Communicating Effectively with Parents

Be aware of parents' information needs

Are the parents struggling to support their children's learning at home?

Are they comfortable reading emails and using e-learning platforms?

Have they access to technology and broadband?

Have they unmet literacy and numeracy needs?

1 Use plain English and clear design
Language tips

Do ✔	Don't ✗
Keep sentences short (15 to 20 words) and simple.	Have too many points in a sentence. It can help to read it out loud to see if you can break it up.
Use common words. **Some people may struggle with certain words and meanings.**	Use jargon unless you have to. If you use a word that may not be familiar to people, remember to give an explanation of what it means.
Use the active voice. **- We will send you the worksheets.**	Use the passive voice. - The worksheets will be sent to you.

Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

LEARNOVATE

IRISH RESEARCH COUNCIL
An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

Before plain English	After in plain English
The enrollment process will be starting shortly for next September and this will help us to plan for staff allocation. If you think or know that your child, will not be attending next year, please let us know as soon as possible, as this can have a big impact on our planning for the coming year.	In the next two weeks, we will be enrolling new students for next September. This means we can begin to plan and look at the number of teachers we need. If your child will not be attending next September, please let us know as soon as possible.

Use plain English and clear design
Font tips

2

Do ✔	Don't ✗
Use bold and highlight to emphasise important points.	Use underline or *italic* as they are harder to read. Use all capital letters (also called upper case) to make points stand out. AS YOU CAN SEE FROM THIS EXAMPLE, THEY CAN BE DIFFICULT TO READ AND MAKE IT SEEM THAT YOU ARE SHOUTING AT YOUR READER!
Use at least font size 12 point and sans serif (such as Arial or Verdana).	Use font smaller than 12. Use serif font such as Times New Roman.

3 Use plain English and clear design
Layout tips

Do ✔	Don't ✗
Use 1.5 spacing if possible.	Use 1 spacing if possible, as it helps with reading the text.
Use headings and bullets to break up text.	Have pages of text with no signposts.

	Item	Update	What you can do to help your child
1	Home learning (week 12)	Each morning, we will send you 3 activities for that day. We will send it by email or text.	Please do what you can with your child. There is no pressure to finish all the work. Please ring your teacher or <Mary> the Home school coordinator if you have any questions or would like some support.
2	Book payment	The book payment of €50 for next September is due now.	We will send you the link in the coming days. If you have any difficulties with this, contact Peter on XXX.
3	Parent Teacher Association (PTA) event	The Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is organising a talk on internet safety on Tuesday at 7.	To book your place, email Jane at info@school.ie

Focus on key messages

4

- Limit messages to 3 at one time (where possible).
- Be clear what you want parents to do – and tell them why.
- Identify between 'need to know' or 'nice to know' information.
- Give links to further information and other resources to help parents understand messages.

5

Invite questions

- Always invite questions from parents.
- Give a name and contact email or phone number.
- Prepare a Frequently Asked Questions sheet.

Follow up

6

If necessary and appropriate, you can email or ring parents to link in with them about information sent out.

For more information

Contact Helen Ryan in the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
Email hryan@nala.ie | Phone 01 412 7919

You will find more plain English tips here in NALA's Writing and Design tips booklet.
https://www.nala.ie/publications/writing-and-design-tips/