

Checklist: Health-literacy friendly resources

This list offers some simple tips to make resources more health-literacy friendly. It is designed to be a starting point. You should work with users throughout the creation of a resource to identify need and make sure your final output is appropriate and useful.

Readability tool checks

Readability tools can run some automatic checks for you. Hemmingway was the most popular tool in a survey of PIF members.

Check	Description	Completed
Reading age	Aim for a reading age of 9-11 years old for patient-facing resources ¹ .	Y/N
Sentence length	Keep sentences short. Aim for 15 words per sentence.	Y/N
Active voice	Use the active voice where possible. This makes sentences easier to understand. Active sentences also have more impact.	Y/N

Examples of active and passive voice

Active: “The doctor writes prescriptions.”

Passive: “Prescriptions are written by the doctor.”

¹ <https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/how-we-write>

Accessibility

Check	Description	Completed
Font size	Use a minimum font size of 12pt. It is good practice to have large print available on request. This is 16pt Arial or bigger.	Y/N
Colour contrast	Use high colour contrasts. These are easier to read. Alternative contrasts, like black text on a yellow background, may also be helpful for some users ² .	Y/N
Images	Include descriptions of any images used in a resource. Consider how images might be interpreted by those with low health literacy.	Y/N

High colour contrast

Low colour contrast

² <https://abilitynet.org.uk/factsheets/creating-accessible-documents-0>

Language

Check	Description	Completed
Tone	User test to make sure the language you use and tone is appropriate for your audience. Check your tone does not sound judgemental.	Y/N
Colloquialisms	Avoid colloquial language. It can make information harder to understand.	Y/N
Inclusive language	Do not make assumptions about the needs of your audience. Ask them what they want.	Y/N
Misinformation	Search to see if there is misinformation on a topic you need to address. For example, around BMI or vaccination.	Y/N

Risks and benefits

Check	Description	Completed
Numbers	Use numbers not percentages. For example, “1 in 10 people” not “10%”.	Y/N
Absolute risk	Use absolute rather than relative risk. Relative risk can be misleading.	Y/N
Graphics	Graphics can be a useful way to present data but they can be inaccessible for people who use tools like screenreaders. Include information in different formats and add descriptions.	Y/N

Examples of absolute and relative risk

Absolute risk: “The risk of heart attack increases from 1 in 100 to 2 in 100.”

Relative risk: “The risk of heart attack doubles.”

Other checks

Check	Description	Completed
Acronyms	Avoid acronyms and jargon. If you do have to use them, include an explanation.	Y/N
Alternative formats	You may need to present your resource in more than one format to engage different audiences.	Y/N
Glossaries	A glossary can help explain medical terms. But the word “glossary” can be hard to understand. Consider other titles. For example: “About the words in this guide.”	Y/N
Key point summaries	Including a key point summary at the start of resources can aid understanding.	Y/N
Negative contractions	Avoid negative contractions. These are words like “don’t”. They can make text harder to understand.	Y/N
Space-saving devices	Avoid space-saving devices. These are things like “and/or”. They can make text harder to read.	Y/N
Question and answer formats	Question headings can help people navigate your resource.	Y/N

Additional resources

Want to know more about health literacy? Check out our poster series: pifonline.org.uk/resources/posters.

Topics include health literacy, co-production, translation, accessibility, Easy Read and inclusive language. PIF members can find more detailed guidance at pifonline.org.uk/resources/how-to-guides.

Access the NHS Health Literacy Toolkit at library.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/06/Health-Literacy-Toolkit.pdf

Feedback

This resource was requested by, and developed with, PIF members. If you have any feedback please email info@pifonline.org.uk.