

Easy-to-read – according to Centrum för Lättläst **(The Swedish Centre for Easy-to-Read)**

Readers and needs:

Approximately 25 per cent of Swedish adults have reading problems. Their reading skills do not reach the level expected of a pupil graduating from the nine-year compulsory school.

They have difficulties in reading – and profiting by – news reports in their daily newspaper.

We may assume that many of these readers would benefit from reading easy-to-read texts. This is also true for young readers. Statistics show clearly that many school pupils have reading problems.

Reading problems may be caused by many things. A disability, for example, might impair the ability to read, interpret and understand texts and pictures.

Intellectual disabilities, dementia, dyslexia or aphasia may make reading, interpreting and comprehension of texts more difficult. People who are untrained readers, are poorly educated, have social problems, concentration problems or are newly arrived immigrants also often have a need for easy-to-read texts.

A task and a business idea:

Our task is this: to produce and distribute easy-to-read literature and news material to those who have reading problems and to those who are untrained readers. We fulfil this mission by producing an easy-to-read newspaper and easy-to-ready books.

Besides our task we have a business idea: to act as consultants on easy-to-read material to national and local authorities, organizations and private companies. We inform them of the need to publish easy-to-read texts and we sell our know-how to them.

We also arrange seminars, courses and workshops for those interested in learning how to write in easy-to-read Swedish.

Our goal for easy-to-read texts is the following:

We aim at writing texts that are **easy-to-read, easy-to-understand, easy-to-embrace and easy-to-remember.**

Basic facts:

- Centrum för Lättläst bases its production on methodical editorial work with the aim of publishing books, newspapers, pamphlets and information material in easy-to-read Swedish.

The expression easy-to-read language might be misleading – easy-to-read presentation might be a more accurate term – the products become easy-to-read through a number of deliberate choices as to content, language, illustrations and overall form/layout.

The best results are often achieved through collaboration between several editors. Texts and layout almost always improve when more than one editor is involved in the process.

- Professional experiences and knowledge from book publishing, journalism, layout, illustrations and pictures form the basis of our work methods. Centrum för Lättläst follows closely research and development in scientific language research and aims to adapt its language as new findings appear.

- The source of a text and who commissions a text always affect the result. Centrum för Lättläst's editors produce original texts but just as often work with and edit freelance material or adapt "difficult" texts written by writers and journalists for the non-easy-to-read market.

Some of the books published by LL-förlaget are easy-to-read adaptations of books – mainly classics – published by other publishing houses.

Our Easy-to-read adaption service helps organizations, state and local authorities or private companies to adapt their texts into easy-to-read Swedish. The demands and wishes of each customer will affect the result.

- What is easy-to-read and what is not easy-to-read? It differs from case to case. Different readers and target groups require different choices in language, typography, editing and illustrations.

The target groups' needs, schooling and social and political awareness will affect the result.

The easy-to-read presentation of one product might differ from that of another.

A book, a brochure, a newspaper article; all of them are different media products with different demands, requirements, readers and aims.

Some of our easy-to-read tools

The following is a list of some of the thoughts that go behind our easy-to-read editing methods:

Content:

- Readers have different needs. The text must be edited with an eye to the reader/target group. Reading problems may be caused by a variety of reasons, such as a disability, lack of motivation, lack of schooling etc. The reader might be an untrained reader, or might be new to the Swedish language.

A sports buff will understand almost every difficult sports term. Other readers will find even the simplest sports term impossible to understand. Texts must be prepared with that knowledge in mind.

- The story-telling, or dramaturgy, of a text must have some sort of logical flow. The text must have a logical, chronological or emotional thread which binds it together. It almost always helps the reader to feel that behind each text is a writer whose personal touch is easily discernable.

- The easy-to-read text contains numerous explanations. A large number of words, expressions and phenomena has to be explained to the reader. It is important that explanations are not ostentatiously pedagogical or condescending. Explanations should be as invisible as possible so as not to point out to the reader that he/she is ignorant.

- The length of a text is important. Long texts may be difficult to relate to, to follow, to remember and for the reader to find interest in. It is difficult to motivate an untrained reader to read a long text.

A short text, on the other hand, may not give the reader all salient facts and it may be too short for the reader to follow the writer's train of thought.

Language:

- Everyday expressions, concrete and tangible words are easier to understand than abstract ones.

- Active phrases are to be preferred to passive ones as they clearly states who does what, not what is done by whom.

- Referrals back to nouns or verbs and subordinate clauses may be difficult to understand if they are too numerous or complicated.
- Metaphorical language, imagery and figurative language may be misunderstood by some readers.

Illustrations:

- The same goes for illustrations and pictures as for language. Some readers cannot interpret imagery and metaphorical illustrations. They need simple and plain illustrations. Other readers may be able to understand and relate to more complicated symbols and abstract illustrations.

It is important to see to it that the text and the illustrations speak the same language and do not contradict each other.

- Text and illustrations work together on many planes. A picture may explain and make things more clear but it can also give associations and feelings that are not necessarily inherent in the text. A news report and an information brochure require different illustration strategies.

Layout:

- Layout and typography must be designed so as to facilitate the reading process. It is essential to regard the product in its entirety, to make sure that it blends together and forms a whole. Text, illustrations, typography, empty spaces - all must be made to interact to reach a successful easy-to-read result.
- Choosing fonts, sizes, space and alignment is important. The right choices will result in a text that the reader takes an interest in and wants to read.

These are some of the tools Centrum för Lättläst's editors work with in creating easy-to-read books, newspapers and information material.

**For more information about Centrum för Lättläst and its products visit our web-site:
www.lattlast.se**