Writing for *ADHD* readers

Ten changes that make letters, emails, and policies easier to read, remember, and act on, for everyone.

1. Lead with the action

Put what the reader needs to do, and by when, in the subject line or the first sentence.

TRY
"Trip forms due Thursday 12 March"

INSTEAD OF
"Further to our previous correspondence…"

2. One message, one job

Each email, letter, or post asks for one thing. Send a second message for a second request.

TRY
One request per email

INSTEAD OF
Three requests in one paragraph

3. Dates, not days

Give the full date and the day, and repeat it where the action is.

TRY
"Thursday 12 March, by 3 pm"

INSTEAD OF
"By the end of next week"

4. Short sentences

Aim for under 20 words. Break long sentences at "and", "which", and "in order to".

TRY
Two sentences of 12 words

INSTEAD OF
One sentence of 70 words

5. Lists for steps

Use a numbered list for anything with an order, and bullets for items without one.

TRY
1. Pay 2. Send the form

INSTEAD OF
A paragraph of instructions

6. Bold the essentials

Bold the two or three words a skim-reader must see. Never a whole paragraph.

TRY
Pay the balance by Thursday

INSTEAD OF
Bold sentences everywhere

7. Everything in one place

Attach or link what the reader needs, instead of pointing to an old message.

TRY
"The kit list is attached"

INSTEAD OF
"See the email of 3 March"

8. Plain words

Choose the everyday word. Explain any term the reader may not know.

TRY
"Before", "send", "help"

INSTEAD OF
"Prior to", "submit", "facilitate"

9. Space to breathe

Short paragraphs, white space, and headings that say what's in each section.

TRY
3-line paragraphs

INSTEAD OF
A wall of text

10. Close the loop

End with who to ask and how, and what happens next.

TRY

"Questions? Reply to this email."

INSTEAD OF

No contact or next step

a note from Andrea →

Read your message on a phone, standing up, with one eye on something else. If you still know what to do and by when, it's ready to send.

Free from Andrea Antal, communications consultant and ADHD and Executive Function Coach in training · andreaantal.com/adhd-friendly-communication/ · Share it freely as it is.