

Job Aid

A Checklist for Creating Easy-to-Read Written Materials

General content

- Limit content to one or two key objectives without providing too much information or trying to cover everything at once
- Limit content to what patients really need to know by avoiding information overload
- Use only words that are well known to individuals without medical training
- Make certain content is appropriate for age and culture of the target audience

Text construction

- Write at or below the 6th grade level
- Use one- or two-syllable words
- Use short paragraphs
- Use active voice
- Avoid all but the most simple tables and graphs. Clear explanations (legends) should be placed adjacent to each table or graph and also in the text

The content for this material was excerpted from the Healthcare Communities website and is available at: <http://www.healthcarecommunities.org/>.

The views expressed in these documents, Web sites, or other products do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the Health Resources and Services Administration, nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Job Aid

Fonts and typestyle

- Use large font (minimum 12 point with serifs. (Serif text has the little horizontal lines that you see in this text at the bottoms of letters like f, x, n, and others. This text, on the other hand, is non-serif.)
- Don't use more than two or three font styles on a page to ensure consistency in appearance
- Use uppercase and lowercase text. ALL UPPERCASE TEXT IS HARD TO READ

Layout

- Ensure a good amount of empty space on the page. Don't clutter the page with text or pictures
- Use headings and subheadings to separate blocks of text
- Bulleted lists are preferable to blocks of text in paragraphs
- Illustrations are useful if they depict common, easy-to-recognize objects
- Avoid complex anatomical diagrams by showing images of people, places, and things that are age appropriate and culturally appropriate to the target audience