

# Health Literacy Checklist for Research Communication

## WHY HEALTH LITERACY?

Health literacy is not just a current buzzword. It is an important concept promoting understandable and person-centered health information. According to the U.S. Health Department, health literacy is the “degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions”. Health literacy affects a potential participant’s ability to:

- Understand recruitment materials and become interested in a study
- Complete consent forms and other study documents
- Share personal information, such as health history
- Comprehend the study and what is being asked or expected of them – this can also impact study compliance as a result

Health literacy is important to the recruitment, engagement, and retention of participants.

## THE BASICS

Health literacy encompasses many aspects. From the images used, to the words chosen, the tone conveyed and more. Your recruitment and study materials should promote health literacy. When creating materials, ask yourself “could a participant obtain, process, understand and make decisions from this material?”

## CHECKLIST

When reviewing materials for health literacy, ensure you have:

- Writing at a 6<sup>th</sup> grade [reading level](#) to ensure to the readability and comprehension of the material
- Clear and concise writing, with a limited number of messages/ideas for the reader to consume at once

- All medical and research terminology changed to lay or [plain language](#)
- People first [language](#) – putting the person before their disease or descriptor(s)
- [Sensitive](#) wording and phrasing to the person’s state of being, disease or condition
- Words that are culturally, spiritually or otherwise [competent](#)

## OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Other considerations that add to health literacy:

- Images that are inclusive and representative of the people and populations you are trying to reach
- Using images, along with words, to visually represent what is being discussed
- Font size that is readable by people of all ages and vision capabilities
- Documents translated to the participant’s primary or preferred language(s)
- Simple text, using as few words as possible to convey messages clearly
- A tone to the messaging that is positive and respectful
- The overall layout and design is organized, readable and understandable

By having understandable, person-centered, health literate study materials, you are in a better position to reach and connect with your desired participant group.

For more information regarding health literacy and to request a complimentary health literacy review of your documents, please email [OCTRRecruitment@ohsu.edu](mailto:OCTRRecruitment@ohsu.edu).

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services - Health Literacy Online  
<https://health.gov/communication/literacy/quickguide/factsbasic.htm#one>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - Health Literacy  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/index.html>

The CDC - A Guide for Creating Easy-to-Understand Materials  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply\\_Put.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf)

The CDC - Everyday Words for Public Health Communication  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/everydaywords/>

The National Institute of Health - Clear Communication  
<https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication>

The CDC - Gateway to Health Communication  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/>

The U.S. Government - Plainlanguage.gov  
<https://plainlanguage.gov/>

*For more information, additional resources, and to request a complimentary recruitment consultation, please visit our [website](#) or email us at [OCTRLrecruitment@ohsu.edu](mailto:OCTRLrecruitment@ohsu.edu).*

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