

GOOD, BETTER, BEST RUBRIC

A how-to guide for writing in cultural institutions

This rubric provides writers in cultural institutions with a standardised framework for relevant, audience-engaged text. It functions as both an assessment tool for existing text and as a guide for planning new text.

It was developed by Jessica Connor and published in her article ‘Crafting Clear, Accessible and Impactful Communications in Cultural Institutions’, *Tate Papers* no.38: *Voice/s in the Museum*, 2026.



To read the full article and download a free poster of the rubric scan the QR code or visit tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/38.

Accessibility

The goal of this focus area is to make it as easy as possible for everyone to read the text. It involves determining who may have the most difficulty accessing the text and in what ways we can improve the access experience or remove access barriers altogether.

GOOD	Text size, spacing, kerning, font, colour and contrast are at levels deemed acceptable for the audience by accredited or trusted organisations and meets legal requirements for accessibility.
BETTER	Text is also formatted for use for screen readers, physical scanning or reading devices and text-to-speech devices.
BEST	Text is also available in at least three of the most common languages used by the audience.

Alignment

Is the text in direct alignment with the stated goals of the artist, audience or subject being written about? This focus area also supports standardisation of grammar, punctuation, capitalisation and spelling guidelines of the organisation.

GOOD	Text is within the grammar and word usage boundaries set by the organisation.
BETTER	Verbiage and style of the text is also consistent with related written materials.
BEST	Text is also in direct alignment with the explicit goals shared by the artist, audience, subject or the organisation.

Clarity

The goal of this focus area is to guide the production of clear, active, concise text that is easy for all members of the target audience to read and comprehend.

GOOD	Text is free of basic grammatical errors and uses proper punctuation, capitalisation, spacing and spelling. Abbreviated words are defined.
BETTER	Text is also free of idioms, colloquialisms and compound sentences.
BEST	Text also has no passive phrasing or superfluous adverbs, and has no sentences longer than fifteen words.

Context

The goal of this focus area is to bridge gaps between audience members’ current knowledge and potentially new knowledge shared through text.

GOOD	Text provides context using language and references generally or specifically related to the experiences of the audience.
BETTER	Text also implicitly or explicitly defines any words specific to the topic that are not commonly used.
BEST	Contextual information is also provided through the lens of the person or people at the centre of the story, text or content.

Perspective

Primary sources help us tell dynamic stories from personal experiences and accounts. The goal of this focus area is to produce content from a variety of first-hand perspectives to share compelling and multidimensional stories.

GOOD	Text was created using perspectives of the subject, artist or community to which it refers.
BETTER	Text also uses language coined or deemed acceptable by the subject, artist or community to which the text refers.
BEST	Text also directly includes the voice or perspective of the subject, artist or community to which the text refers.

Readability

This focus area supports the creation of text that is academically accessible to everyone in the intended audience.

GOOD	Text location and size makes it easy for the audience to locate and read; large print or resizeable versions are also available.
BETTER	Text also has no words longer than fifteen letters and no paragraphs longer than five sentences. Longer text is visually organised with indentations or paragraph breaks.
BEST	Text reading level also spans ages 12 to 15 and uses no words with more than four syllables.

Reference/Reverence

The goal of this focus area is to pay homage to the people or cultures from which the subject, idea or text was created (or evolved) from.

GOOD	Text is informed by the knowledge and primary sources of those directly impacted or responsible for the content.
BETTER	Text also explicitly acknowledges the authors or creators of the topic, content or text itself.
BEST	Text is also written or otherwise directly created by the authors or creators of the topic, content or text.

Trauma-Informed

When the text is potentially traumatising or re-traumatising to members of the audience, consideration must be made in how the text is written and what is included to support a healthy response to the trauma.

GOOD	Text refers to potentially traumatic content or subject objectively and in ways that are sensitive to those harmed and potentially re-traumatised by the content or subject.
BETTER	Text also includes warnings for potentially traumatising content in a location prior to accessing it.
BEST	Text also includes guidance for audience members that supports a healthy response or recovery from the potentially traumatising content.

Voice/Tone

The words we choose to communicate with colour readers’ perception of the subject. This focus area provides guidance on using language that conveys regard and respect for the audience or content.

GOOD	Text uses person-first language (when generally deemed acceptable by the people to which the text refers).
BETTER	The tone of the text also generally expresses respect for the subject, artist or audience to which it refers through intentional word choice and general sensitivity toward and awareness of power dynamics.
BEST	Text is also free of opinion-based or speculative language.