(U) Joint Staff Training Program (JSTP)

(U) Effective Writing:

Incorporating Plain Language Guidelines

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By: JSTP
ICOD: 08 May 2019

(U) Purpose

- (U) Fulfill Plain Writing Act of 2010 requirements

- (U) Fulfill DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5025.13 requirements

- (U) Ensure a uniform standard in Joint Staff (JS) written products

- (U) Prepare Action Officers (AOs) to develop written products in support of key positions:

  - President of the United States (POTUS)

  - Secretary of Defense (SecDef)

  - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)

(U) Objectives

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- (U) Understand why to apply guidelines for plain language

- (U) Understand the Plain Writing Act of 2010

- (U) Understand PUBLIC LAW 111–274

- (U) Understand DoDI 5025.13 (DoD Plain Language Program)

- (U) Identify the intended audience

- (U) Understand plain language examples and guidelines

- (U) Understand how to apply plain language guidelines

- (U) Apply plain language guidelines in effective writing

(U) Understand the Plain Writing Act of 2010

(U) PUBLIC LAW 111–274 Implements the Plain Writing Act of 2010

- (U) The term "plain writing" means writing that is clear, concise, and well-organized

- Follows best practices (subject, field, and audience appropriate)

(U) PURPOSE

- (U) Improves the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies

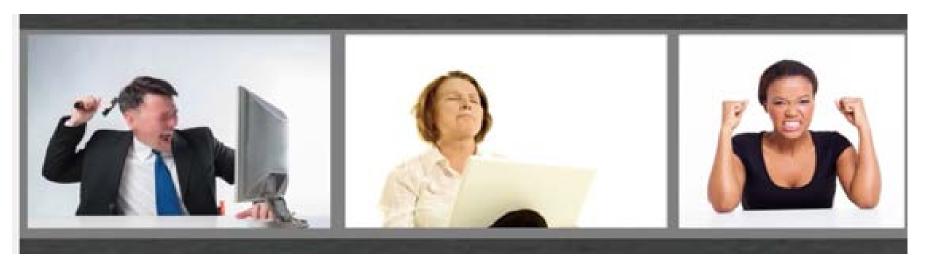- (U) Promotes clear U.S. Government communication to the public, without "dumbing down" your information

(U) Understand the Plain Writing Act of 2010

(U) PUBLIC LAW 111–274 (Plain Writing)

(U) Covered Documents:

- (U) Federal Government benefits or services

- (U) Filing taxes

- (U) A Federal Government administered or enforced program

- (U) Letters, publications, forms, notices, instructions (paper/electronic)

(U) Understand DoD Instruction 5025.13

(U) DoDI 5025.13 directs DoD entities to

- (U) Use guidelines in all new or substantially revised documents

- (U) Use plain language when preparing contracts

- (U) Require plain language training for personnel who write regularly

Department of Defense
INSTRUCTION

NUMBER 5025.13
April 11, 2013
Incorporating Change 4, May 31, 2018

~~D~~CMO

SUBJECT: DoD Plain Language Program

References: See Enclosure 1

1. __PURPOSE__. This instruction, in accordance with the authority in DoD Directives 5105.82 and 5105.53 (References (a) and (b)) ~~and~~, the July 11, 2014 Deputy Secretary of Defense Memorandum (Reference (c)), *and the February 1, 2018 Secretary of Defense Memorandum (Reference (d))*:

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(U) Joint Staff Audience Types

(U) Audience Types

- (U) Public

- (U) Government
  - Federal
  - State
  - Local

- (U) Academic
  - Colleges
  - Universities

- (U) Professional
  - Legal
  - Medical
  - Nonprofit organizations

(U) Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, discusses defense challenges with NBC correspondent Andrea Mitchell at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, June 17, 2016. The graphic is UNCLASSIFIED

(U) IDENTIFY AND KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

(U) Understand Writing Preferences

(U) Plain Style

- (U) **Preferred:** For a proper seal, apply petroleum jelly to your beard prior to donning the M50 mask.
- (U) Personnel with beards shall apply petroleum jelly to beard before putting on the M50 mask to prevent breathing difficulties.

- (U) **Preferred:** As we implement the National Defense Strategy (NDS), I directed a revision of the National Military Strategy (NMS). The revised NMS will articulate "how" the Joint Force will execute the "what" prescribed in the NDS.

The NDS example, extracted from the 2019 NDS, highlights writing for a particular audience (government), incorporating tone, and spelling out acronyms. These are key concepts of plain language writing.

(U) Understand Writing Preferences

(U) Formal Tone (Tone, conveyed through an author's choice of words, is the author's attitude toward a subject or audience. Can be formal, informal, serious, comic, sarcastic, sad, or cheerful, or it may be any other existing attitude. Word selection must match the audience's knowledge of the topic.)

- (U) The Department of Human and Health Services (HHS) reports an increase in Ankylosing spondylitis, a painful spine disease.

(U) Preferred for an audience that is unfamiliar with the topic and acronym.

- (U) Formal Tone: HHS reports an increase in Ankylosing spondylitis.

(U) Preferred for an audience that is familiar with the topic and acronym.
(U) Preferred if the acronym was previously spelled out in the document.

- (U) Recommend funding approval of The Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) program.

(U) Preferred for an audience unfamiliar with the acronym and program.

(U) Understand Writing Preferences

(U) Idioms (a fixed phrase that cannot be deduced from its meaning)
- (U) **Preferred:** The employee was sick and did not report to work.
- (U) Idiom: The employee was under the weather and did not report to work.

(U) Clichés (an overused phrase)
- (U) **Preferred:** The patient experienced severe abdominal pain.
- (U) Idiom: The patient experienced gut-wrenching pain.

(U) Examples of five common idioms used in daily conversations:
- (U) "Hit the hay"
- (U) "Stabbed in the back"
- (U) "Takes two to tango"
- (U) "Kill two birds with one stone"
- (U) "Costs an arm and a leg"

(U) Understand Writing Preferences

(U) Active Voice Versus Passive Voice (active: subject performs the action; passive: subject receives the actions)

- (U) **Preferred:** Action Officers draft actions.
- (U) Passive Voice: Actions <u>are drafted </u>by Action Officers.

- (U) **Preferred:** The Action Officer made the recommendation.
- (U) Passive Voice: The recommendation <u>was made </u>by the Action Officer.

- (U) **Preferred:** The Chicago Bulls won the game.
- (U) Passive Voice: The game <u>was won </u>by the Chicago Bulls.

- (U) **Preferred:** The Chairman prefers proper and concise writing.
- (U) Passive Voice: Proper and concise writing <u>is preferred </u>by the Chairman.

- (U) **Preferred:** The Chairman signed the document.
- (U) Passive Voice: The document <u>was signed </u>by the Chairman.

(U) Understand Writing Preferences

(U) Parallel Construction: Use consistent grammatical form when offering several ideas

- (U) Refers to order and balance within a sentence
- (U) Increases the quality of a sentence
- (U) Allows the sentence to flow smoothly
- (U) Performs, collectively, through the same function

(U) Examples:

- (U) **Preferred:** I admire people who are honest, reliable, and sincere.
- (U) Faulty Parallelism: I admire people who are honest, reliable, and have sincerity.

Note that *are* applies to and makes sense with the three adjectives.

- (U) **Preferred:** You should check your spelling, grammar, and punctuation.
- (U) Faulty Parallelism: you should check your spelling, grammar, and punctuate properly.

(U) Understand Plain Language Preferences

(U) Economy of Language

- (U) **Preferred:** If you received a payment from the State in error, you must repay the entire sum.
- (U) Economy of Language: If the State Secretary finds that an individual has received a payment to which the individual was not entitled, whether or not the payment was due to the individual's fault or misrepresentation, the individual shall be liable to repay to State the total sum of the payment to which the individual was not entitled.

(U) Word Selection
- (U) Because
- (U) Also
- (U) None
- (U) For
- (U) Annually

(U) Avoid Phrases
- (U) Due to the fact
- (U) In addition to
- (U) Not one of these
- (U) For the purpose of
- (U) On an annual basis

(U) JSTP

(U) PLEASE COMPLETE YOUR SURVEY FOR THIS BRIEF