Health Literacy Checklist for Written Consumer Resources

This tool provides a basic guide for ensuring resources written for consumers are clear and easy to understand. Additional guidance can be found in the resources listed over the page.

Preparation		
		Audience, objectives and outcomes are defined prior to writing resource. *[Tip: Consider involving representatives of your target audience early in the development process.]*
Content		
		Sentences are short. *[Tip: Aim to limit sentences to 8-10 words.]*
		Paragraphs are short. *[Tip: Aim to limit paragraphs to 3-5 sentences.]*
		Content is focused on 2-3 key messages. *[Tip: Delete any unnecessary content that could detract from the key messages.]*
		Information is up-to-date. *[Tip: Include the date of publication.]*
Language		
		Language is personalised to the reader. *[Tip: Use "you" rather than "the patient/consumer".]*
		Resource is free of medical jargon. *[Tip: Replace medical jargon with simple English wherever possible. See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Plain Language Thesaurus. Create a glossary of medical terms, if necessary]*
		Language is consistent. *[Tip: Use the same words for ideas and procedures.]*
		Language is positive. *[Tip: Say "eat less cheese" rather than "don't eat lots of cheese".]*
		The active voice is used. *[Tip: Use sentences where the subject acts – subject + verb + object. For example, "Joan (subject) is eating (verb) the sandwich (object)" rather than "the sandwich is being eaten by Joan".]*
Presentation		
		Text is broken into sections. *[Tip: Use headings and text boxes to chunk information.]*
		Font is simple and consistent. *[Tip: Use a 12-point font at minimum. Consider a larger font for older audiences.]*
		Spacing is adequate between individual sentences and sections. *[Tip: Aim for 40-50% white space.]*
		Diagrams and illustrations provide useful information and are adequate size. *[Tip: Include captions or labels.]*
Readability		
		The resource is written to a reading grade level of 7 or less *[Tip: Online tools such as https://readability-score.com provide results for Average Grade Level, which combines results from multiple readability tests.]*
Review		
		A colleague has reviewed this resource using the checklist and provided feedback.
		The resource has been tested with a sample of consumers representing the intended audience.

More information

Communicating with consumers, series volume 1, well-written health information: a guide

A detailed guide prepared for the Department of Human Services, by the Centre for Clinical Effectiveness and Health Issues Centre. Refer to page 26, for a comprehensive checklist for assessing consumer resources.

Currie K, Spink J & Rajendram M, 2000, 'Communicating with consumers, series volume 1, well-written health information: a guide', retrieved 23 July 2014, http://docs.health.vic.gov.au/docs/doc/D5DF528B7A2685A2CA257C78000E083F/$FILE/well%20written.pdf

How to write easy-to-read health materials

A guide on how to write easily understandable health information. Sections include: planning and researching; organising and writing; evaluating and improving.

U.S National Library of Medicine, 2013, 'How to write easy-to-read health materials', retrieved 23 July 2014, http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/etr.html

Simply put: a guide for creating easy-to-understand materials

A comprehensive guide to creating easy-to-understand materials for consumers. Refer to page 29, for an alternative checklist for assessing consumer resources.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009, 'Simply put: a guide for creating easy-to-understand materials', retrieved 23 July 2014, http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf

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Page 2 of 2