Mayo Clinic Center for Tuberculosis

An Introduction to Health Literacy

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Train the Trainer- Guam
Disclosures

• No conflicts of interest

• No relevant financial relationships with any commercial interests
Objectives:

• Define literacy standards
• Describe principles for creating easy-to-understand materials
National Literacy

Defines:

Literacy as “using printed and written information in society, to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”
Health Literacy

Defines:

Health Literacy as “the ability to use literacy skills to read and understand written health-related information encountered in everyday life.”
NAAL

National Assessment of Adult Literacy is a nationally representative assessment of English Literacy among American adults age 16 and older. This is sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

• This is the most comprehensive measure of adult literacy.

• Most current comprehensive large-scale assessment completed in 2011-2012.
NAAL

Current indicator of nation’s progress:

• Adult Skills
• Literacy
• Numeracy
• Problem solving in technical environments
NAAL 3 Types of Literacy

1. Prose Literacy— to search, comprehend, and use continuous text. Ex. Editorials, brochures, and *instructional materials*

2. Document Literacy— to search, comprehend, and use non-continuous texts in various formats. Ex. Job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, *maps*, tables, and *drug or food labels*

3. Quantitative Literacy— to identify and perform computations, either alone or sequentially, using numbers embedded in printed material. Ex. Balancing a checkbook
Considerations

• It is difficult to comprehend the world of those with low health literacy

• Can be damaging and counterproductive to provide anything except health literacy care

• The health literacy approach means not only materials and instruction, but discussions, directions, signs, etc.
Communication that is Clear and Understandable
Learning how to communicate your message effectively across a wide range of audiences is very important to avoid the one-size fits-all mindset.

- People learn differently (visual, auditory, reading/writing, and kinesthetic)
- Culture and literacy skills also need to be put into consideration
According to the *National Center for Education Statistics (NCES & NAAL)* One-third of U.S. Adults have trouble reading and acting on health related information.
Make Your Message Clear
1. Give the most important information first.
   • Most important information first
   • What actions to take
   • Why is it important to them
2. Limit the number of messages.
   • Focus on a need to know
   • Stick to one main idea
   • Avoid lengthy lists
3. Tell audiences what they need to know

- State actions
- Highlight the positive

on a need-to-know basis
4. Tell the audience what they can gain
5. Choose your words carefully
Text Appearance Matters
The way a text looks makes a difference in the readability. It’s important to choose the correct font style, size and color.

1. Use font size between 12 and 14 points.

2. Headings should use a font size at least 2 points larger than the main text size.

3. Font style can make a big difference in a person being able to recognize a letter quickly.
1. Font Size
2. Headings

Which one below would be easiest for you to read?

This is 8 point.
This is 10 point.
This is 12 point.
This is 14 point.
This is 16 point.
This is 18 point.

*Note older people have difficulty reading and seeing and may need larger print.
*Anything less than 12 points could be difficult to read.
3. Font Style

Which one below would be easiest for you to read?

S or S

Serif or Sans Serif

*San Serif is more readable when you must type small or used on a website.

Limit use of light text on dark background
Visuals Help Tell Your Story
1. Choose the best type of visual for your materials
2. Use visuals to help communicate your message
3. Make visuals culturally relevant and sensitive
4. Make visuals easy for your audience to follow and understand
5. Sometimes drawings alone can help your audience understand
6. Use realistic images to illustrate internal body parts or small objects
7. Use high quality visuals
Please take all of your medications at the same time
Remember....

Need help creating effective visuals?
CDC has a Public Health Image Library at http://phil.cdc.gov/Phil/default.asp
Layout and Design
1. Design an effective cover
2. Organize your messages so they are easy to act on and recall
3. Organize ideas in the order that your audience will use them
4. Make the text easy for the eye to follow
5. Invite your audience into the text
SHARE THE FUN... not the germs

Protect yourself, your family, and your friends from germs in the water!

Pools, waterparks, hot tubs, splash pads, and spray parks are great places to have fun, be active, or just relax. But you can get sick if germs contaminate the water.

People who get into the water can carry in and spread germs.

Follow these 4 easy steps to help keep germs out of the water and stay healthy:

1. Stay out of the water if you have diarrhea.
2. Shower before you get in the water.
3. Don’t pee or poop in the water.
4. Don’t swallow the water.

Why is this so important?

If you get into the water when you have diarrhea, you could make others sick.

Most outbreaks linked to the water we swim, relax, and play in are outbreaks of diarrhea. These outbreaks are caused by germs like Cryptosporidium (or “Crypto” for short), norovirus, and E. coli.

These germs—sometimes millions at a time—can spread when someone who is sick has diarrhea in the water. Other people can get sick if they swallow the germy water—even just a mouthful.

Even when it’s treated properly with chemicals, the water can still have germs.

Pool chemicals, like chlorine or bromine, are added to the water to kill germs. But they don’t work right away. If used properly, they can kill most germs within a few minutes. However, some germs, like Crypto, can live in properly treated pool water for several days.

Let the chemicals use their power on germs—not on your pee, poop, sweat, and dirt.

The job of pool chemicals is to kill germs. But when pee, poop, sweat, and dirt rinse off our bodies and into the pool water, the chemicals break down these other things instead of killing germs. This uses up the chemicals’ power, which means there’s less to kill germs. That’s why it’s important to follow the 4 easy steps.

Did you know that germs in the water can also cause skin, ear, and lung infections?
Cultural Considerations
1. Use terms that your audience uses and/or is comfortable with. Ex. Does your group like to be called (African American or Black) (Native American or American Indian)

2. Target messages to each cultural or ethic group or subgroup. (Must test with the intended audience)
Translations Take Your Message Further
• Know your audience
• Design accordingly
• Get advice from your community organizations
• Select a translator
• Avoid literal translations
• Back-translation
• Field test
Beware of These Pitfalls

• **Do not** translate English slang

• **Do not** translate into a dialect unless used by your audience

• **Do not** omit foreign characters because it may change the translation

• If you list contact information make sure that there isn’t a language barrier on the automated system
Testing for Readability
Readability formulas are useful in that they can help you determine how difficult it would be to read the document you are creating.

What it **doesn’t** do:

- Measure a person’s comprehension
- Consider the layout and design
- If it’s well written or in an understandable text
Reduce Reading Level

Use one or two syllable words to reduce reading level and change it to an active voice.

Example:

This sentence is written in a passive voice:

“Heart disease and lung cancer are caused by smoking.”

Using active voice is better:

“Smoking causes heart disease and lung cancer.”
Testing the Documents Readability

This can be completed in two ways:

1. By hand using (Flesch-Kincaid Readability Test, Fry Readability Graph, Gunning ‘FOG’ Readability Test

2. By computer software applications such as Microsoft Word or Corel WordPerfect

* Remember the best way to check readability is to use a sample group of your intended audience
References

- CDC, Simply Put, July 2010