



Plain Language Materials Development

Sabrina Kurtz-Rossi, M.Ed., Principal,
Kurtz-Rossi & Associates
Assistant Professor, Tufts University
School of Medicine




Learning Objectives

- Describe an audience-centered approach
- Define plain language
 - List writing principles
 - List design principles
- Consider the issue of numeracy
- Share lesson learned from pre-testing
- Discuss approaches to translation




Getting Started


- Involved your **AUDIENCE**
- Specify an educational **OBJECTIVE**
- Consider how material will be **USED** and select a **FORMAT**
- Develop the **CONTENT**



Know Your Audience

- Learn about the culture (gender, age, ethnicity, experience, etc)
- Identify their needs and priorities
- Don't make assumptions
- Involve your audience the process






Types of Objectives


- To provide information (knowledge)
- To change attitudes
- To teach new behavior

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Print Format Options


<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters • Fact sheets • Pamphlets • Booklets • Signs and stickers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activity books • Pocket cards • Other <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Photo novels ▫ Newspaper ads ▫ Payroll inserts
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Non-print Format Options

- Audio formats
- Video formats
- Multi-media formats
- Social-media formats
- Online/web-based
- Other computer-based








WORKING ACROSS DISCIPLINES AND GLOBAL BOUNDARIES

Develop the Content

- **Limit** information to **need to know**
- Provide information that is **relevant** to audience concerns
- Break information into manageable **chunks**




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Processing Text

Adapted from Doak C, Doak L, Root J. Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills (2nd edition). Lippincott 2007

<i>Proficient Readers</i>	<i>Below Basic Readers</i>
Interpret meaning, generalize	Take words literally
Read with fluency	Read slowly, or one word at a time
Get help for uncommon words	Skip over unfamiliar words
Grasp the context, make inferences	Miss the context, may not make inferences
Persists in reading	Tires quickly when reading



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Writing Tips

- Write in everyday language
- Use action words and active voice
- Use shorter sentences
- Give concrete examples
- Use short, common words
- Define unfamiliar words

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Writing Tips

- Avoid technical terms, abbreviations, and acronyms
- Give *pro-nun-see-AY-shun* if needed
- Be careful using slang and humor
- Use headers to guide reader to main points
- Repeat important information

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Helpful Techniques

- Q & A format (“I”/ “you”)
- Bulleted lists
- Interaction
- Story telling
- Dialogues

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Simplify Medical Terms!

Diagnosis.....	Cause of your illness
Anti-inflammatory.....	Lowers fever and swelling
Nasal congestion.....	Stuffy nose
Lesion.....	Wound, sore, infected patch of skin
Risk factor.....	Will increase your chance of getting...

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Processing Visuals


Adapted from Doak C, Doak L, Root J. Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills (2nd edition). Lippincott 2007

<i>Proficient Readers</i>	<i>Below Basic Readers</i>
Scan the visual to find central concept	Eyes wander, difficulty finding central focus
Quickly identify key features in a visual	May skip over key features
Separate key points from details	May get lost in or too focused on details
Quickly interpret visual information to derive meaning	Interpret visuals more literally

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Tips for Visuals

- Use realistic, uncluttered drawings or photos
- Use images relevant to your audience
- Apply labels and arrows



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Design Tips

- Lots of white space and wide margins
- Use **SERIF** font for text,
- **NON SERIF** for headers
- Larger type (12 pt or larger)
- **UPPER AND LOWER CASE—NOT ALL CAPS**
- *Avoid italics, script, fancy fonts*



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Design Tips

- **Bold**, concise headers
- Consider use of columns
- Ragged right edge
- **Appealing colors**
- High contrast
- Include contact info, credits, and date



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RECOMMENDED REGARDING WRITING IN TERMS OF ITS RECEPTION

IT IS NOT INAPPROPRIATE , WHEN USING PRINT MEDIA TO IMPART MATERIAL OF A FACTUAL OR INTERPRETIVE NATURE WHICH HOLDS THE INTENTION OF CONVEYING CRITICAL INFORMATION TO AND/OR INCLUDING A CRITICAL ACTION BY ITS PROSPECTIVE RECIPIENTS, TO EMPLOY RELATIVELY NONCOMPLEX VERBIAGE SO AS TO MAXIMIZE COMRPEHENSION IN THE AFOREMENTIONED POPULATION.

Credit: Lessons in Plain Language 1992, PLAN, Inc.



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Notes on Numeracy

- Reduce effort, do the math
- Provide fewer options
- Present absolute, not relative risk
- Keep denominator the same (1 in 100 / 4 in 10)
- Use appropriate visuals
- Use labels carefully (poor, fair good, excellent)
- Use frequency (1 out of 10) vs percent (10%)



www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/numeracy-course



What is Pre-testing?

- A process of reviewing draft materials with your target audience
- The way to find out whether your material is understandable, acceptable, attention-getting, and relevant
- Needs to be in your budget and timeline



Pre-testing Questions

- What about the material got your attention?
- What words might others not understand?
- How do you suggest we say this?
- What do you think of the pictures?
- What did you learn? What will you do?



About Translation

- Emphasize need for plain language
- Do not expect word-for-word translation
- Work with professionals
- Back translation for quality control
- Be sure to localize and pre-test



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Key Points

- Know and involve your audience
- Limited content to “need to know”
- Apply plain language principles
- Pre-test, pre-test, pre-test
- Work with experienced translators

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