

# About Plain Language

## What is Plain Language?

Plain language is a way of writing. We use shorter sentences and simpler words. Plain language makes things easier to read. We organize things carefully and we use headings.

Plain language helps some disabled people who have a hard time reading. But plain language writing helps lots of other people too.

Plain language is an important part of accessibility. It often gets left out when people talk about disability access. But access is not just about having a ramp into the building. It is not just about sign language interpreters. Plain language makes it easier for more people to have access to written ideas and information.

## Who Writes in Plain Language?

Self-advocates have been using plain language for a long time. They are writing plain language pieces about disability rights. Their work helps other people learn how to be advocates. There is also a federal law that says government information has to use plain language.

But few disability books today are written in plain language. The idea of writing in plain language is still new to many people, including many disabled people.

## **Why Did We Write These Pieces?**

We wrote these pieces because of our own commitment to access. We have been writing about disability and disability health in plain language for many years. We have also spent years reading work by self-advocates. In 2020, Alice Wong and Sara Luterman created a plain language version of Alice Wong's book, *Disability Visibility*.

The plain language version of Alice Wong's book excited us to work on a plain language project from a new book, *Loving Our Own Bones*, by Julia Watts Belser. We cannot translate the whole book into plain language. So we are creating plain language versions about a few important topics from the book. We think these are a good start. And we plan to write more plain language pieces based on the book.

## **Thank You**

We would like to say thank you to Alice Wong, Cal Montgomery, Reid Caplan, and Sara Luterman, who helped shape our ideas about how to write these plain language pieces.

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## **About the Authors**

**Julia Watts Belser** (she/her) is a scholar, rabbi, and activist. She is a professor of Jewish Studies at Georgetown University. She helps lead Georgetown's Disability Studies Program. She has been an activist for disability and gender justice for a long time. One of her books is called the *Health Handbook for Women with Disabilities*. It is written in plain language. Julia loves wheelchair hiking, gardening, and spending time in nature. You can learn more about Julia at [www.juliawattsbelser.com](http://www.juliawattsbelser.com).

**Devorah Greenstein** (she/her) is a retired academic, developmental psychologist, and Unitarian Universalist minister. Her disability-related work and activism span many decades. She has been writing plain language resources for people with disabilities and their families for more than 30 years.