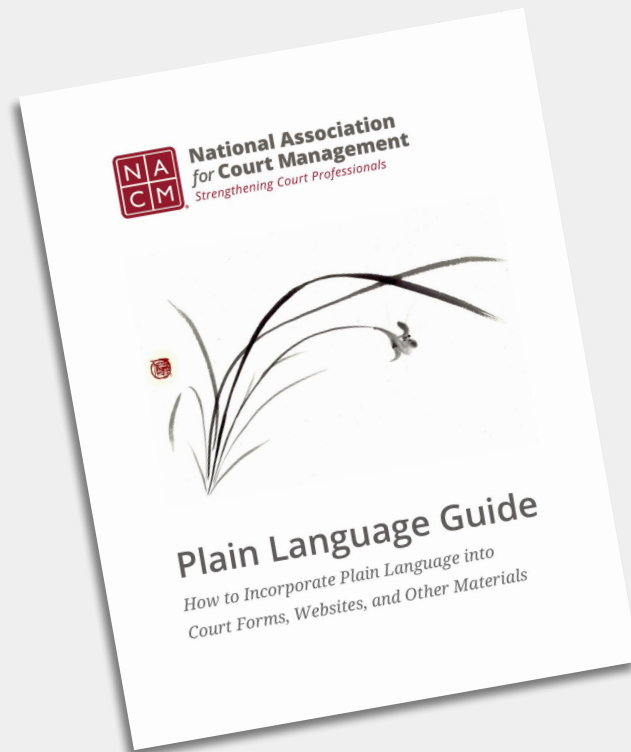


NACM's 2019 Guide



Improve access to justice and increase public trust in the courts by adopting *plain language*.

Use this comprehensive 89-page guide to understand how to incorporate plain language into court forms, instructions, signage, and other public materials. Includes best practices, essential tools, in-depth resources, and supplemental readings.

National Association for Court Management www.nacmnet.org

nacmnet.org/resources/publications/guides/plain-language-guide

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Cover: *Sumi-e* is an ancient Japanese art form of communicating with clarity and simplicity using only black ink, brush, and paper. The goal is to not just depict the appearance of a subject but to convey its essence and spirit.

Updated: January 7, 2019

How to Incorporate Plain Language into Court Forms, Websites, and Other Materials

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1 Introduction

History of Plain Language

It used to be the case that when we did not understand the meaning of a word, we referred to a dictionary for its definition. Today, we “Google” it.

Plain, clear to the mind; evident, manifest, or obvious; to make one’s meaning plain.

In this Guide, the word retains that meaning and extends it to include “*plain language*”, communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. The concept is so prevalent there is a namesake acronym referring to the **Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)**¹ which is a community of federal employees dedicated to the idea that citizens deserve clear communications from the government.

The timeline below demonstrates how this style and concept of writing was directed and has evolved in our country. In this Guide, NACM offers guidelines, resources, and examples for our courts, following the requirements of the [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#) action so your court users can:

- Find what they need;
- Understand what they find; and
- Use what they find to meet their needs.

¹ Federal Plain Language Guidelines, March 2011, Revision 1, May 2011. <https://plainlanguage.gov/media/FederalPLGuidelines.pdf>, accessed May 8, 2018.