

Health literacy strategies for advocacy

NHC health literacy training 2 October 1, 2021

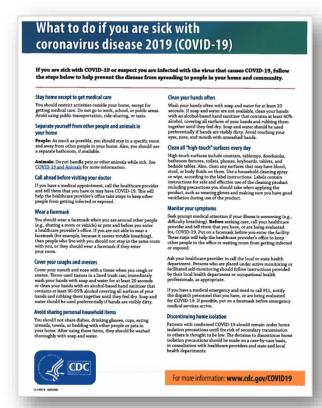
Why does health literacy matter for advocacy work?

Raising health literacy means raising self-efficacy. If people get the right information and understand it, they are more likely to get involved.

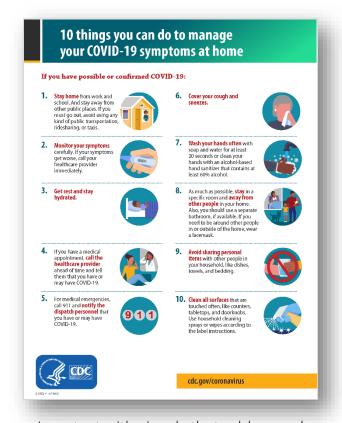
Tailor your message to your purpose and audience

- · Use language and visuals that represent your intended audience
- Consider creating different versions for your different audiences
- For social media posts, use the platform your audience uses

2 versions of a CDC document about COVID-19:



Heavier text with more detail



Less text with visuals that add appeal



Structure materials for easy scanning

- Think of questions your readers might ask about your topic – those can become your headings
- In the body text, answer the question posed in the heading – each heading + body text is a "chunk" of information that presents 1 idea
- Use bullet points for lists of 3-5 items

Create content that resonates with your audience

- Combine facts with human interest, such as to:
 - Tell stories or use quotes that relate the experiences of people who represent your intended audience
 - Create videos to engage and inform different types of learners

Design materials to support understanding

- Use 20-30% white space per page
- Use a clear font in 12-point size for body text
- Use color to highlight important information and make your material more appealing
- Use meaningful visuals mostly people and faces

CASA de SALUD What is diabetes, and how do I know if I have it? What is diabetes? Diabetes is a life-long disease where your blood sugar (glucose) is too high because your body cannot make or u insulin the way it should. Insulin is a homone the body makes that helps turn sugar from the food you sat into energy. When your body doesn't make insulin or use insul the way it should, too much sugar stays in your blood. There are 3 main types of diabetes: Type 1 diabetes Your body does not make insulin — it usually starts when you are a child or young adult Type 2 diabetes Your body makes insulin, but does not use insulin the way it should — it is the most common type of diabetes in adults, and more children have been getting it due to rise in childhood obesity High blood sugar in pregnant women – it usually goes away after pregnancy ends, but may raise the mother's or baby's chances of getting type 2 diabetes later in life What are the symptoms of diabetes? Symptoms of diabetes include: ⚠ If you have any of these symptoms, call Casa de Salud right away to schedule Losing weight without trying to (for type 1 diabetes only) 314-977-1250

Motivate your audience to become advocates

Clearly state the issue - that's your main message

- Be concise stick to your main topic
- Make it relatable show how the issue affects your audience
- Make it actionable give specifics about what you want people to do

Give your audience the tools they need to act

To make it easy for people to get involved and take action, use:

- Links or fillable forms
- Talking points, a script, or text to copy
- Resources to learn more and contact information in case they have questions



Resources

Use online health literacy resources

- CDC Health Literacy Research on Patient Engagement https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/researchevaluate/patient-engage.html
- CDC Health Equity Guiding Principles for Inclusive Communication https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/Health_Equity.html
- CDC Health Literacy Resources https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/learn/resources.html
- Usability.gov https://www.usability.gov/

Use a health literacy or plain language thesaurus

- CDC's Everyday Words for Public Health Communication https://www.cdc.gov/other/pdf/everydaywordsforpublichealthcommunication.pdf
- Health Research for Action's Plain Language Word List https://multco.us/file/46697/download

Health literacy cheat sheet

Use this cheat sheet to see if your material follows the main principles of health literacy.

Purpose and audience

Make your purpose and intended audience clear at first glance to help build trust with your readers.

Purpose

Think about your purpose. What is your topic? Are you trying to educate, motivate, or change attitudes or behaviors? Describe your purpose as specifically as you can:

Audience

Think about your audience. Keep them in mind as you develop the material: their age, gender, ethnicity, reading level, and cultural beliefs. What questions might they have? Describe your intended audience as specifically as you can:

- ☐ State or imply the purpose in the title.
- □ Add a table of contents if material is 4 pages or longer.
- ☐ State or imply the audience in the title.
- ☐ Match visuals to the audience's physical appearance and life experience.
- ☐ Test your material with 3-5 people in your audience to see if it meets their needs.

Structure

Structure your material so readers can easily find what they need.

- ☐ Place the content in this order:
 - Most important information first the core message or what patients need to know to take action
 - Supporting info second
 - Background info last history or data

Include only "need to know" not "nice to know"
information, such as prevalence data.
Stick to 1 main massage supported by 3-5

- Stick to 1 main message supported by 3-5 points that tie directly to your purpose. Write short sentences (15 words or fewer) and paragraphs (3-5 sentences).
- ☐ Delete extra words that muddy sentences, such as "Please be advised..."
- ☐ Place related items together make sure the same point doesn't appear in multiple places (one exception is action steps, which are okay to summarize or repeat).
- ☐ Use headings that accurately represent the content that follows.
- ☐ Write headings that put the reader in an active role: "Ways to keep your heart healthy" instead of "Cardiovascular health."

Content

- Make your words and numbers easier to understand by saying what you mean and nothing more.
- ☐ Replace jargon (complex words) with common words when possible.
- ☐ If you need to use a complex word that can't be replaced, define it in the text: "Foot doctor, called a podiatrist."
- □ Write sentences in active voice so the subject performs the action: "The boy took his medicine" instead of "The medicine was taken by the boy."
- ☐ Use a conversational style. Try 1st person questions in headings and 2nd person answers in the body text.
- ☐ Use consistent terms rather than varying them. If you choose "doctor," stick with it throughout the material.



Behaviors

- ☐ Clearly tell your readers what you want them to do.
- Make the desired actions clear by highlighting and concretely explaining behaviors.
- ☐ If actions should be done in a certain order, put them in a numbered list.
- □ Engage readers with interactive elements such as a checklist, quiz, or a place where they can write notes

Design

- Make your material appealing and easy to read through clear layout and graphics.
- ☐ Make it easy to read:
 - Include 20%-30% white space
 - o Break content into chunks
 - Make headings distinct from body copy with more space above than below through bolding or using a different font
 - o Left-align the text
 - Use dark text on a light background
- ☐ Aim for a line length of 3-5 inches.
- ☐ Limit bulleted lists to 2-7 items.

Graphics

- Choose graphics that are highly related to the purpose and that describe action steps – consider picture-based instructions to describe a process.
- ☐ Use clear graphics:
 - Simple black and white line drawings
 - No distracting backgrounds
 - Explain through captions
- ☐ Use simple tables with around 3 rows and 3 columns.

Fonts

- Use clear fonts:
 - o Sans serif
 - o 12-point or larger
 - Use **bold** to highlight an important word or phrase
- Avoid ALL CAPS, <u>underlining</u>, *italics*, and novelty fonts

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *CDC Clear communication index: a tool for developing and assessing CDC public communication products*, http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/

Doak, C., Doak, L., & Root, J. (1996). *Teaching patients with low literacy skills* (2nd ed.). Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott.