



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 hyphens¹**

■ **Use the active voice whenever possible**

Examples:

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

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)



Drink water



Walk



Have an apple
for lunch

■ **Visuals should be representative and sensitive of the target audience**



■ **Use realistic images**



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 levels³**
 - 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 Sight⁴

■ 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:

Simply Put, A Guide for Creating Easy-to-Understand Materials

www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/simply_put.pdf

Other references:

- ¹ Accessible Print Materials, Formatting Guidelines to Accommodate All Audiences
www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/file/TA/Creating-Accessible-Print-Materials-DoH-Massachussets.pdf
- ² CDC Clear Communication Index, A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products User Guide
www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/ClearCommunicationIndex/ClearCommunicationUserGuideMay2013.pdf
- 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 and Health

Children and Youth Branch

PHONE

919-707-5600



State of North Carolina • Pat McCrory, Governor
Department of Health and Human Services • Richard O. Brajer, Secretary
Division of Public Health • Dr. Randall Williams, State Health Director
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/dph

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