

Tips for clear written materials

Activities for Virginia Community Healthcare Association
September 19, 2018



Tips for clear written materials

1. Make your purpose and audience clear

- Tailor your title
- Think about your intended audience – gender, race, etc.
- Use meaningful visuals
- Use cultural sensitivity

2. Organize your information

- Put most important information first
- Use clear headings
- Chunk related information together

3. Use simple words and clear sentences

- Replace jargon or define important terms
- Use active voice
- Get rid of extra words

4. Clear design

- Add space for clarity
- Use clear typography
- Use visuals to highlight numbers

5. Highlight behaviors and give clear action steps

- Describe and highlight behaviors
- Make action steps easy to find
- Highlight behaviors

Please, take our pre-webinar survey, by following this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Pre--Webinar>

Activity 1: Write clear headings

Review the passage below about asthma. It contains a lot of ideas that could be organized more clearly under separate headings. Create at least 3 headings.

Asthma is a condition that affects airways, which are like tubes that conduct the air through the lungs. Asthma makes it hard for your child to breathe.

Children with asthma have airways that are sensitive and easily irritated. Asthma can be very active at times, and when this happens the airways become swollen, tighter and narrower and produce more mucus.

These changes make it difficult for air to pass through and make it hard to breathe. This also causes other symptoms such as tightness in the chest and wheezing (a high-pitched sound when breathing). Other common symptoms of asthma are shortness of breath and coughing particularly at night or after physical activity.

Infants and young children tend to have asthma that is “episodic”. This means that a child can get asthma attacks with symptoms that may last for a few days, but in between episodes they do not have difficulty breathing.

Older children and adults tend to get asthma that is continuous or persistent and may be long-lasting (chronic).

Heading 1:

Heading 2:

Heading 3:

Activity 2: Use clear words

Replacing jargon

On the line next to each difficult word, write a simple word or phrase you could use to replace it.

Inception

Approximately

Insufficient

Collaborate

Defining jargon

On the line next to each jargon word or phrase, write a definition for it in simple words.

A1C test

Chronic

Postpartum

Deductible

Activity 3: Write clear, direct sentences

For each sentence, cross out words that add length but not meaning. Then, rewrite the sentence so it's clear and short.

1. Every Woman's Life Program aims to be a catalyst in helping to leverage technology to address critical and potentially life-saving needs for women in Virginia.

2. Beyond providing financial resources in developing digital innovations, Microsoft's digital experts are providing technical support and providing strategic insights on technology trends that may have implications on the solution design.

Activity 4: Give clear action steps

Revise this letter to parents about the Swine Flu in Virginia into clear, specific action steps.

As you are probably aware by now, the Swine Flu has surfaced once again. While there are no reported cases in the State of Virginia, officials at the CDC have requested each school district to share the following preventive information with its students.

- If you are sick with flu-like symptoms, stay home and report it to your doctor
- Use proper procedures when coughing
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly
- Use Kleenex and dispose in trash cans immediately after use

Want to learn more?



“Writing for the public” free online training from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC):
www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/writing-course/index.html



Tips and tools from the federal government:
www.plainlanguage.gov



Plain language checklist at the Center for Plain Language:
<http://centerforplainlanguage.org/5-steps-to-plain-language/>



Universal patient language plain language resources:
www.upl.org

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