

Agricultural Economics Society Annual Conference, 04–06  
April 2022, K. U. Leuven

## Workshop 2

# Plain English and beyond: writing skills for agricultural economists

### Time of Workshop

09:00-10:15, 06 April 2022

### Location

AUG.00.0015

### Motivation and objectives

Much academic writing is mediocre or worse – trust me, as editor of *Development Policy Review*, I review dozens of submitted articles every year. Few of them are a pleasure to read.

Being able to write competently is not a grace note to research, it's part of research. Most articles that are badly written are badly thought out as well. The skills of writing facilitate clear and productive research.

This workshop aims to:

- Explain (briefly) why writing matters and why it's not as easy as one might think
- Show how most writers can benefit from the principles of Plain English
- Outline the more advanced skills that lie beyond Plain English
- Run practical examples to demonstrate how to write better.

### Format

A 75 minute workshop led by Steve Wiggins, with two short presentations lasting 15 minutes or less, leaving plenty of time for discussion and practical examples.

### Who is this for?

For any agricultural economist who wants to improve or brush up on their writing skills

### Presenter

Steve Wiggins is an agricultural economist who has engaged as planner, teacher and researcher with agricultural and rural development in the global south since 1972.

He runs writing course for colleagues at ODI.

He is lead editor of **Development Policy Review**.

### Reading

If you'd like to know where the inspiration for this comes from, apart from practical experience, then here are some influences:

### Plain English

Gowers E, 2014, *The complete plain words*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, Middlesex. [Latest editions revised by Sir Ernest's granddaughter.]

Strunk, W. & E. B. White, 1979, **The elements of style**, Third Edition, Boston: Allyn & Bacon

Plain English <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

DevSpeak: <https://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/which-awful-devspeak-words-should-we-ban-your-chance-to-vote/>

### More advanced writing skills

Harriss, Robert A., 2018, **Writing with clarity and style**, Second Edition, Abingdon: Routledge

McPhee, John, 2017, **Draft No. 4. On the writing process**, Melbourne: Text Publishing Company

Moran, Joe, 2018, **First You Write a Sentence**, Penguin

Sword, Helen, 2012, **Stylish Academic Writing**, Harvard University Press

Zinsser, William. 2006, **On Writing Well**, 30th Anniversary Edition (p. v). Harper Perennial.