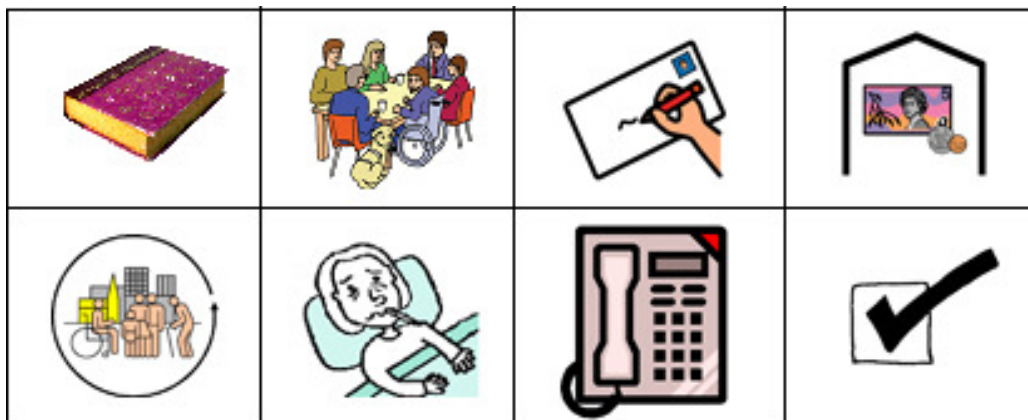


# Images for Easy English



## Contact Details

For more information

Address: Communication Resource Centre  
Scope  
830 Whitehorse Road  
Box Hill, Victoria 3128

Phone: + 61 3 9843 2000

Fax: + 61 3 9843 2033

Toll free: 1800 888 824

Web site: [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

Email: [crc@scopevic.org.au](mailto:crc@scopevic.org.au)

**This document was published in August 2008.**

# Introduction

## Who is this guide for?

There are some people in our community who find it hard to read and understand written information.

This guide is to help you prepare documents for people who have difficulty reading and understanding written information. This guide will help you in making reports, forms, information sheets, flyers, brochures, posters, booklets, etc

## How to use this Guide

Read this guide in conjunction with the **Easy English Writing Style Guide**.<sup>1</sup>

This guide will help you develop Easy English documents with images that are easy to understand. You should check that the information you develop follows the guidelines set out here.

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<sup>1</sup> Easy English Writing Style Guide – [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

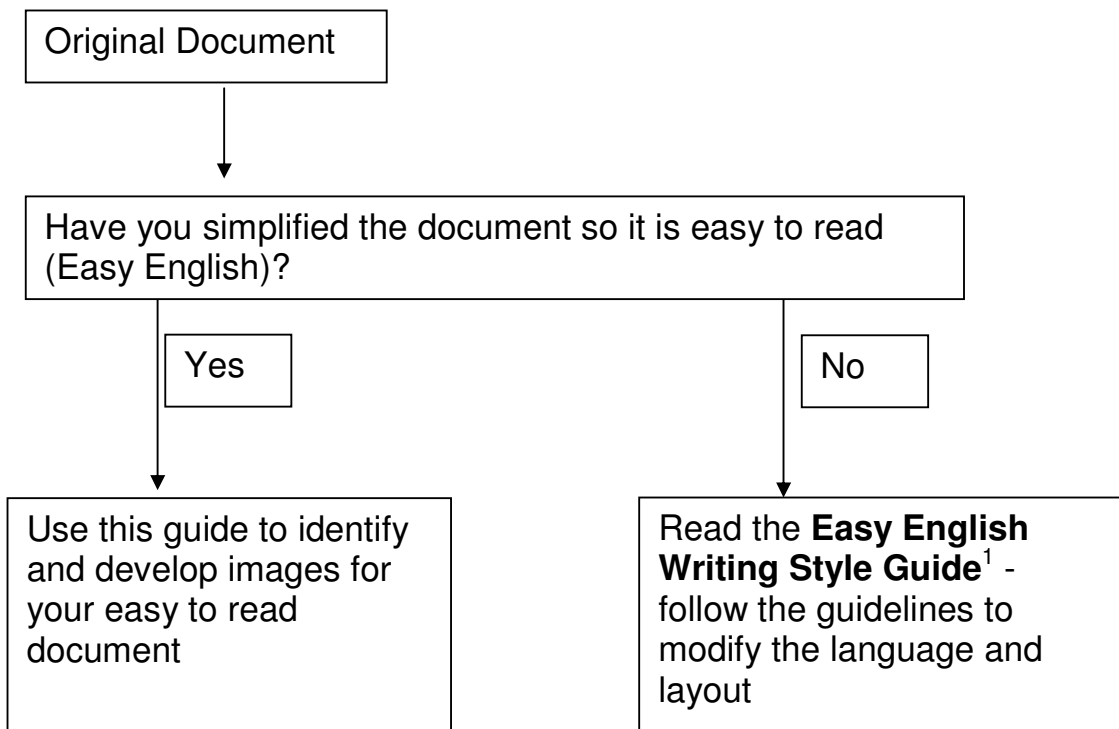
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# Chapter 1

## Using Images for Easy English

It takes time to develop good written information supported by images or symbols. First, you need to translate written information into Easy English. Then, choose the best images or symbols.



<sup>1</sup> Easy English Writing Style Guide – [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)

Symbols or illustrations should:

- be meaningful to the reader
- make your key messages easier to understand
- emphasise the key points in the document
- help the reader to remember information
- have space around them

All commercial resources mentioned are listed in the resources section at the end of the guide.

## Chapter 2

### Symbols

#### What is a Symbol?

Symbols are simple line drawings or pictographs that can be used to support written information. A symbol is ‘something that stands for or represents something else.’ A graphic symbol can be a picture or illustration, a logo, photograph, pictograph or printed word. We will be discussing the use of pictures and illustrations, logos, photographs and pictographs in this guide.

There are a number of factors to consider when using symbols:

- how similar the symbols looks to the real object or activity
- whether the symbol can be confused with something else
- how clear is the symbol. The background of the symbol should not distract from the symbol
- how the thickness of the lines affects the clarity of the symbol
- how acceptable the symbol is to the target audience. For example,
  - culturally appropriate
  - within the life experience of the target audience, and
  - age appropriate

Some symbols can be recognised and understood immediately. Other symbols need to be learnt. This could be because the person looking at the symbol has no experience of the object or concept that is being represented.

Or, if the symbol is representing a complex concept, it can be difficult to understand. The person may need to learn this symbol. However, you should also review the language and concepts used. Could the concept and language be made simpler?

## Why use symbols?

Everyone has different skills and abilities. We all should have access to information in a way that is meaningful to us. For some people that means adding symbols to written information.



You can go to a Neighbourhood House. You can meet new people. You can try new activities.

Symbols tell people what the written information in the document is about.

### Symbols

- should add meaning to a document
- can help people to remember information
- make a document more interesting and attractive to the reader.

Symbols are only useful for people who recognise and understand symbols.

Easy English documents with symbols should be provided to individuals with support. Someone should read through the information with the person. The person may need help to understand how the information relates to them.

## Which Symbol?

There are many different types of symbols available. We will be discussing photographs, logos and signage, illustrations and line drawings and pictographs.

### Photographs



Some people will benefit by having photographs included that relate to the important parts of the document. You will need a digital camera and computer software to support this.

You can also find photographs and images on the internet. Look for the 'image search' function on your search engine. You should acknowledge all sources of photographs used in your document. Always be aware of copyright issues.

Photographs are useful to depict a

- Specific person. For example, work manager
- Specific event. For example, a sporting event
- Specific venue. For example, where a meeting will be held.

Make sure you get permission to use someone's photo of themselves or their place.

Good, clear photographs can be quickly recognised and interpreted. Clear photographs make any article more interesting

to read. Many coloured photographs will lose their clarity when photocopied or printed in black and white. Either photocopy or print in colour or choose a photograph that will be suitable for black and white copying.

There are also some commercial software photo sets available, for example Photosymbols™ or Hemera\* Photo Objects.

## Logos



Company logos, particularly ones that are well known to your target audience, can assist understanding. Be aware of copyright issues. You should also check with the owner of the logo to see if the owner has rules for use of their logo with regard to colour, size, etc.

## Signage



Try to use familiar signs from within the community, rather than introduce new symbols. Community symbols are often familiar to the target audience, for example, toilet, train station, café.

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\* Trademark of Hemera Technologies Inc

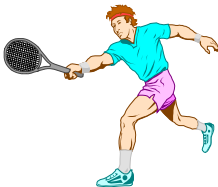
## Illustrations and Line Drawings



Sometimes hand drawn images, illustrations or computer generated images are useful. It is important to make sure illustrations are age-appropriate and do not offend your target audience. The illustration needs to help make the message clear, rather than being a 'clever' or 'pretty' illustration. If you cannot locate an appropriate image from commercially available sets, asking an illustrator to create specific images may be useful.



Some commercial software programs available include The CHANGE Picture Bank©, Valuing People ClipArt\* and Bonnington Symbols.



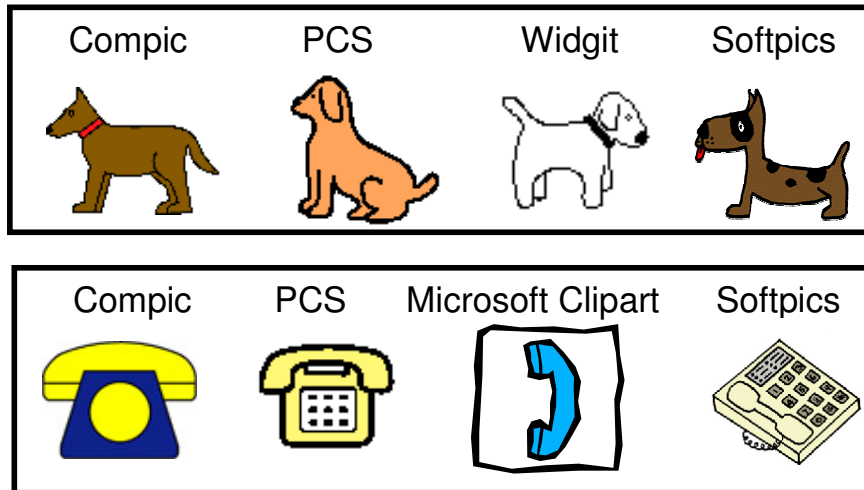
MicroSoft ClipArt has a number of different illustrations, some of which may also be appropriate.

---

\* Inspired Services Publishing Ltd ©

## Pictographs

Pictographs are commercially available sets of line drawings. Many of the commercially available sets do have similar concepts represented. In Victoria, Australia, the more commonly used pictograph sets are Picture Communication System (PCS™), COMPIC© and Softpics™.



You can use symbols from a variety of sources in the one document.

See the resources section at the end of this guide for details of where you can purchase the various software packages of pictographs, illustrations and photograph sets.

### A note about copyright

Many different images or symbols have restrictions due to copyright. Check you are not breaching the copyright on the particular image or symbol you use.

## Chapter 3

### Interpreting Symbols

Most people have a broad understanding of symbols based on their life experiences and knowledge of the world. This is often different for people with limited life experiences or different cultural backgrounds. A person's understanding and interpretation of symbols will also be different if they have a learning disability or an intellectual disability. This may be due to difficulty understanding information, and in particular, abstract information.

When selecting symbols, you should choose the clearest, least confusing symbol possible. More complex symbols may not be immediately recognisable and may need to be learnt by the target audience.

## Use Concrete Images

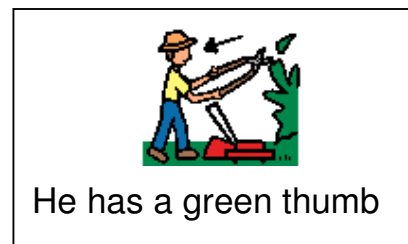
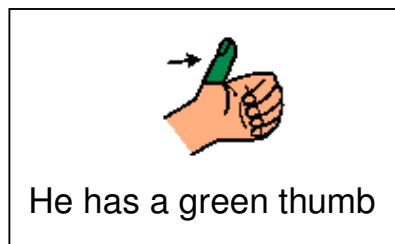
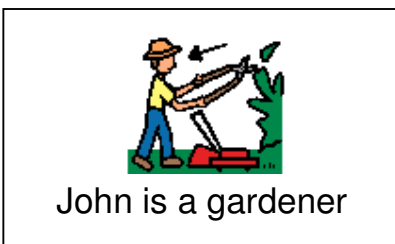
A number of symbols rely on reading or knowledge of number concepts to be understood.

For example:



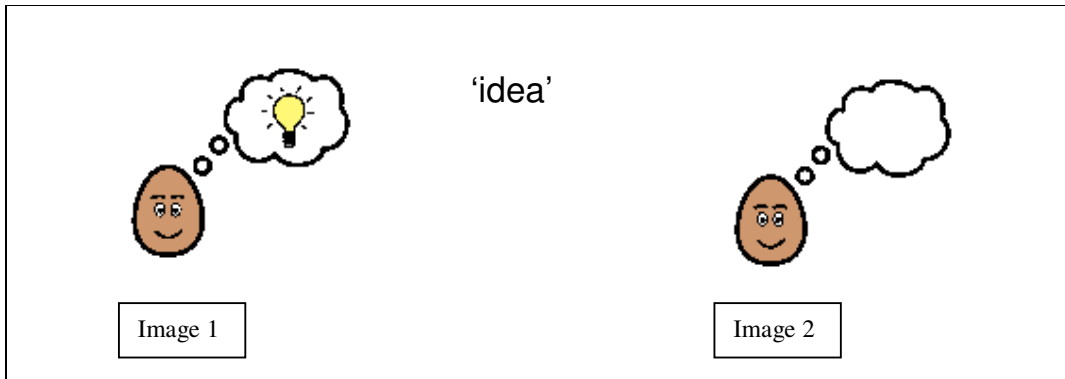
**Metaphors**, which are figures of speech, for example, 'he has a green thumb' require a high degree of language skills to interpret correctly. Make sure your language and the symbols used mean the same to you as to your audience.

Example 1:



Example 2:

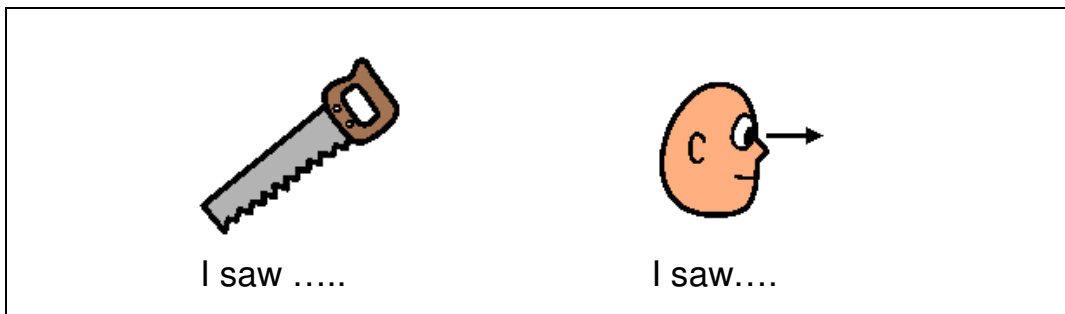
The concept of 'I have an idea!!' Some people would interpret image 1 (below) as 'turn on the light bulb.' Image 2 (below) could be interpreted as 'cloud and not a thought bubble.' The 'cloud' assumes the reader understands the image represents 'idea'.



### Symbols match the meaning

Make sure the symbols make sense pictorially.

For example:





## Consistency

For Easy English, symbols are not needed to match every word or even to be used every time a particular word is used. Symbols should be used sparingly to give an idea of the content of particular sections of text.

Use existing symbols if possible. A 'Dictionary of Symbols' may be a good way to list all the symbols you have used or created.

Remember:

- **Position** – the placement of symbols should be consistent throughout the document. For example, if you place the symbols above the paragraph of information at the start of the document, continue to do so until the end.  
Some people prefer the symbols above the words; others prefer them beside the words. Check with your target audience.
- **Symbol used** – once a symbol is used for a concept, use the same symbol throughout that document. Do **not** use the same symbol for different concepts or ideas in the one document.
- **Size** – choose a symbol size to fit your document. The smaller the size of the symbol, the less clear it is to interpret. Use the same size symbols throughout the document.  
The symbols should have thick black lines so they are clear.
- **Space** – allow extra space between lines when there are symbols. DO NOT crowd the symbols onto the page.

**Content** - Use symbols to represent an object rather than a person carrying out the activity.



Symbols should show what is actually happening. For example, if the document is talking about sport, and what sports to play, the symbol should include the available sports.

When symbols of people are used they should show the whole person, where possible. Parts of people are not always easily recognised. If you are referring to a specific person, it is usually more meaningful to use their photograph, than a symbol of 'man' or 'woman.'

It is suggested you

- Use symbols or photos on the title page to represent what the document is about.
- Use coloured symbols (if needed). If you are photocopying to black and white, choose a black and white symbol.
- Present writing and symbols from left to right.
- Place the symbol on the left side of the page. This may support the person to 'read' the symbol and then read the text or have the text read to them. It will increase the value of the symbol for the person.
- Use a plain, solid background. DO NOT use watermark graphics behind the text.
- Keep the writing and symbols separate. Do not overlap the writing with the symbols

## Chapter 4

### How to Use Symbols for Easy English Documents

#### How to Use Logos

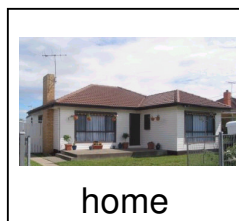
- Use appropriate logos, if needed. For example,



- To identify your company, put the logo in the same place on all documents.

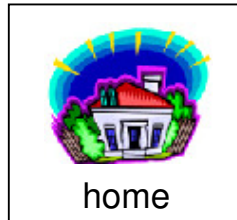
#### How to Use Photos

- Use clear photos
- Remove background and foreground clutter
- Make the item/s in the photo the main part of the photo
- Use a clear background screen when taking photos of objects
- Reduce glare and reflection from surfaces
- Keep your photographs up-to-date.



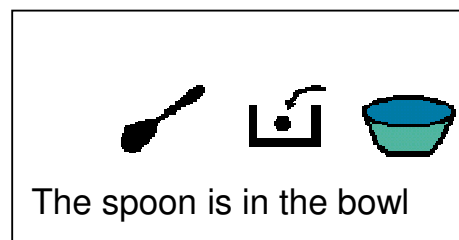
## How to Use Pictographs and Pictures

- Think about which pictograph set/s you use. Use clear line drawings or pictographs. For example,



- Use pictographs for key points only
- DO NOT use a pictograph for every word in the document
- Use the same pictograph for the same concept in the one document
- Use a pictograph that visually looks like the idea being described for your target audience

For example,



## Do you know your audience?

If you know who you are developing the resource for, encourage the person to be involved in selecting the symbols needed to support the resource.

If your resource is for a wider audience, you should consider the life experience, culture and age of your target audience.

Choose symbols that best represent a concept

Pilot the resource with the potential audience.

### Quick Test

- Cover your writing
- Try to 'read' the document using the symbols
- Do the symbol/s visually make sense without the writing?
- Do the symbol/s represent the idea or concept being discussed?
- Will the person reading the document be able to relate to the symbol/s from their life experiences or cultural background?

## Chapter 5

### Other Considerations

#### Use of Colour

- Use high contrast colours. Usually use dark colours for the writing such as

Yellow and blue

Or

Black and white

**Make white writing big and bold. Use a dark background.**

- Highlight headings with colour
- DO NOT overuse bright colours
- DO NOT use lots of different colours in the one document.

## Chapter 6

### Resources

These resources are mentioned in this guide.

- Bonnington Symbols. [www.modemoperandi.co.uk/symbols](http://www.modemoperandi.co.uk/symbols)
- Compic© 1998 [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)
- Hemera Photo Objects. Trademark of Hemera Technologies Inc. [www.silverliningmm.com](http://www.silverliningmm.com)
- MicroSoft ClipArt <http://office.microsoft.com/en-au/clipart/default.aspx>
- Picture Communication System (PCS™),  
Mayer-Johnson LLC [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)  
P.O. Box 1579, Solana Beach, CA 92075  
Phone: 858-550-0084
- Photosymbols © [www.photosymbols.com](http://www.photosymbols.com)
- Softpics™. [bloom@tig.com.au](mailto:bloom@tig.com.au)
- The CHANGE Picture Bank©.1999.  
[www.changepeople.com.uk](http://www.changepeople.com.uk)
- Valuing People ClipArt. Inspired Services Publishing Ltd.  
[www.inspiredservices.org.uk](http://www.inspiredservices.org.uk)

There are numerous other pictorial and symbol resources available. Websites have many images available. You do need to check if they are free to use or whether you need to purchase the image to use, particularly if you are selling your resource or putting your resource in the public domain.

## **References used to help write this document.**

Am I making myself clear? Mencap's guidelines for accessible writing. 2002. [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

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Information for All – Using Pictures. (2004) Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol & RNIB Multiple Disability Services. [www.easyinfo.org.au](http://www.easyinfo.org.au)

Information for All – Using Symbols. (2004) Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol & RNIB Multiple Disability Services. [www.easyinfo.org.au](http://www.easyinfo.org.au)

Recommendations for the future development of symbols(as agreed by the Symbols Working Group, November 1998) Sharing Care, Oxford Chambers, Oxford Place, Leeds LS1 3AX

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