

Tips for Writing for Families



During virtual learning, as teachers and school staff create assignments and send home more written instructions to families, consider these tips:

- Use *families* and *family members* rather than *parents*, *mothers*, or *fathers*.
- Write **simply**. Use only as much text as necessary to get information across.
- Give an **example** to clarify your point.
- Use a large font and create white space.
- Keep text style simple. Use one or two **basic fonts** that are easy to read like Arial, Calibri, or Times New Roman.
- Put the most important information in **bold type**.
- Include short sentences and **bullet points**.
- Avoid idioms and phrases that are open to different interpretations. Remember, some readers will take what you have written literally.
- Write out acronyms and avoid jargon. Families may not be familiar with educational terminology.
- Be **repetitive**. In other types of writing, you avoid repetition by using synonyms. But in this case, repeating the same word can help avoid confusion. It also supports readers with limited literacy or English skills.
- Use **active verbs** rather than passive ones. Focus on the reader's perspective: *Receive free meals* rather than *Meals are offered for free*.
- Use **graphics** to help illustrate content. Extra decorations can be distracting rather than helpful.
- Consider **translating** materials into families' dominant language.
- Use online tools to check for **readability**. Websites, such as www.prowritingaid.com, will scan your writing for grammar, spelling, and jargon while also calculating a variety of readability statistics. For families, try to write below a sixth-grade reading level.
- Ask others to review your materials.