



# How to make a comic-style document

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Dr. Anne Ketola, Tampere University, Finland

# Turning a document into a comic: Four steps

Adapted from: *Five Steps to Plain Language* by the Center for Plain Language

Step 1: Identify and describe the target audience

Step 2: Structure the content

Step 3: Create the illustrations by using simple visual techniques

Step 4: Test the design and content

# Step 1: Identify and describe the target audience

- What do they use the document for?
- What do they need to do, know, learn?
- List audience characteristics that might influence design (for example age, cultural and linguistic background, if relevant)
  - Age: What kind of a visual style might they prefer?
  - Linguistic and cultural background:
    - Language proficiency? Literacy level?
    - Reading direction?
    - Cultural use of color and symbols?

# Step 2: Structure the content, slide 1/2

(Pre-illustration stage)

- Choose relevant content
  - Does *everything* have to go in (shortening/combining)?
- Segment text into panel-sized bits
  - Typically: One sentence = one panel
- Linguistic modification starts
  - Principles of plain language
  - Shortening text throughout the process

# Step 2: Structure the content, slide 2/2

- Re-structure content by considering and weighing the following:
  - **Chronological order:**
    - In which order do things happen?
  - **Thematic order:**
    - Which parts describe/are related to the same events/ processes?
  - **Order of importance:**
    - What is the most essential thing the reader needs to know/remember?

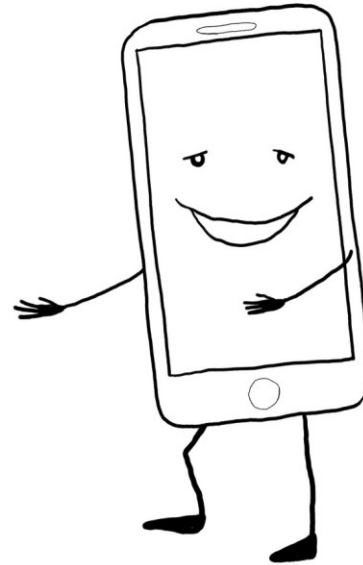
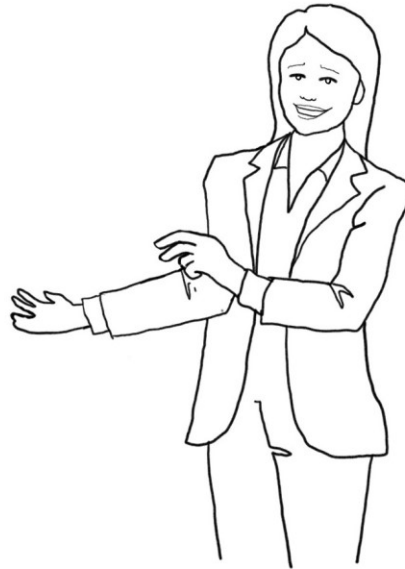
Versus: How much can we fit on a page/in a section of the layout?

# Step 3: Create the illustrations by using simple visual techniques

- Balance between *appealing/engaging* vs. *as simple as possible*
- Consider:
  - **Characters:** Simple, detailed, non-human?
  - **Symbols** for abstract concepts
  - **Relative size:** Make important items bigger
  - **Navigational clues:** Arrows, connected/grouped panels
  - **Color:**
    - Connecting items with color?
    - Using symbolic colors (green and red for right and wrong, ect.)?
    - Remember sufficient contrast & limitations!

# Step 3: Characters

## What works for your readers?

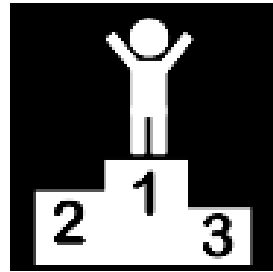


# Step 3: Symbols

- Abstract concepts as symbols (i.e. “court order” as *a gavel*)
- Tip: see symbol/pictogram languages for ideas
  - For instance:



Mulberry symbol  
for “winner”



Sclera symbol  
for “winner”



ARASAAC symbol  
for “winner”



# Step 4: Test the design and content

With

- **content experts**

- What do things look like?
- What is the most essential content?

- **target user groups**

See test questions in *Five Steps to Plain Language*; for instance

- Ask readers to describe key concepts or processes in their own words
- Note where they stumble or misunderstand and rethink those parts