Brighton & Hove
City Council supported

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How to write clearly

This sheet gives you some tips and advice on how to write clearly.

It's part of a series of four produced by the Resource Centre, which can be read together or separately. The others cover:

l Planning and producing and a community newsletter

l How to make your newsletter look good

l What will you put in your community newsletter?

Here are a few tips to help you write clearly:

l **You want the content of your newsletter to be easy to read and enjoyable. If articles are too long and complicated, your reader will give up half way through.**

l **Stop and think before you start writing. Make a note of the points you want to make in a logical order.**

l **Get something down. Don't think too much! Don't try to get everything perfectly worded in your head before you write anything down. The important thing is to get started - even if you know it's not quite right, put it down. You can then go back and change it. Even experienced writers will do several drafts before they are satisfied.**

l **Keep your sentences short. Try to keep them around 15-20 words. Stick to one main idea in a sentence. It helps to read the sentence out loud. As a general rule, when you pause in your speech you need a comma. If you come to a stop, put in a full stop.**

l **Be natural. Use everyday English. Avoid jargon, abbreviations and legalistic words. Don't use a long word if a shorter word will do. Imagine you are talking to your reader, and write as you would speak.**

l **Keep it short and simple. People have short attention spans and won't read pages of text. If you want them to read your article, keep it short and simple. Go back over your article and see if you can make it shorter.**

l **Use active verbs as much as possible. For example, say 'we will do it' rather than 'it will be done'.**

l **Check grammar and spelling. The grammar and spell check on your computer program is worth using, but remember computers don't always get it right. Ask someone to read your article to check for mistakes.**

l **Get a second opinion. It's always useful to get another opinion on something you've written. Ask for feedback on how clear and readable your article is.**