

Checklist for written communication

Use when creating new or improved letters, emails, forms, brochures or web pages.

Easy to skim

If someone spends ten seconds (or less!) scanning your communication, will they get the key points? Aim for a clear headline and bolded subheads above short paragraphs. Where possible, break text into short bulleted lists or numbered steps. Break up long sentences and paragraphs into shorter ones.

Obvious call to action

Put the action as close to the top as possible. It should be one of the first things people see.

Clear and simple language

Avoid jargon and complex language. Use plain language and break down steps.

Your audience comes first

Don't start sentences with information about your organization or effort. Lead with your audience: why they should pay attention, what they should do, how it will benefit them. Start with "you" vs. "we."

Warnings and benefits emphasized

If there's a deadline, consider using **bold text** to highlight key dates and words. (Remember, red by itself is not accessible.)

A **bold** font can also draw attention to benefits ("save money" or "raise funds for this non-profit").

Icons and images replace or highlight text

Icons and images can make a document easier to skim, since we process images more quickly than text.

Do: Use icons that provide easy visual cues to the reader of what they can expect from that part of the communication:



Action required



Sign up



More info



Recycle



Compost



Trash

Don't: Add random visuals that distract from the message.

Fine print is at the end

Move details, legal or bureaucratic language to the bottom of the communication where it can still be read, but only after you've caught the reader's attention with a clear, simple call to action at the start.

Before & after examples (*Based on real communications)

June 4, 2017
SUBJECT: Notice of Violation

The City Code, Title 19, Section 3.004 requires all properties to be maintained in a safe, sound, and sanitary condition.

We recently received a report and verified that your property is in violation of the City's Property Maintenance Code, Title 19. Title 19 establishes and enforces minimum standards of maintenance for outdoor areas and adjacent rights of way. Attached to this letter is a list of the cited nuisance conditions.

If the nuisance conditions are not corrected, the following enforcement actions will take place: You have fifteen days from the date of this notice to correct all the cited nuisance conditions. A city inspector will re-inspect this property on or after that date. After the re-inspection of the cited nuisance conditions, remaining violations will be referred for a Work Order Inspection. If this inspection verifies that the cited violations are not corrected a two-hundred-dollar Work Order Inspection Fee will be charged.

For complete details on fees and appeals, please refer to the enclosed information sheet. If you have any questions concerning this case, or if you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to comply with this notice and need to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact our office.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. Please call our office if you have any questions,

-----OR-----

NOTICE OF VIOLATION

Failure to respond will result in a **\$200 fine**

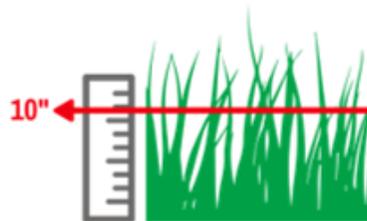
June 4, 2017

Your property's lawn has been determined to be above the maximum allowed height of 10 inches. You are currently in violation of the City's Property Maintenance Code (Title 19).



Action required by June 30

1. Cut all weeds and grass to a height of 10" or less.
2. Call 503-333-1010 for a follow-up inspection.



Penalty warning: If you do not bring your property into compliance by June 30, 2017 you may be **finned up to \$200** for each month you remain out of compliance.



Get support

If you have questions, or would like assistance, please contact us:
Monday-Friday between 9am – 5pm at 503-333-1010 or citycode@city.gov.



More information

Find complete details on the Title 19 code, fees and appeals at:
www.city.gov/code/propertymaintenance.
Lawn height guidelines are on page 10, section 3.004.

Thank you for helping keep your neighborhood clean and safe.