Accessible Print Materials

Guidelines to Accommodate People of All Abilities
Keep It Simple
The Message

- **Give the most important information first**

- **Limit the number of messages to 3-4 per document**
  - Include only what the audience needs to know and do
  - Provide one idea at a time
  - Lists should be no longer than 3-7 items
  - Keep messages short and simple

- **Clearly state the recommended actions and what will be gained by following them**
  - Emphasize what audience should do, not what they should not do
  - Be encouraging
- **Choose words carefully**
  - Use concrete, practical examples
  - Limit jargon and technical language
  - Language should be clear and consistent
  - Use language and examples that are familiar to the audience
  - Avoid acronyms and abbreviations
  - Limit the use of statistics or mathematical concepts – instead, use words like many, most, half

- **Limit the use of symbols** – symbols may not be understood by everyone

- **Limit the use of quotation marks and hyphens**¹

- **Use the active voice whenever possible**
### Examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Say this:</th>
<th>Not this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wear a helmet when on a bike.</td>
<td>When biking or participating in other wheeled sports, always wear protective head gear.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children watch about 2 hours of TV a day.</td>
<td>Children watch TV for an average of 1.96 hours a day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred has a body mass index (BMI) of 22. A BMI between 19 and 25 is considered healthy.</td>
<td>Fred has a BMI of 22.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash fruits and vegetables before you cut or peel them.² (active voice)</td>
<td>Fruits and vegetables should be washed before they are cut or peeled.² (passive voice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This guide will teach you how to have a healthy pregnancy and prevent possible complications.</td>
<td>Pregnancy guide.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Visuals

- Visuals should be easy to understand and close to the corresponding text
- Use photographs to show real life events
- Illustrations or drawings can be used if they are simple
  - Cartoons can be misinterpreted and should be avoided
  - Photographs work best for showing “real life” events, people and emotions
- Use high quality visuals so the resolution is sharp with clear content
- Use circles or arrows to point out key information
- Use visuals to emphasize or explain the text
  - One message per visual
  - Label visuals with captions
  - Show positive actions (not the actions you do not want audience to take)
- Visuals should be representative and sensitive of the target audience

- Use realistic images

Drink water  Walk  Have an apple for lunch

Diabetic foot check  Physical exam
Text

- Use 12-14 point font
- For headings, use a font size at least 2 points larger than the main text
- Fonts:
  - Do not use fancy or script fonts like *This* or **This**
  - Do not use ALL CAPS
  - Use correct punctuation
  - Use **bold** to emphasize words
  - Limit the use of *italics* or _underline_
  - Use dark letters on a light background

Layout and Design

- Materials should be visually attractive with the main message on the front cover
- Messages should be easy to act on, easy to remember and in a logical order
- Use headings and subheadings or columns to break up text
Leave more space above headings than below them

Leave plenty of white space and adequate margins – do not fill the page with text

Make the text easy for the eye to follow
  • Use bulleted lists
  • Align text to the left side of the page
  • Use columns if needed
  • Place key information in a text box

Readability

Conduct a readability test of the materials. Materials should be written at 4th or 5th grade reading levels
  • Many word processing software programs have reading level tools included
  • To conduct a readability test by hand, instructions are located in Appendix C of Simply Put

Test materials with members of the target audience
Print Materials for People with Partial Sight

Below are additional tips for those with impaired vision:

- Text should have high color contrast with the background, white/black is preferable
- Type should be large print, which is a minimum of 16-18 point font
- Avoid close letter spacing or close spacing between lines of text
- Do not use glossy or shiny paper
- Use standard, non-decorative fonts
Unless otherwise noted, the information in this document is based on:


Other references:

1. Accessible Print Materials, Formatting Guidelines to Accommodate All Audiences

2. CDC Clear Communication Index, A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products User Guide

3. National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research
   www.ncddr.org/products/researchexchange/v08n03/2_materials.html

4. Lighthouse International, Designing for People with Partial Sight
   www.lighthouse.org/accessibility/design/accessible-print-design/making-text-legible/

Additional resources:

WebAIM, Information and resources to ensure web accessibility
webaim.org/intro/
The North Carolina Office on Disability & Health

Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Public Health  |  Children and Youth Branch

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