

Printed information resources checklist

By building a better health literacy environment we reduce the burden on individuals to find, understand, assess and use health services and information.

Use this checklist as a self-assessment tool or to guide development of user-friendly health information resources that are delivered in hard copy or PDF.

Planning

- Your resource has a **clear purpose** – ideally behaviour based, e.g. to encourage regular skin checks instead of to raise awareness of skin cancer.
- You have identified **two or three key messages** to support your purpose.
- Your resource is targeted at a **specific audience**.
- You **consulted with the target audience** in the development of the resource.

Language

- You have used **familiar words** and removed, replaced or explained any technical terms, acronyms or medical jargon.
- You have used **'you', 'we' and 'us'** instead of 'the patient', 'the health service', etc.
- You have used an **active voice** – e.g. 'Have check-ups regularly' instead of 'Regular check-ups are encouraged'.
- You have used **positive language** that encourages desired behaviours rather than prohibiting undesired behaviours – e.g. 'Eat less cheese' not 'Don't eat a lot of cheese'.
- You have avoided interchangeable terms and **used words consistently**.
- You have used **inclusive language**.

Structure

- You have included the **purpose of the resource in the title or introduction**.
- You have included a **summary of the main points** of the resource.
- Your content **only contains important information** directly related to your key messages.
- You have used **short paragraphs** of around 3–5 sentences with white space in between to break the information into chunks.
- You have used **headings** as signposts for your content. A scan of the headings provides the reader with an outline of your resource.
- You have used **dot points for lists**, with each point containing one idea or piece of information.
- Your **sentences** contain around 15 words on average. Long sentences are used sparingly and have no more than 25 words. Short sentences contain around 8–10 words.
- You have checked the **readability** of your content (without titles and proper nouns), ensuring that it can be read and understood by someone in Year 7 (12–14 years old).

Presentation

- You have included the **most important information on the front** of a two-sided document.
- You have used a **plain, sans serif font** (e.g. Arial, Helvetica) consistently throughout the resource – ideally, no smaller than 12-point size.
- You have used **left-aligned text** for paragraphs, not centred or justified.
- You have used **bold type**, not capitals, italics or underlining to highlight important information.
- You have left adequate spacing between individual sentences and sections, and there is plenty of **white space** on the page.
- You have ensured there is **contrast between the text and background** (black text on white background, or high-contrast dark ink on light background) and that text is not placed over background graphics, patterns or watermarks.
- You have used **colours** to support understanding, not in a distracting way.
- You have used **diagrams and illustrations** to reduce text, simplify ideas or visually represent information. They are clear, adequately sized and have captions and/or labels as appropriate.

Identification

- You have included a **date**, so the reader knows how current the information is.
- You have included **organisation contact details**, so the reader knows who produced this information and how to get in touch with you.

Review

- You have **asked a colleague to review the resource** using this checklist and give feedback.
- You have **tested the resource with a sample of the intended audience** to ensure that it is understandable and appropriate.

Adapted from *Health literacy checklist for written consumer resources* (North Western Melbourne PHN) and *Checklist for designing consumer-friendly health information* (Health Literacy Northern NSW).

Published July 2021. For more information or support using this checklist contact healthliteracy@nswphn.org.au.