

Case Study: Website tips (ato.gov.au)

Introduction

This case study is published by the International Plain Language Federation (IPLF) to provide a real-world example of how organizations are implementing the ISO 24495-1 plain language standard.

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Purchasing and applying the standard

We obtained the ISO Standard in August 2024. The content was completed in September 2024 using the standard.

What was the problem or issue we tackled?

We changed digital platforms in January 2024, resulting in a new look and feel to our website. While we made many improvements, change can present challenges for some users, particularly those with lower digital literacy. ato.gov.au is an important part of the Australian tax system, with millions of visitors every year. So we wanted to share useful tips for using our website.

How did we gather information about the problem?

We reviewed current information about the website and liaised with specialists to identify differences in the new website experience from a user perspective. We also reviewed other similar websites to see how they provided similar support.

What was the scope of our project?

The scope was to publish helpful information to support users on the new website. We wanted to use the plain language standard as a test case to demonstrate our commitment to clear advice that supports the community.

How did we apply the plain language principles?

We used the sample checklist in the standard to ensure each principle was addressed.

Principle 1: Relevant

We focused on the needs of the users who experienced a changed website experience (guideline 5.1.3), particularly those with lower digital literacy. We explained helpful website functions in simple terms. . We avoided content about what we did behind the scenes to improve the simplicity of tax information, a feature of

earlier drafts, and focussed strictly on tips for using the website. We ensured the content was accessible to all users (guideline 5.1.2).

Principle 2: Findable

We published the content in a logical and easy to find place on the website. We grouped information together in a way to best support users (guideline 5.2.2), applied scannable headings and a table of contents (guideline 5.2.3)

Principle 3: Understandable

We removed technical and potentially unfamiliar terms such as ‘user-centric design’ and ‘hamburger menu’ (guideline 5.3.2) We added images to support the text (guideline 5.3.6). Content was structured to exemplify the simple structural and navigation elements that help users understand content (guideline 5.3.4).

Principle 4: Usable

Assessment by multiple specialists and a sample of users unfamiliar with the website confirmed the content was easily understood. Accessibility was also factored in and assessed (guideline 5.4.2). Sample testing is also planned.

Outcome

The content has been published ([Website tips | Australian Taxation Office \(ato.gov.au\)](#)) and outcome testing continues. However, we can confirm:

- Accessibility – passed all requirements
- Plain language standard version was slightly preferred, and images were unanimously appreciated

We’re dedicated to providing clear information to users of our websites. Conducting the second Australian case study using the standard, was a great learning experience and a testament to our commitment to continual improvement. After further testing, we will consider the potential for further application.