



# Executive Policy

## Chapter 1: Executive Policy and Procedure

## Policy 1-81

Resource Contact: Plain Talk Coordinator

Established: August 16, 2005

References: [Executive Order 05-03](#)  
[Ecology's Plain Talk Web Site](#)  
[Governor's Plain Talk Web Site](#)

## Establishing Plain Talk at Ecology

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**Purpose:** To require the use of Plain Talk principles in Ecology's internal and external written communications.

**Application:** This policy applies to all Ecology employees.

### 1. Employees Write Clear Documents the Intended Audience Can Easily Understand.

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Documents include:

- Letters
- Instructions and applications
- Focus sheets
- Fact sheets
- Public notices
- Reports
- Web pages
- Presentations
- Permits
- Any other written/printed proof of agency action or expectation

### 2. Employees Use Plain Talk Principles to Write Documents.

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Employees use the Plain Talk principles below:

- Use clear language commonly used and understood by the intended audience.
- Include only the information the recipient needs and present it in a logical sequence.
- Use short sentences.
- Write sentences in the active voice.
- Use a layout and design to help the reader understand the message on the first try.

This includes:

- Adequate white space
- Bulleted lists
- Visual aids such as tables
- Helpful headings
- Other proven techniques

### **3. The Director Appoints the Plain Talk Coordinator.**

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The Director, with input from the Senior Management Team, appoints a Plain Talk Coordinator. The Coordinator oversees the agency's efforts to implement the Plain Talk Executive Order, 05-03.

### **4. Each Program Has a Plain Talk Team.**

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All agency programs recruit or appoint employees to a Program Plain Talk Team. Each program team helps develop and implement the process for how to incorporate Plain Talk into their program.

### **5. Plain Talk is Incorporated into the Work Done at Ecology.**

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Each program will decide where to focus their Plain Talk efforts based on their existing program priorities.

Ecology program managers and supervisors are responsible for making sure employees:

- Use the Plain Talk principles in all new documents.
- Review existing documents against the Plain Talk principles.
- Rewrite existing documents that don't meet the Plain Talk principles.
- Learn how to write clear document the intended audience can understand by taking training offered by the Plain Talk Team or Department of Personnel.

### **6. Documents are User-tested.**

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User-testing is a way to evaluate if a target audience can understand a document. Programs are encouraged to incorporate user-testing into their process. The Plain Talk Coordinator user-tests documents, at an agency level, when appropriate.

Approved:



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Director

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