Policy and Procedure Language and Tone Tips

Review these tips before you begin to write. Then, when you have finished your document, compare your work to the checklist.

- Write to the reading level of the document users. If necessary, use only numbers, graphics, and photographs.
- Use short sentences with familiar English words and with one thought or concept per sentence.
- Use must or will if something is mandatory. Avoid ambiguous words such as may or shall.
- Use plain words that are commonly understood rather than jargon. If you must use specialist terms, explain them in the text and in your glossary section.
- Use terms consistently throughout your documents.
- Write the full name for acronyms when you first use them.
- Remove extra words. For example, use to instead of in order to.
- Use positive and inclusive language. Their, not he or she (gender-neutral), worker not workman (gender-inclusive).
- Use active voice rather than passive voice. For example, you must wash the dishes. (Active). The dishes must be washed. (Passive)
- Use present tense. When you finish your shift, you lock the cabinets.
- Use headings that clearly identify the content of each section.
- Use evergreen contact and referral information as much as possible. info@contoso.com rather than the phone and email address of a specific individual.