ClearMark Awards
Q&A Webinar

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www.centerforplainlanguage.org
Dec. 2, 2016

What we'll cover today

- About the ClearMark awards

- Award categories

- Judging criteria

- How to enter

About the ClearMark Awards

What are ClearMark Awards?

ClearMarks are peer-reviewed awards that honor the best plain language communication produced in North America by government, private sector and non-profit organizations.

The awards networking banquet will be May 9, 2017 in Washington, D.C.

Four reasons to enter

1. Earn recognition for great content

2. Get written feedback from professionals

3. Attend the banquet

4. Support the Center for Plain Language

How to enter

Information and entry form:

www.centerforplainlanguage.org/clearmarks/

Note: This page includes a fillable PDF that you can use to plan and get preapproval for your entry, if your organization requires it. You will need to copy and paste the information from the pre-approval form to the entry form.

Entries accepted: Jan. 1-31, 2017

Award Levels

Grand Award

Category Winner

Award of Distinction

Award Categories

Two languages

- English
- Spanish

Five communication types

- Original documents
- Before and after
- Websites
- Multimedia
- Legal documents

Two document lengths

- Short – up to five pages
- Long – more than five pages

What are the categories for English and Spanish?

Original	Long
Original	Short
Legal	Long
Legal	Short
Websites	Long
Websites	Short
Multimedia	Long
Multimedia	Short
Before and After	Long
Before and After	Short

Video

- We don't accept standalone videos.

- We do consider videos as part of a multimedia project or website.

- For the best results:
  - Please include a transcript for any video you want us to review as part of your entry.

Who should enter?

Plain language communicators who
- Wrote or substantially improved a communication for consumers
- Published between 2014 to 2016
- Published in North America

You should attend the ceremony to receive your award.

Don't enter if:
- You entered the same or a similar document last year. (You can re-enter substantially changed documents.)
- You've won your category within two years.

What if …

… I'm a contractor who created a document on behalf of a client or government agency?

… I work for an American organization creating documents for people outside the U.S.?

… I work for a global organization creating documents for people in the U.S.?

How much does it cost?

Entry fees per entry, payable by credit card:

Non-members	$200
Government agencies	$165
Members	$125

Entry fees defray the cost of the ceremony and, when possible, support other Center initiatives.
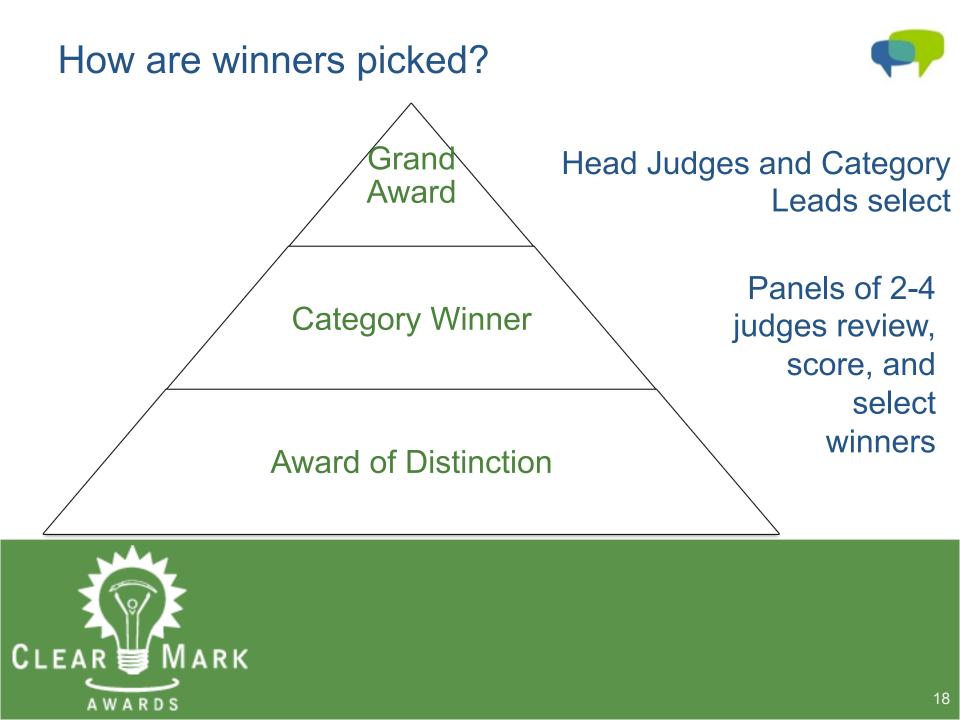
A shameless plug for membership

For $200, you can

- Submit 1 entry at the non-member rate of $200

or

- Become a member ($50) and enjoy a year of benefits
- Submit your entry ($125)
- Save even more by submitting additional entries

How are winners picked?

Grand Award

Category Winner

Award of Distinction

Head Judges and Category Leads select

Panels of 2-4 judges review, score, and select winners

CLEAR MARK

AWARDS

Another plug: What judges do …

1. Attend several orientation calls
2. Review 6 to 15 entries in a single, specialty category
3. Score and rank entries based on judging criteria
4. Collaborate with other judges to select Awards of Distinction and category winners
5. Provide brief written feedback on each entry

The total commitment is from 10 to 30 hours.

If you're interested in becoming a judge, email us at awards@centerforplainlanguage.org.

Judging Criteria

Based on international Plain Language definition

The scoring scale and its distribution

1 **Needs Work** – Something the misses the mark.

2 **Improving** – Uses some, but misses most of the principles of plain language.

3 **Average** – A competent example of plain language.

4 **Above Average** – Not much room to improve.

5 **Excellent** – A thought provoking and inspiring example of plain language. Masters all of the principles.

Scoring criterion: Understanding audience needs

- Is it clear what the audiences should learn or do using this entry?

- Are the writing, tone and presentation appropriate for the audience?

- Did you get the sense that the writers genuinely want the audiences who use this product to succeed?

Scoring criterion: Style or voice

- Do the writers follow plain writing principles (for example, short sentences with active voice)?

- Does the product feel credible and sincere?

- Do the tone, choice of words and conversational style convey respect for the target audience?

- Do they avoid jargon?

Scoring criterion: Structure and content

- Are the sections of the product clearly organized and labeled?

- Do the labels help audiences predict what is in each section?

- Do the writers create effective transitions between sentences, paragraphs and sections?

- Is the content presented in an order that tells a story or helps audiences complete a task?

- Do they convey key content while effectively winnowing unnecessary details?

- Do the writers provide relevant information in a balanced way, without overselling or underselling their points?

Scoring criterion: Information design and navigation

- Do the typography, color and whitespace grab and guide the audiences' attention?

- Do the layout and presentation make the product easy to scan?

- Can you tell by glancing where the important information or action is?

- (For websites) Does the navigation offer a visible, guided path through the content?

Scoring criterion: Pictures, graphics and charts

- Do the pictures, graphics or charts map to and support the content?

- Will audiences understand the point of the chart or graph?

- Do the visuals help audiences understand important points better or guide them on how to take important steps?

Conversely:

- Are the images and graphics included merely as decoration? Or would the product be easier to understand if the writers had chosen more or different graphics?

Scoring criterion: Evaluation

- Were the evaluation methods appropriate considering who and how many will use the product and its importance to their well-being?

- Were the right evaluation methods (such as surveys, usability tests or focus groups) used at the right time? Was there an explanation of why they chose those evaluation methods?

- Was the evaluation done with representative audiences?

- Were the findings used to shape and improve the final version?

Scoring criterion: Overall

- Will the target audiences be able to find, understand and act confidently using what they learn in this entry?

- Will the product help the authoring organization achieve its business goals (for example, increased customer self-service, enhanced mission, better consumer decisions)?

- Would you use this product as an example of effective plain writing and information design?

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Entry form

- Nominator & contact information

- Owner or publishing organization and contact information

- Category

- Title

- Publication date

- What the entry is trying to communicate. (4000 characters)

- Who your target audience is. (1000 characters)

- What constraints you worked under. (2000 characters)

- How you evaluated the entry. (4000 characters)

- The impact or benefit of using plain language. (2000 characters)

- Upload or point to your document

- Commitment to participate in the award ceremony

Tools to help

Information and entry form:

www.centerforplainlanguage.org/clearmarks/

1. Scoring criteria
2. Entry worksheet
3. Sample entry
4. Previous winners
5. This webinar

Tips

- Proofread

- Tell your story – Everyone who enters writes in plain language. How is your entry different? Innovative? An example others will want to use?

- Brag a bit – If you can, quantify the impact your writing had for your customers and for your organization. If you can't quantify, describe it qualitatively under impact.

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Thank you!

If you have questions about the awards, please contact us:

awards@centerforplainlanguage.org

To learn more about the Center for Plain Language, go to

www.centerforplainlanguage.org

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