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

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)
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 levels\(^3\)
  - 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/
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