



Jess. My story



I did a course at TAFE.

It was a Certificate 3. It was about animals.



Some of it was easy. Like I worked with animals.



Some of it was hard. Like when I had to read.



I have just won an award. It was for all of Victoria.

It was for being a really great TAFE student.

My teachers said

- I did **not** give up
- I always tried my very best.

It is called the Young Achievers Award.

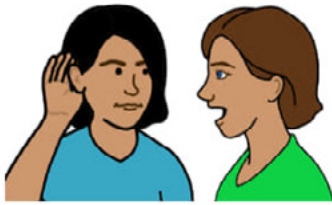
I was very excited to win.



There was a big dinner in Melbourne.

My family came too.

I bought a new dress. I had my hair done.



I do work with Cass. We read Easy English.

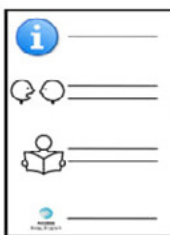
I can tell Cass when I do **not** understand.



I tell her what

- is good
- needs to change.

It helps her make Easy English better.

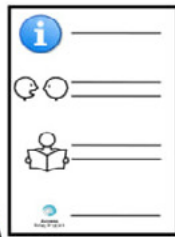


I can read all the words.

I know what the pictures mean.

I like Easy English a lot.

I know what I am reading about.

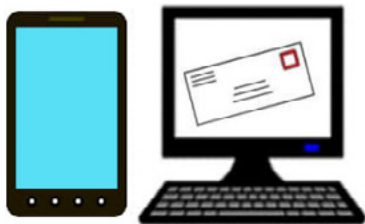


I wish my course was in Easy English.

It helps me to understand.



Jess.



You want to know more about Easy English.

Call Cathy 0466 579 855

Email

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Images from TheNounProject, Tobii-Dynavox and Picto-Selector.

Photos from Jess Stone and 7News Young Achiever Awards Facebook.

Access Easy English wrote this article. May 2022.

EASY ENGLISH: CONSUMERS TELL US WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW

By Cassandra Wright-Dole and Cathy Basterfield,
Access Easy English

Access Easy English focuses on developing written information accessible for people who have low literacy. Low literacy can be due to many reasons such as socio-economic disadvantage and poor access to education. It may also be associated with learning or intellectual disabilities. There are many other reasons why people may need Easy English, including English as a second language, mental health, deafness and acquired brain injuries such as following a stroke.

The issue of low literacy is widespread and the need for accessible written information is not limited to a single demographic. Australian Bureau of Statistics show that 44% of Australians, aged between 15 and 65 years old, do not have the literacy skills to read a range of day-to-day reading tasks. This equated to 7.3 million adult Australians at the time of the research (ABS Data 2013 #4228/ OECD PIAAC Data 2013, 2016). This does not include regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, nor people who live in institutions.

In developing Easy English, the views of the intended audience are critical. They provide insights from their lived experience on the choice of words, the sentences, the images, and the format. It is the combination of how these factors work together that appear to assist in how the reader understands the written information. The feedback we have had from people with low literacy is that Easy English is beneficial to them. They would also be more inclined to read more Easy English if it was more widely available.

One of these consumers is Jess. Jess commented after first doing a consumer review that she wished more things were in Easy English, including the TAFE course she has recently completed. Jess has welcomed other opportunities since that first experience in reviewing Easy English. We equally value her lived experience input in the projects we develop.

Some of Jess's feedback includes

- identifying words that are still too long or not known
- when information needs to be in a different order
- images that are not guessable
- images that are too complex or need more information
- steps to help her access any weblinks.

As with many readers who prefer Easy English, Jess has commented that each page does not have lots of words.

In her mid-20s, Jess is autistic with a learning disability and difficulties with her speech. Despite this, Jess completed a Certificate III in Animal Studies last year. Jess held strong when people told her she would not succeed in gaining her certificate. Jess's affinity with animals meant the practical aspect of her studies were a breeze; however, her disabilities made the written component of the course more challenging. Jess completed her course over three years instead of one.

Her experience with studying was that many people felt it was not an achievable goal for her. However, with some extra time, Jess was able to complete all requirements. In an article written by the local paper, she said, "People think I may not be able to do things which I know I can, it just takes me a little while longer to do." (Bendigo Advertiser 3/12/21)

The resilience displayed by Jess was not unseen. In 2021, Jess was nominated as a young achiever for the Kangan Institute Inspirational TAFE Student Award and announced a semi-finalist for the 7NEWS Young Achiever Awards Australia in March 2022. The 7NEWS Young Achiever Awards seeks to acknowledge, encourage, and promote the achievements of young people up to 29 years old. Winners were announced at an awards gala in April.

For Jess, participation in the gala was perhaps more significant than whether she won. The participation itself was recognition of her achievements, for herself and those around her. Like us all though, in the lead up to the gala, Jess booked in to have her hair done, booked accommodation in the city, and purchased a beautiful gown. Jess went on to win her category. A week later, she was still on Cloud 9. And like many others who get opportunities to be recognised for their achievements, she now has wonderful memories of the event, her own feelings of achievement, how proud her family are of her, the award itself, planning for and buying her new gown, and the photos for years to come.

The Access Easy English team congratulate Jess on all her achievements, both in her studies and in her award.

We encourage anyone who is interested in supporting the development of quality Easy English to make contact with us. We are always interested in meeting and working with other people who would like to provide feedback on the Easy English we develop. Your input ensures we are creating Easy English that works for you.

Cassandra Wright-Dole and Cathy Basterfield

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Access
Easy English

ARE WE ON THE SAME PAGE WHEN IT COMES TO SUPPORTING OUR CLIENTS WITH AAC?

**By Clare Gregory One and Tracey Hanigan,
Speech and language pathologists, Department of
Education, Tasmania**

As speech and language pathologists (SLPs), we belong to a profession that prides itself on excellent communication skills and the ability to work as a team. We know that we can get the best outcomes for our clients when we work collaboratively with other professionals. There is a wide body of research available that supports this inter-professional teamwork (Wilkinson & Young, 2015; Copley & Ziviani, 2007). As far as working with other SLPs (intra-professional collaboration), this happens more commonly when we work as part of a SLP team (or through mentorship) where we can provide or receive collegial support when we find ourselves managing complex cases. Times are changing though, and with the NDIS now an established part of the picture, we find ourselves working more and more with other SLPs as primary therapists for shared clients. This means that there are two therapists contributing to our shared client's augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) system prescription and therapy plan.

In March 2021, 6617 students in Department of Education schools in Tasmania were identified as

having a disability as part of the National Consistent Collection of Data (Department of Education, Tasmania 2021). Many of these students with diverse communication needs were supported through the use of an AAC system. These students who use AAC systems may have access to a NDIS funded SLP, as well as the one provided through the Education Department, to support their communication development. On paper, this looks like a great model for children and their families. Their Education Department SLP can provide consultative support in the school setting, including working with teachers to develop learning plan goals and training school staff to support their student to use AAC in the classroom setting, while their NDIS therapist offers individualised therapy sessions focusing on family specific goals. They often work more closely with the child's family on targeted vocabulary expansion and developing operational skills, specific to the home environment. This model supports generalisation of communication skills throughout the whole day – at home, in the community, and at school.