

Factsheet 2 - Who is Easy English for?

Many people find it hard to read and understand everyday written information and documents. The reasons for such difficulties are as diverse as the people themselves.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) 44% of Australians (7.3 million) had literacy skills at Level 1 or 2* on an international survey of adult literacy, conducted in 24 countries. Level 1 equated to the ability to read short print and locate a single piece of information that is the same as information given in question. The person may be able to enter some personal information into a document and recognise basic vocabulary.

At Level 2 a person has low level inferencing skills and can compare and contrast information. For all people at these levels of literacy, and also for some people with pre-literacy skills, Easy English may greatly improve access to written information.

A person may have low English literacy due to

- an intellectual or cognitive disability
- a learning disability
- acquired disability, such as stroke, brain injury or degenerative condition
- poor educational outcomes
- reduced exposure to literacy in adult life
- ageing.



People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also experience low English literacy.

A person may have low English literacy for a short time or throughout their life. In the short term, a period of mental illness or an acute illness may affect literacy skills.

Literacy skills also vary with reduced familiarity of a topic area, stress and/or anxiety.

Easy English can also be extremely worthwhile for people who are time poor!

Access to information is a human right. Being able to access and understand written information enables people to make choices and be active participants in our society.

Easy English focuses on presenting key information rather than all the detail. Words are combined with images to enhance the message for the reader.

Ideally, reading an Easy English document is a shared activity between the reader and another person, such as a friend, a family member or support person. Through discussion, the meaning of the document can be clarified, understood and further details can be provided. Once the document has been explained it can be a useful reminder for the person later.

* Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) 4228.0 - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, Australia, 2011-12. Retrieved 14/11/13
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4228.0>

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