

Checklist to Develop Easy-to-Read Informed Consent Documents

Text

- ☐ Words are familiar to the reader. Any scientific, medical, or legal words are defined clearly.
- ☐ Words and terminology are consistent throughout the document.
- ☐ Sentences are short, simple, and direct.
- ☐ Line length is limited to 30-50 characters and spaces.
- ☐ Paragraphs are short. Convey one idea per paragraph.
- ☐ Verbs are in active voice (i.e., the subject is the doer of the act).
- ☐ Personal pronouns are used to increase personal identification.
- ☐ Each idea is clear and logically sequenced (according to audience logic).
- ☐ Important points are highlighted.
- ☐ Study purpose is presented early in the text.
- ☐ Titles, subtitles, and other headers help to clarify organization of text.
- ☐ Headers are simple and close to text.
- ☐ Underline, bold, or boxes (rather than all caps or italics) give emphasis.
- ☐ Layout balances white space with words and graphics.
- ☐ Left margins are justified. Right margins are ragged.
- ☐ Upper and lower case letters are used.
- ☐ Style of print is easy to read.
- ☐ Type size is at least 12 point.
- ☐ Readability analysis is done to determine reading level (should be eighth grade or lower).

Avoid:

- Abbreviations and acronyms.
- Large blocks of print.
- Words containing more than three syllables (where possible).

Graphics are:

- Helpful in explaining the text.
- Easy to understand.
- Meaningful to the audience.
- Appropriately located. Text and graphics go together.
- Simple and uncluttered.
- Images reflect cultural context.
- Visuals have captions.
- Each visual is directly related to one message.
- Cues, such as circles or arrows, point out key information.
- Colors, when used, are appealing to the audience.
- Avoid graphics that won't reproduce well.