Defense Logistics Agency
INSTRUCTION

Accountable Office: Headquarters Complex Strategic Plans and Policy,
Policy Management Office (J523)

Subject: Plain Language Program

References:

(a) DoDI 5025.13, "DoD Plain Language Program," June 9, 2014

(b) DLAI 5025.01, "Management of Policy and Procedures," September 11, 2015

(c) "Federal Plain Language Guidelines," May 2011

1. PURPOSE:

This Instruction, later referred to as "Policy," implements DoD policy, assigns responsibilities, and provides procedures for writing in plain language (English).

2. APPLICABILITY: This Policy applies to all DLA activities.

3. DEFINITIONS: See Glossary.

4. POLICY:

DLA must write new or substantially revised covered documents in plain English. There are five primary benefits of writing in plain language.

a. Writing in plain language gets your message across in the shortest time possible.

b. More people may understand your message; thus, you spend less time explaining it to people.

c. If your document directs your readers to do something, they are more likely to understand and follow them correctly.

d. Writing in plain language can save time, personnel, equipment, and money.

e. You will give better service to your readers.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES: See Enclosure 1.

6. PROCEDURES: See Enclosure 2.

7. INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS:

J523 sends a completed DD Form 2960, "DoD Plain Language Compliance," report by March 1 of each year. Send report to Washington Headquarters Services, Directives Division (WHS/DD) at whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.

8. INTERNAL CONTROLS:

a. The DLA Learning Management System (LMS) confirms all employees who complete LMS plain language training.

b. Organizational Directors and Commanders direct their staff (managers, supervisors, and employees) to use the "Federal Plain Language Guidance" document when writing documents.

c. Organizational Directors and Commanders complete DD Form 2960, *DoD Plain Language Compliance Report* and send it to J523 by February 1 of each year.

d. The Director, Strategic Plans and Policy sends the *Consolidated DoD Plain Language Compliance Report* to Washington Headquarters Services, Directives Division by March 1 of each year.

9. RELEASABILITY: This Policy is releasable to the public. It is available on the Official DLA Issuances Website.

10. EXPIRATION DATE:

This Policy expires on September 10, 2025 if J523 does not reissue or cancel it.

PHYLLISA S. GOLDENBERG
Director, DLA Strategic Plans and Policy

Enclosure(s)
    Enclosure 1 – Responsibilities
    Enclosure 2 – Procedures
Glossary

ENCLOSURE 1

RESPONSIBILITIES

1. DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PLANS AND POLICY (J5):

Under the authority, direction, and control of the Director DLA and through the Policy Management Branch, you must:

    a. Communicate plain writing program requirements throughout the Agency and oversee compliance.

    b. Require Agency personnel who regularly prepare documents to complete plain language training under this policy.

    c. Appoint an Agency plain language contact that will serve as a representative on the DoD Plain Language Committee and be responsible for overseeing Agency implementation and compliance with Reference (a).

    d. Encourage Agency personnel to seek clarification from within their organization before requesting an amendment through the DoD Plain Language Website. If the request is valid, the author will rewrite the section of the document that is unclear.

    e. Require all DLA employees to write in plain language in all new or substantially revised documents.

    f. Collaborate with the Director, Human Resources on plain language training.

2. DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES (J1): must

    Collaborate with the Director, Strategic Plans and Policy in keeping current the DLA Plain Language Training Program.

3. DIRECTOR AND COMMANDERS, J CODE, D STAFF, AND PRIMARY LEVEL FIELD ACTIVITIES (PLFA): must

    a. Communicate plain writing program requirements throughout the organization and oversee compliance.

    b. Require organizational personnel who regularly write documents to complete plain language training under this policy.

        (1) Supervisors may direct personnel to repeat plain language training if necessary.

(2) Include a requirement in future support contracts that states employees of the contract must write documents following the "Federal Plain language Guidelines."

c.   Appoint a plain language contact that is responsible for overseeing plain language implementation efforts and compliance within your organization.

d.   Encourage personnel to seek clarification from within their organization before filing an amendment on the DoD Plain Language Website. If valid, the author will rewrite the section of the document that is unclear.

e.   Direct employees to use of plain language concepts in all new or substantially revised documents.

f.   Maintain a record of all written or revised covered documents conforming to the "Federal Plain Language Guidelines."

g.   Send the DLA Plain Language Document Compliance Worksheet to Headquarters Policy Management Branch by February 1 of each year.

ENCLOSURE 2

PROCEDURES

1. <u>Training</u>. DLA employees who regularly write and edit covered documents must complete plain language training by registering for the computer-based training in DLA LMS. Encourage all other DLA employees to take this training.

    a. LMS training course: *Writing in Plain Language.* This training presentation addresses why we need to write in plain language, several myths and facts of plain language, and the top 10 plain language techniques. To register for LMS training, click here.

    b. Classroom training: *Effective Writing Techniques in DLA course.* For those that want to receive <u>practical</u> plain language training, a two-day interactive classroom course is available. In this course, you learn how to use and fine-tune your existing writing skills to write "the DLA way." In addition, you learn how to use plain language writing techniques to be an effective writer for DLA and get your message across the first time, every time. In this course, you learn how:

        (1) Write in DLA

        (2) Write standards in the Government

        (3) Write in plain language

        (4) Think, write, and proofread your documents

        (5) Enable your readers to understand your message

Contact DLA Training to register for this class.

2. <u>Using Plain Language in New Documents</u>

    Plain language is clear, succinct writing ensuring the reader understands the information as quickly as possible. Plain language strives to be easy to read, understand, and use. It avoids verbose, complex language and jargon. Writing in plain language is a skill employees must learn to hone. To help you with this skill, follow the "Federal Plain Language Guidelines" when writing or revising documents. You can download the guidelines at http://www.plainlanguage.gov. You may use specialized language depending on the intended audience, but your language and document organization ought to be as clear, concise, and specific as possible.

Table 1. Plain Language Concepts

Concepts	Applications
Be Clear	Use plain language whenever possible; avoid jargon Avoid overuse of acronyms (if used, establish them first) Use the active voice Organize and filter information with readers' needs in mind Format your document so it's easy to read and understand Use tables or figures if that's the best way to show information
Be Concise	Remove unnecessary words Write sentences with 20 words or fewer and contain a single thought, action,. Use seven sentences or fewer within each paragraph
Be Specific	Include only information the reader must know Use words with precise meaning Include details that are directly relevant to the main point

    a. The procedures for users outside DLA that request amendment of *covered* DLA documents are in Reference (a).

    b. Below are the procedures for DLA employees (civilian, military, or contractor) that seek an amendment of a DLA document, including covered documents.

        (1) An employee requests clarification from colleagues within their organization. Afterwards, contact the document author and request clarification. If this does not resolve the issue, contact your Organizational Plain Language Contact and request that he or she address the plain language issue with the Author's Organizational Plain Language Contact.

        (2) An employee's Organizational Plain Language Contact engages the author's Organizational Plain Language Contact to discuss the issue.

        (3) The author's Organizational Plain Language Contact forwards the amendment request to the proper office. If necessary, engage the author to discuss the issue. Afterwards, contact the requesting Organizational Plain Language Contact and tell him or her of the status.

(4) The author must evaluate the amendment request and decide a proper way ahead. You have three courses of action from which to choose. You may:

(a) Revise your document now using plain language standards,

(b) Revise your document on the next edition, or

(c) Inform the Requester the current language in your document is necessary.

After you decide on the best course of action to take, contact the employee and his or her Organizational Plain Language Contact and tell them of your decision.

(5) If the document is a covered document, the Author's Organizational Plain Language Contact resolves internal plain language concerns on the *DLA Organizational Plain Language Compliance Worksheet*. (See Appendix 2) Send the report to Headquarters Complex Policy Management Branch on February 1 of each year.

3. <u>Measuring Compliance</u>. There are three simple ways to check your draft document for plain language compliance:

a. Use editorial software to identify and correct plain language discrepancies.

b. Use the Plain Language Checklist to catch problems with document organization and flow. See Appendix.

c. Have a colleague review the draft document from a plain language perspective.

4. <u>Annual Compliance Report.</u>

a. <u>DLA Plain Language Compliance Worksheet</u>. All J/D Codes and PLFA plain language contacts send their worksheet to Headquarters Complex Policy Management Branch by February 1 of each year. (See Appendix 2) You can download a copy of this worksheet from the DLA Issuances Website.

b. <u>DoD Plain Language Compliance Report</u>. The Policy Management Branch prepares an annual consolidated plain language compliance report using the DD Form 2960, "DoD Plain Language Compliance." Examples of information to report include:

(1) For covered documents:

(a) Number of amendment requests received.

(b) Number of amendment requests resolved.

(c) Number of amendment requests denied and the justification for those denials.

(d) Status and number of amendment requests still outstanding.

(2) Verify the Agency complies with training requirements in reference (a).

(3) Headquarters Policy Management Branch must send DD Form 2960 "DoD Plain Language Compliance" by March 1 of each year to whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil.

Appendix 1: Plain Language Checklist

Use this checklist to verify you are following the "Federal Plain Language Guidelines" when writing documents covered by this policy.

Have you…	Check √	Comments
Written for the average reader within your intended audience?		
Organized the document to serve the reader's needs and answer the reader's questions? Included useful headings to guide the reader?		
Used active voice wherever appropriate?		
Clarified responsibilities?		
Written to one person at a time rather than a group?		
Used "you" and other pronouns to address the reader directly?		
Used "must" instead of "shall" or "will" to signal requirements, policy, or law?		
Used the simplest tense possible?		
Removed unnecessary and obsolete words?		
Hyperlinked to other documents rather than repeated text?		
Avoided confusing words and phrases?		
Avoided technical jargon and bureaucratese?		
Defined and used terms consistently?		
Clarified ambiguities?		
Placed words carefully in each sentence?		
Avoided turning verbs into nouns?		
Used numbered lists, bulleted lists, or tables to present complex materials?		
Created short, concise sentences, paragraphs, and sections, and covered only one topic in each sentence and paragraph?		
Made your questions and response neither shorter nor longer than necessary?		

Defense Logistics Agency

Plain Language Compliance Worksheet

For Calendar Year:

Reference: DLAI 5025.13, *Plain Language Program*, current edition

1. DLA Organization and Office Name:

2. Compliance Efforts (In this section, provide your comments on the covered documents your organization issued that is a candidate for revision.)

a. Number of amendment requests from users outside DLA:
(Covered documents only) (Required)

b. Amendment Requests and action taken: (Covered documents only) (Required)

(1) Amendment request received (Type Name of document and from whom)	(2) Action taken (Accept/Reject)	(3) Current status and justification (If accepted, where is it in the process? If rejected, give reason.)

c. Covered Documents Revised:
(Optional, list any covered document you developed or revised that improved DLA operations.)

(1) Type of covered document and How did you make it available to the public?	(2) Intended user(s) and approximate number of users?	(3) What has changed by using plain language?

3. Other Information (Optional: Include requests from DoD personnel asking you to revise a document. What action did you take?)

4. Person Completing the Worksheet
a. Name (Last, First, Middle Initial):

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APPENDIX 2 TO ENCLOSURE 2

Glossary

Part I. Abbreviations and Acronyms

DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
DLAI	Defense Logistics Agency Instruction
HQC	Headquarters Complex
J5	Directorate of Strategic Plans and Policy
J523	Policy Management Branch
J1	Directorate of Human Resources

Part II. Definitions

Amendment Request. Any inquiry from a user requesting a revision to a covered document by rewriting it using plain language.

DLA Organizational Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. An annual report that is appended to the DLA Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. The organizational report documents DLA's *organizational* compliance information and ongoing implementation efforts.

DLA Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. An annual consolidated report, required by WHS/DD, appended to the DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. The report documents DLA's compliance information and ongoing implementation efforts as an Agency.

DoD Annual Plain Language Compliance Report. A comprehensive report, required by the Plain Writing Act, which is posted to the DoD Plain Language Website, each year. The DoD report documents DoD's compliance information and ongoing implementation efforts.

DoD and OSD Component plain language contacts. Individuals selected by their Component head as responsible for overseeing Component implementation efforts and compliance with the Plain Writing Act and serves as the Component's Plain Language Committee representative.

DLA personnel. All DLA civilians, contractors, and Military Service members.

Compliance Information. Any information demonstrating efforts towards implementation and compliance with DoDI 5025.13, DoD Plain Language Program. It may include, but not limited to, the number of personnel who have completed training, operational process changes to promote using plain language, and documentation of amendment requests and responses.

Covered Document. Any document necessary for obtaining Federal Government benefit or service, provides information about any Federal Government benefit or service, or explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the Federal Government administers or enforces. It does not include a regulation.

Documents. All written documents, including websites and official communications, created by DLA personnel requiring user(s) to understand and/or implement the information they contain.

Plain Language. Language that is clear, concise, well organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. Such language avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity.

User. Any reader of a document or covered document who needs information in the document or covered document to perform their work duties, obtain a federal government benefit or service, obtain information about a federal government benefit or service, or comply with a requirement the federal government administers or enforces.