

1. Clearly label the instructions

Give your reader a tip-off that they are in the right place. They want to be sure they've found the information they need before they begin reading.

How do I do this?

- **Create clear headings:** "Instructions for ..." or "How to ..." are two good ways to begin a heading for a set of instructions.
- **Consider picking out the most important point and making it your heading.** This can help draw the reader into the instructions. For example: "You must choose a new doctor by July 1st" could lead your reader right into instructions for how to do this.
- **Try a simple plea,** such as "What we need" or "What you must do now." This might work if your instructions follow an explanation.

Why do this?

- People will be more likely to read your instructions if they know they're in the right place.
- Compelling headings are great tools for urging the reader to comply.

Do	Don't
How to collect your refund:	Washington State Industrial Insurance is not a "co-pay" system.
Calculating and paying your workers' compensation premiums: Instructions for completing this Quarterly Report.	Information and instructions
How high may I put my antenna?	Limitations on antenna structures
What we need Send us a medical report from the doctor or clinic that you visited in the past six months.	Please furnish medical evidence in support of your pension claim.
You must choose a new health plan by December 31, 2007 Your current health plan will not be available in your county in 2008.	We regret to inform you that the health plan you are enrolled in will not be available in your county next year.

2. Break down your instructions into short, distinct steps

Break down tasks so the reader can see exactly what's involved in complying with your instructions.

How do I do this?

- **Think through the steps.** How many actual tasks will be involved in following a particular instruction? If a document must be notarized, for example, don't take it for granted that the reader will automatically understand the steps involved.
- **Give each step a label or bulleted heading.** This will help the reader understand *how many* steps are involved and also acts a kind of mental checklist.

Why do this?

- People will be more likely to read your instructions if they can see right away how much work is involved.
- Breaking tasks up into steps will help *you* think through what you are actually asking the customer to do. This should make your instructions more effective.

Do	Don't
Please submit your application and the following: - Resume - References - Work samples - Photograph	In addition to your application, please include your resume, references, work samples, and photograph.

Use a numbered list if there is a specific order:

Do	Don't
What do I need to do to keep my PEBB coverage? 1. Apply for Medicare Part A and Part B before you turn age 65. 2. Once you have enrolled, send a copy of your Medicare card to us at:	You should apply for Medicare at least two months before your eligibility date.

If instructions are complicated, consider a reminder box. Try using this on your envelopes. For example:

Did you remember to:

- Sign at the bottom?
- Notarize your statement?
- Make sure our address appears in the envelope's window?

3. Use a clear, firm tone, but don't "shout" with capitalizations

When lots of customers make the same mistake, it can be frustrating. Unfortunately, programs often respond by rewriting the important parts of their instructions IN ALL CAPS.

How do I do this?

- Research has found that the most effective way to emphasize a point is to **boldface in both upper and lower case**.
- If your computer system doesn't have a boldface feature, try setting your headings off with white space above and below.

Why do this?

- *Italics*, underlining, ALL UPPER CASE, reverse (white on a solid background) and shadow types are not useful because they increase reading strain when used in small type sizes.
- Research has shown that it takes people much longer to read ALL CAPS than upper and lower case.
- Readers see your headings first, as they scan the document. It is the most important part of your document to need a good design.

Do	Don't
It's time to renew your certificate. Please follow the instructions below.	FAILURE TO RESPOND TO THIS NOTICE WILL RESULT IN THE NON-RENEWAL OF YOUR CERTIFICATE.

4. Tell customers how to respond

Some instructions contain a great deal of information, but aren't specific enough about the actual task the customer is being asked to do.

How do I do this?

- Be specific about what you need and when you need it.
- If you are asking for a reply, be very specific about where it should be sent, such as "to the address above," "the address below." If you have room, create a separate "box" on your document with the return information printed as it would appear on an envelope.
- Include the deadline, if there is one.
- If they don't need to take any action, let them know.

Why do this?

- You will increase your compliance rate.
- You will reduce customer errors and the expense of fixing them.

Do	Don't
<p>After you have completed this form:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sign the bottom- Enclose it in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope.- Include a check for \$100, made out to the Department of Labor and Industries.- Mail or hand deliver to: Joe Smith Department of Labor & Industries 7273 Linderson Way Tumwater, WA- Your mailing should be postmarked on or before Dec. 1, 2007.- We will contact you within 10 business days.	<p>Send form and payment to us by 12-1-07.</p>
A Seller Report of Sale does not Transfer	A SELLER REPORT OF SALE DOES NOT TRANSFER

Ownership

You have the responsibility of properly filing the Report of Sale, or pay penalties or fines associated with the vehicle.

The Department of Licensing considers the Report of Sale form properly filed if we or a vehicle licensing office receive it within five business days after you sell the vehicle. The Report of Sale must include:

- Date of the sale or transfer
- Name and address of the seller and buyer
- Buyer's driver's license number, if available
- Description of the vehicle, including the vehicle identification number (VIN)

OWNERSHIP

Per Washington state law RCW 46.12.101, This report of sale will be deemed properly filed if it includes the date of the sale or transfer, the name and address of the seller and of the buyer, the buyer's driver's license number if available, a description of the vehicle, including the vehicle identification number, and it was received by the department, it's agents, or sub-agents on or before the fifth day after the sale of the vehicle, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and state and federal holidays.

IMPORTANT: If this report of sale does not meet all of the criteria established above and the new owner has not applied for title of the vehicle, the registered owner (or seller) may be responsible for the operation of the vehicle to include paying any fees assessed for parking tickets, impound fees for an abandoned vehicle, etc.

5. Tell customers what happens next

When you ask citizens or businesses to do something, they usually want to know what will happen after they do it. Will you be contacting them? Sending them a receipt? Mailing them a copy?

How do I do this?

- After your instructions, clearly state how you will respond when they comply.
- If you won't be responding, let them know.

Why do this?

- You will reassure the customer.
- You may prevent unnecessary phone calls from the customer.

Do	Don't
<p>If you have been arrested or charged with an alcohol/drug related offense, your driving privilege can be suspended, revoked, or denied.</p> <p>If you intend to seek deferred prosecution from the court, you may use this form to request that we stay (not impose) this action. The stay will be no longer than 150 days after the charges are filed, or two years after the date of the arrest, whichever time period is shorter.</p> <p>To qualify for a stay, you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- have submitted to a breath/blood test.- have not entered into an alcohol/drug related deferred prosecution program previously.- file an intent to seek deferred prosecution with us. <p>To file an intent to seek deferred prosecution, complete this form and mail it to:</p> <p>Department of Licensing Deferred Prosecution PO Box 9030</p>	<p>The petitioner was arrested on _____ and submitted to a breath or blood test. After the Department of Licensing received the law-enforcement officer's sworn report of the arrest and breath and/or blood test results, the Department of Licensing informed petitioner that his/her driver's license, permit, or privilege to drive has been or will be suspended, revoked or denied (as described in RCW 46.20.308 (7)).</p> <p>Criminal charges arising out of the same arrest have been or may be filed and petitioner intends to enter into a deferred prosecution agreement. Petitioner asks that pending the entry of a likely deferred prosecution agreement, that the Department of Licensing stay the administrative suspension or revocation of driving privileges. Petitioner understands the stay shall be no longer than one hundred fifty (150) days after the date charges are filed, or two years after the date of the arrest, whichever time period is shorter.</p> <p>In order to qualify for a deferred prosecution on the underlying criminal charge, petitioner</p>

<p>Olympia, WA 98607-9030</p> <p>If you qualify, we will notify you by mail. If you had a valid Washington driver license when you were arrested, a temporary driver license will be enclosed with your notification.</p>	<p>understands the court must find the wrongful conduct charged is the result of or caused by a) alcoholism, and/or b) drug addiction, and/or c) a mental problem. Petitioner also understands that he/she is not eligible for a deferred prosecution program more than once.</p>
<p>Mail us your payment. You will receive your certificate in the mail, usually within two weeks.</p>	<p>Mail in your payment.</p>

If they don't respond, state the consequence. If the customer will lose benefits, say so directly.

Do	Don't
<p>You must call in each week or you will not get a check.</p>	<p>You must certify your job search each week to receive benefits.</p>
<p>If you do not respond to this notice, you will have to repay the benefits you received.</p>	<p>Our records indicate that you did not report your full income while receiving benefits. This may be deemed an overpayment. If you dispute this fact, you must file an appeal.</p>

Use tables for "if-then" statements.

Do	Don't
<p>We must receive your completed application form on or before the following dates:</p> <p>If you submit your form ... We must receive it by ...</p> <p>Electronically The 25th of the month</p> <p>By mail The 15th of the month</p>	<p>The Department of Revenue must receive your completed application form on or before the 15th day of the second month following the month you are reporting if you do not submit your application electronically or the 25th day of the month following the second month you are reporting if you submit your application electronically.</p>

6. Do your homework when writing legal instructions

How do I do this?

- **Check your rules and statutes:** Make sure you are in complying with any requirements set forth in the RCWs and WACs. Have them checked out by an attorney familiar with your program.
- **Make sure the program reviews any changes made by the attorney,** so it process matches the attorney's recommendations.
- **Don't assume your reader will understand legal terminology.** Some words that may confuse: Notarize, Warrant, Serve.
- **Send a final, clear write-through to the program and the attorney if their changes aren't clear.**
- **Set the appeal rights statement apart from the body of the decision:** Use white space and a simple header, like "What to do if you disagree with this decision."

Why do this?

- Citizens have the right to absolutely correct and clear information when it comes to understanding their rights and obligations under the law.

Do	Don't
Enclosed is a Proposed Decision and Order (PD&O) in this appeal. What if I disagree with the decision reached in the PD&O? Any party who disagrees with any portion of this decision may request a review by the three Board Members. Your request must be in writing and should be titled "Petition for Review."	Attached to this notice is the PROPOSED DECISION AND ORDER issued by the Industrial Appeals Judge. If you disagree with any portion of this decision, you have the right to request the Board to review the case.