skilled editors to stay on top of upgrades and updates to publishing software and tools that searched for missing or inappropriate punctuation, misuse of acronyms, completeness of parts or document structure, and more.
 - Reviewed and edited all departmental administrative policy and procedural publications with emphasis on understandable and concise writing. Ongoing projects included review and discussion of the Army’s leading publishing policy, procedural publications, and website accessibility for everyone.
 - Conducted multiple publishing champion and publishing champion officer training sessions to update the publishing community on changes in publishing policy and contact information.
 - Enforced strict standards for maintaining metadata in the Department of the Army Publications Index, resulting in another year of improved searches on the APD Website.
 - Performed quarterly website reviews, which validated that the APD Website continues to be accessible to all and easy to navigate.
 - Used specialized language depending on the intended audience.
 - Ensured that editors formatted documents making it easy to read and understand, wrote sentences with 20 words or less that contained a single thought, and included details that were directly relevant to the main point.

- Communicated with the individuals that requested clarification regarding plain language use in Army specifications and engineering manuals.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
 - The DCAA revised its small business page (<https://www.dcaa.mil/small-business/>), adding more presentations of interest to small business owners trying to break into defense contracting, and expanded the number of presentations to develop a presentation on one district topic to cover in-depth to increase comprehension of complex topics.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
 - From a communications perspective, DFAS continued to have its Corporate Communications Office prepare and review all official customer communications for message clarity and ease of understanding. This included Facebook posts, articles, videos, letters, e-mail content for public release, and web content.
 - DFAS' Corporate Communications Office continued to provide plain language training for agency newsletter editors.
- National Security Agency (NSA)
 - The NSA provided in-house training sessions for general audiences, as well as one geared to specific workforce segments such as Chiefs of Staff and employees writing promotion justifications. The NSA Chief of Staff issued several NSA-wide e-mails throughout the year on the importance of plain writing, focusing on topics such as brevity and use of bullets.
- Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)
 - WHS oversees the DoD Plain Language and DoD Issuances programs. In 2024, the WHS/ESD/DD:
 - Performed 1,471 editorial reviews for issuances in progress and published 129 new and revised issuances. All reviews included evaluation for plain writing compliance.
 - Hosted the annual DoD Plain Language Committee meeting.
 - Maintained the DoD Plain Language Website, collecting plain language requests for resolution and posting the annual Plain Writing Act Compliance Report.
 - Reviewed the DoD Plain Writing Act Implementation Plan, DoD Instruction 5025.13, "DoD Plain Language Program," for currency and completeness.

III. Communication of Requirements

Communication about the Plain Writing Act of 2010's implementation, plain language guidelines, and compliance requirements is provided to the DoD workforce through:

- Publication of DoD Instruction 5025.13. It is available on the DoD Issuances Website at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/>.
- Distribution of memorandums from the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- Meetings of the DoD Plain Language Committee, which consists of representatives from the DoD and OSD Components.
- Training and helpful resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website and individual agency websites.
- Notices placed in various public forums such as:
 - DoD newspapers
 - DoD newsletters
 - Mass electronic information systems

IV. Training

- DCAA
 - DCAA provided plain language training through webinars and online.
- DFAS
 - DFAS provided plain language training in-house.
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA)
 - DLA provided plain language training through in-house training, www.plainlanguage.gov., webinars, and online.
- Defense Technical Information Center (DTIC)
 - DTIC provided plain language training through webinars and online.
- Defense Prisoner of War/Missing-in-Action (POW/MIA) Accounting Agency
 - Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency provided plain language training through www.plainlanguage.gov, webinars, and online.
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA)
 - DTRA provided plain language training through webinars and online.
- Director of Operational Test and Evaluation (DOT&E)
 - DOT&E provided plain language training in-house.
- Missile Defense Agency (MDA)
 - MDA provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)
 - NGA provided plain language training through in-house training, www.plainlanguage.gov., webinars, and online.
- North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM)
 - NORAD and USNORTHCOM provided plain language training in-house and through www.plainlanguage.gov.
- NSA
 - NSA provided plain language training in-house.
- Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA)
 - PFPA provided plain language training in-house, through webinars, and online.
- WHS
 - WHS provided plain language training on iCompass. It also maintains a plain language training video on the DoD Plain Language Website at <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/plainlanguage/>.

V. Ongoing Compliance and Sustaining Change

The DoD is working towards full compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010 and has fulfilled requirements such as:

- Publishing the DoD Plain Writing Act implementation plan, DoD Instruction 5025.13.
- Maintaining the DoD Plain Language Website.
- Designating a senior official for plain language.
- Encouraging feedback from the public and stakeholders to identify communications that require improvements.
- Publishing the annual compliance report on the DoD Plain Language Website.

VI. Website: <https://www.esd.whs.mil/DD/plainlanguage/>

VII. Customer Satisfaction

We want your input. Feedback is critical to help us know whether we have been successful in providing information that is clear and well-organized for its intended audience.

Comments, questions, and concerns may be sent to whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.