




Health Literacy 101 Best Practices



OUTREACH PARTNERSHIP TO IMPROVE
HEALTH LITERACY



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Overview

- Health Literacy
 - What is it?
 - Why should we care?
 - Best Practices



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Objectives

- Understand the definition of health literacy.
- Understand the impact of health literacy on client/patient outcomes.

- Apply health literate best practices to modify written materials.
- Apply health literate best practices to improve verbal communication.




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Introductions

- Name
- Organization
- Role

What do you already know about Health Literacy?

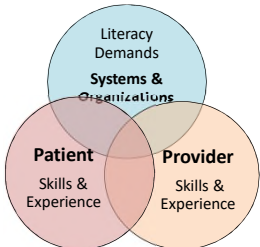


"Is there a health-care representative in the house?!"



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Health Literacy



"Health literacy allows the public **and** personnel working in all health-related contexts to

- find,
- understand,
- evaluate,
- communicate, and
- use information."

(Calgary Charter, 2008)





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Health Literacy

Includes the ability to...

- ✓ Speak
- ✓ Listen
- ✓ Read
- ✓ Write
- ✓ Do math



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We all are.

Only **10% of adults** have the skills needed to use **health information** that is routinely available in health care facilities, retail outlets, and the media.

What about the other **90% of us?**

We deserve **PLAIN LANGUAGE INFORMATION** about our health!

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Impact of Health Literacy

Predictors of Health Status

- Literacy Skills
- Age
- Income
- Employment Status
- Educational Level
- Racial or Ethnic Group

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Impact of Health Literacy

Low Health Literacy results in:

- Increased medication errors (Davis, 2007)
- Increased hospitalizations (Baker, et. al., 2005)
- Increased hospital readmission
- Increased risk of death (Baker, Wolf, Feinglass, Thompson, Gazmararian, 2007)
- Increase cost (Weiss, 1999)
- Limited use of preventative services (DeWalt, Berkman, Sheridan, Lohr, Pignone, 2004)
- Poor disease self management

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Health Literacy is NOT Static

- Influenced by underlying literacy skills AND...
 - Fear
 - Unfamiliarity with information
 - Distractions of the moment
 - Feeling ill in the moment
 - and more...



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Best Practices for Health Literate

Written Communication



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Best Practice: Plain Language

Does your primary audience understand the *first* time they read it or hear it?

Applicable to Writing and Speaking



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Best Practice: Plain Language

Limit Jargon



- Positive/negative
- Trigger
- Diet
- Tissue
- Stable



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Best Practice: Plain Language

Written Communication

Who is your primary audience?

- Patient/Client vs. Caregiver
- What questions do they have related to what you are writing?
- Where will they encounter what you are writing?
 - Will they encounter it?
- What is their reading level?



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Best Practice: Plain Language

Written Communication

Who is your primary audience?

- Is evidence or example you are citing relevant to this audience?
- What language is appropriate?
 - Translation and back translation
- Are things represented in your materials appropriate (culturally)?
 - Food, activities, beliefs
- What are the barriers your audience faces when using and acting on the information you are writing?



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Best Practice: Plain Language

Written Communication

Who is your primary audience?

- Put the most important information first
- Use the simplest, most straightforward words to express an idea
- Avoid jargon, abbreviations, acronyms
- Use "living room language", "kitchen table" words
- Use stories and analogies
- Use pictures
- Use examples
- Active Voice



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Best Practice: *Easy-to-Read* writing

- Simple words (1-2 syllables)
- Short sentences (4-6 words)
- Short paragraphs (2-3 sentences)
- Headings and bullets
- White space
- Visuals
- Direction on how to find more information
- Sixth grade reading level (or lower)



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Organization


- Material begins with the most important message first
 - What *is* your most important message?
- Content is arranged in an order that makes sense to readers
- Informative headings signal what is coming and make it easy for readers to skim



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Writing


- Address the reader with Active Voice.
 - “I recommend that you use active voice to make it clear who is expected to do what.”
- Use common and familiar words – no JARGON!
- Limit acronyms, abbreviations, and technical terms
 - Use only when the reader needs to know them.
 - Explain them
 - Consider underlining the first letter in acronyms Outreach Partnership to Improve Health Literacy (OPIHL)



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Writing


- Use brief, one-topic paragraphs with simple sentences.
- Use terms consistently
 - Define words that are difficult, but unavoidable
 - “hypertension is also called high blood pressure” but then stick with one or the other.
- Use brief, step-by-step instructions placed where readers need them
- Make connections in your writing to help readers understand and absorb new information
 - Use analogies where appropriate



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Design and formatting


- Consistent style, structure, font, italics, bold, color, numbers, and bullets
- Inviting and easy to read
 - Uncluttered
 - White space
 - Dark colored type on light background (contrast)
- Fonts are clean and easy to read



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Design and formatting


- Text size large enough for easy reading.
 - Each line has 10-15 words
- Italics and bold used sparingly
- Images are clear and related to content and culturally appropriate
- Align text to the left ←



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Font

- Header: Tahoma, Arial, or other san serif
- Body:
 - When in print serif font like Times New Roman.
 - When electronic, either will do.
- Pick 1-2 fonts and **stick with them** throughout the document
- ✗ *Limit Italics* and fancy fonts
- ALL CAPS ARE OK FOR TITLES
- ✗ DON'T USE ALL CAPS FOR TEXT. IT SEEMS LIKE YOU ARE YELLING AND IS HARDER TO READ BECAUSE ALL CAPS ARE MORE DIFICULT TO DISTINGUISH, ONE LETTER TO THE NEXT.



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Navigation Aids

- “Call out” boxes
- Numbers in Order
-

This is a call-out box

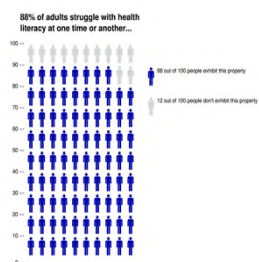
- Numbers in order
-



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Visuals

- Visuals *only* if they illustrate your point.
- Limit or avoid tables and graphs.
- Demonstrate percent when possible.




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Show the reader what you want them to do.





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Be Careful...



- Readability tests regularly underestimate grade-level difficulty of a document.
- People read 2-3 grade levels below their education level.
- Reading level is only one of MANY components of readability.

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STAY IN THE GAME!



Recently, you received a free colorectal cancer screening kit at a local pharmacy through an outreach program sponsored by the South Heartland Colon Cancer Coalition and South Heartland District Health Department. Our records indicate that you have not yet completed or returned the screening kit to the lab in the addressed envelope provided in the kit.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer related deaths in Nebraska. If colon cancer is found early, you have a good chance of beating it with treatment. The screening test that you received can detect hidden blood in the stool that can be an early warning sign of colorectal cancer.

Please take this opportunity and complete the screening kit as directed. If you have any questions regarding this screening, please call Susan Ferrone, RN at : 877-238-7595 or 402-462-6211.

GET SCREENED TODAY AND STAY IN THE GAME!

South Heartland Colon Cancer Coalition
South Heartland District Health Department





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It's not too late!

Send us your colon cancer screening kit


When you mail us your completed colon cancer screening kit, we will check for hidden blood in your stool. Hidden blood can be an early sign of colon cancer.



Colon Cancer is the second leading cause of cancer related deaths in Nebraska. The screening kit can help you...

- ✓ find it
- ✓ treat it
- ✓ beat it

 Do you have questions? Call our nurse at 877-238-7595.




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Best Practice: Usability Testing

A way to evaluate written materials by observing how the users use them.
(Winchester, 2012)



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Best Practice: Usability Testing Usability Prompts

- Can you find...
- Please fill in...
- Pretend you are applying for...
- What if you need to...
- You are trying to...



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Health Literate Writing Tools

- Quick Checklist for Plain Language
- Patient Education Material Assessment Tool (PEMAT)
- Center for Disease Control Clear Communication Index




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Quick Checklist for Plain Language Center for Health Literacy Research and Promotion, University of Wisconsin-Madison

» This checklist will provide you with useful information on how to design written materials to be more understandable and useful for people with limited literacy skills. Use this checklist to evaluate your materials and make changes as needed. The more you check, the more likely it will be that your materials will be more useful.


<p>Reader focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The title and introduction reflect the content of what comes in the outline and text. <input type="checkbox"/> The tone is direct, frank, and positive, using simple, direct language such as "you" and "we." <input type="checkbox"/> The content is directly and immediately useful to users, and addresses their questions and concerns. <p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The material begins with the most important message. <input type="checkbox"/> The content is arranged in an order that makes sense to users. <input type="checkbox"/> Information is arranged logically, clearly, and in a way that is easy to understand. <p>Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The writing is readable, free of jargon, and the words are common and familiar to the target audience. <input type="checkbox"/> Acronyms, abbreviations, technical terms, and full sentences are used and explained to the user. If used, they are explained. <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraphs are not too long and include simple and straightforward sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Key points are emphasized. <input type="checkbox"/> Information is brief, appropriate, and based on evidence and research. <input type="checkbox"/> The writing is evidence-based, connecting research to health needs assessment and shared decision-making. 	<p>Design and formatting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The material is printed in a clear, readable font, with consistent margins, colors, and fonts. <input type="checkbox"/> Operational links, such as phone numbers, website URLs, and email addresses, are clearly visible and easy to use. <input type="checkbox"/> The layout is clear, with clear design and easy-to-read graphics. <input type="checkbox"/> The text size is large enough for easy reading and is consistent throughout the document. <input type="checkbox"/> Links and URLs are clearly visible and easy to use. <input type="checkbox"/> Images are clear and relevant, added at appropriate points in the document. <p>Tips for checking the language</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ask a careful reader or the readability study specialist to read the material and check for readability. If the readability is low, consider using plain language. <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud to the audience and see if they can understand it. If not, try to rephrase it in plain language. <input type="checkbox"/> Read aloud to the audience and see if they can understand it. If not, try to rephrase it in plain language. <p><small>For more tips and resources, visit www.healthliteracy.com.</small></p>
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Health Literate Writing Tools

- Quick Checklist for Plain Language
- Patient Education Material Assessment Tool (PEMAT)
- Center for Disease Control Clear Communication Index



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Best Practices for Health Literate Verbal Communication



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Best Practice: Teach Back Method

- Asking patients to share in their own words what they need to know or **do**, in a non-shaming way.
- A test of how well **you** explained a concept, not of the patient.
- A chance to check for understanding and **re-teach** the information, if necessary.



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How to Teach Back -verbal

- Start with the most important information first
- Focus on the 2 or 3 concepts.
- Limit new information.

- Use plain language.
- Break it down



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How to Teach Back- non verbal

- Slow down.
- Sit down.
- Use a caring attitude and tone of voice.



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Teach Back Tools

- Always Use Teach Back
- <http://www.teachbacktraining.org/coaching-to-always-use-teach-back>



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Best Practice: Ask Me Three

Patient asks....

- What is my main problem?
- What do I need to do?
- Why is this important?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3EB-icaNKQ>



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Best Practice: Brown Bag Checks

- Patient brings in all medications in a brown bag
 - Prescriptions
 - Over-the-Counter
- Patient explains:
 - When they take each
 - Why they take it
 - When they last took each



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Health Literate Standards

- National Patient Safety Guidelines
 - http://www.jointcommission.org/standards_information/npsgs.aspx
- 10 Attributes of a Health Literate Organizations
 - https://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Perspectives-Files/2012/Discussion-Papers/BPH_HLit_Attributes.pdf
- Public Health Accreditation Standards
 - <http://www.phaboard.org/wp-content/uploads/SM-Version-1.5-Board-adopted-FINAL-01-24-2014.docx.pdf>



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Questions?
Comments?

Evaluations

Thank you!



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