

Job Aid

Plain Language Checklist

Content:

- ☐ Title describes content
- ☐ Purpose is clearly stated
- ☐ Purpose is achieved
- ☐ Target group is clearly defined
- ☐ Information is accurate and reflects current practice
 - ◆ Messages do not contradict themselves
 - ◆ Information is evidence-based
- ☐ Information is current
 - ◆ Date of production shown
 - ◆ Expiration or review date shown
 - ◆ Sources mentioned are dated and current
- ☐ Content includes all essential information
- ☐ Procedural steps are clear, single action and observable
- ☐ Rationale for steps of procedure is provided
- ☐ Material free from bias and commercial endorsement
- ☐ Major points limited to 3 to 5 most "need to know" information
- ☐ Material encourages interaction with the reader
- ☐ Reader directed to other sources of information or support

The content for this material was excerpted from the Health Disparities Collaborative website and is available at:
<http://www.healthdisparities.net>.

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Organization:

- ☐ Key points emphasized or summarized
- ☐ Text organized in a easy-to-follow sequence that is logical to reader
- ☐ Key messages are behavior-focused, up front, and repeated
- ☐ Sections or paragraphs are short (3 to 4 sentences), present a single message, distinct, and labeled with subheadings
- ☐ Organization of the document is easily identified by reader
- ☐ Context precedes new information

Language and Writing Style:

- ☐ Active rather than passive voice
- ☐ New words / concepts are clearly defined and explained.
- ☐ Analogies help explain difficult concepts
- ☐ Positive, friendly, conversational tone
- ☐ Consistent terms throughout
- ☐ Reader referred to in first person and personal pronouns are used
- ☐ Jargon and technical words are avoided or explained
- ☐ Abbreviations and acronyms are avoided or explained
- ☐ Verbs are used to describe action
- ☐ Simple, everyday, familiar words
- ☐ Sentences are short (15 to 20 words) and contain only one idea
- ☐ Avoids slang
- ☐ Free of stereotypes (racial, ethnic, sexual) and inclusive language
- ☐ Concrete examples rather than abstract principles
- ☐ Important points are separated and listed from the text with bullets

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Design and Appeal:

- ☐ Cover or masthead includes title and action (behavior) focused message
- ☐ Ample white space with generous margins
- ☐ Upper and lower case letters used, not all capitals
- ☐ Text is left justified and right ragged, without hyphens
- ☐ Use font size 12 to 14 point with typeface for text serif and sans serif for headings. Font size increases from body text to headings and headings stand out
- ☐ Bullets used to present lists. Limit 5 to 7 items in a list
- ☐ Key points are emphasized with boxes, rule lines, bolding, color, symbols
- ☐ Dark ink on light, non-glare paper
- ☐ Lengthy instructions are subdivided with appropriate subheadings
- ☐ Graphics and illustrations
 - ◆ Simple, clear lines with distracting details
 - ◆ Aid learning and retention
 - ◆ Clear captions and labels
 - ◆ Represent a single concept
 - ◆ Color enhances message and does not distract
 - ◆ Color is accurate / realistic
 - ◆ Images are near text they refer to
 - ◆ Charts / graphs avoided
 - ◆ Illustrations show people, activities, objects that are realistic, positive, culturally acceptable
 - ◆ Body parts shown are within context of whole body