



Easy-to-Read



Cape Mental Health
all about ability

We need to consider the emotional and psychological impact of not being able to read text.

Easy-to-Read ensures that persons with intellectual disability and those with limited reading skills can access and understand documents written in a standardised format that combines approved images and simple text.

Easy-to-Read should be the golden standard of communication with and for persons with intellectual disability or reading difficulties.

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An imperative for communicating with persons with disabilities

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) states that a disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society.

The purpose of the Convention is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities, including the importance of accessibility to information and communication.

The Convention also states that information in accessible formats, such as easy-to-read, must be provided as a reasonable accommodation.

“Reasonable accommodation” means necessary and appropriate modifications and adjustments for the integration of persons with disabilities into society.

According to the South African White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015), service users with intellectual disability have the right to access information that is easy to read and to understand. Being able to access information that they can understand will help them to learn, make decisions for themselves, and be included in society.

Access to information – a democratic right

International studies show that in most countries, more than 25 per cent of the adult population does not reach the level of literacy or reading skill expected after nine years of formal education. In several countries, this figure is as high as 40 to 50 per cent*.

It is a democratic right that all people have access to culture, literature and information – and in a comprehensible form. In order for citizens to exercise their democratic rights and control their lives, these citizens must be well informed and capable of making choices.

Quality of life is another important factor. Being able to read gives people a tremendous amount of self-confidence, by enabling them to expand their view of the world and take control of their lives. Through reading, people are able to share ideas, thoughts and experiences, and grow as human beings.

Providing Easy-to-Read materials is a matter of democracy and accessibility.

What is Easy-to-Read?

Easy-to-Read is an internationally recognised method of presenting written information in an easier-to-understand format using specific writing standards, while pictures, photos and other symbols are used to support the text. In essence, Easy-to-Read is an adaptation that makes both reading and comprehension possible and easier.

To achieve such a product, the writer/publisher must take into consideration content, language, illustrations, as well as graphic layout.

All documents written in an Easy-to-Read format must comply with very specific rules provided by Inclusion Europe. Documents have to be proofread, understood and approved by persons with intellectual disability before they are made available to others.

Documents that meet the required standards display the Easy-to-Read logo



Who benefits from Easy-to-Read?

There are two main groups of beneficiaries:

- persons with a disability who have a permanent need for Easy-to-Read products.
- readers with limited language or reading proficiency, who may, for a while, find material in this format useful.

A wide variety of disabilities, including dyslexia, intellectual disability, neuropsychiatric disabilities, pre-lingual deafness, aphasia, and dementia, can cause reading problems, thus creating a need for Easy-to-Read materials.

For these persons, Easy-to-Read publications unlock opportunities and provide a useful training resource. These materials can create interest and be a tool to improving reading skills, and can accommodate different age groups, namely adults, young adults/youth, and children.

Ways in which to implement Easy-to-Read

Written information such as leaflets, letters, contracts, reports, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, forms, posters, and consent forms, can be written in Easy-to-Read format. Alongside is an extract from information on the United Nations.

Electronic information such as websites, emails, and PowerPoint presentations, as well as audio and visual media such as podcasts, videos and CDs can employ Easy-to-Read to reach targeted audiences as well.

Easy-to-Read – a first in Africa

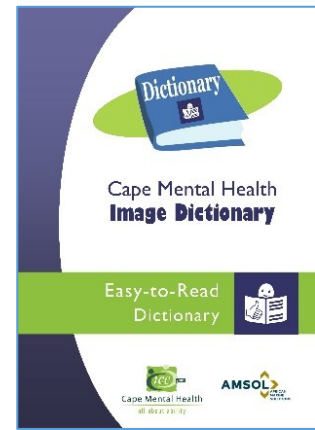
The Cape Mental Health Easy-to-Read initiative is a direct outcome of a 2018 self-advocacy exchange programme with Germany for two CMH service users with intellectual disability.

Our expertise was recognised in when GIZ (The German Agency for International Cooperation) contracted Cape Mental Health to convert the IGAD “Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education” into Easy-to-Read to make it accessible to persons with cognitive impairments, young persons, and those who do not speak English as a first language.



In 2019, we launched the first Easy-to-Read dictionary in South Africa that offers a compilation of more than 900 images and words (in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa) to subscribers.

We have embarked on a national programme on the Inclusion Europe Easy-to-Read methodology to equip staff and educators to create appropriate and comprehensive resources for persons with intellectual disability.



How can Cape Mental Health help your organisation?

Cape Mental Health has specially trained proofreaders (who have various levels of intellectual and/or neuropsychiatric disabilities) and document writers who work with proofreaders to ensure compliance with Easy-to-Read guidelines and principles.

We can convert a range of documents to Easy-to-Read format and have successfully provided this service to various stakeholders. We can also provide training in Easy-to-Read document writing for your staff. To date we have trained 62 ETR document writers from various organisations and institutions across the country, including the South African Federation for Mental Health, the National Council for and of Persons with Disabilities, and the Western Cape Network on Disability.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In September 2023, Cape Mental Health will be rolling out the second phase of Easy-to-Read Document Writing training nationally to healthcare and allied health professionals, special and inclusive education professionals, and other interested stakeholders.

The training is funded once again by AMSOL.

Contact Razaan Galiel, ITD Manager, Cape Mental Health for more information.

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*<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.ZS?locations=ZA>