

HEALTH COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

Creating easy-to-understand written materials is critical for reaching your audience. Use this checklist as a quick reference to improve the health literacy of your materials. For a more comprehensive analysis, use one of the tools linked below.

Define and involve your audience

- Identify and account for the age, gender, cultural identity, and literacy level of your reader.
- If possible, ask members of your target audience for feedback. Incorporate their recommendations into your final document.

Make it look good

- Use an easy to read font such as: Arial, Calibri, or Verdana
- Use a minimum font size of 12 point. 14 point or larger is best for older audiences.
- Left justify text and keep a ragged margin on the right side of the document. Use plenty of white space. Don't overcrowd the page.
- Use relevant visuals and illustrations that model desired behaviors. For example, use images of someone coughing into their elbow or properly washing their hands.



Follow “easy-to-read” best practices

- Always follow AHRQ’s plain language guidelines.
- Use active voice in all instructions. For example, “Cough into your elbow,” “Wash your hands for 20 seconds.”
- Avoid jargon when possible. Define all scientific and medical terms immediately after use.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs. Keep sentences less than 10-15 words. Keep paragraphs less than 3-5 sentences.

Review, assess, and revise

- Use assessment tools such as [AHRQ’s PEMAT-P](#) and [CDC’s Clear Communication Index](#) and readability formulas to ensure the material is suitable for your audience.
- Have multiple committee or team members review the material, and compare scores.

The **Pennsylvania Health Literacy Coalition** can help. If you would like feedback on materials, or help implementing best practices, reach out to Susan Cosgrove, Director, Health Literacy. We are here to support you in making information accessible, actionable, and health literate.