

# Patient Health Literacy – Made Easy Workshop

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# Content

What is Health Literacy?
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Australia & Health Literacy
-----------------------------

Health Literacy Research
--------------------------

Impact of Low Health Literacy
-------------------------------

Health Literacy Client Screening
----------------------------------

Language
----------

Verbal communication
----------------------

Readability
-------------

Readability Tools
-------------------

# Please read

Eht tseb yaw ot naelc ruoy sessalg si htiw paos dna retaw.

1. Tsrif, esnir ruoy sessalg rednu retaw. Neht esu hsid paos ro diuqil

dnah paos ot hsaw ruoy sesnel dna emarf.

2. Esnir ffo eht paos dna yrd ruoy sessalg htiw a tfos, tnil-eerf htolc.

3. Od ton esu repap slewot ot yrd ruoy sessalg; yeht nac hctarcs eht snel.

# What is Health Literacy

# What is Health Literacy

Health literacy refers to an individual's ability to read, understand, and use the information necessary to enjoy good health and to obtain adequate health care in order to maintain their health (Fineberg, 2004).

# Australia & Health Literacy

- 60% of Australian's are health illiterate
  - 75% of those 60% are people born in a non-English speaking country (ABS Data – Health Literacy, Australia, 2006)
- Approximately 70% of Australian do not possess adequate skills in problem solving to meet the complex demands of everyday life (ABS Data – Health Literacy, Australia, 2006).
- Health literacy is a social determinant of health (Nutbeam, 2008)

# Health Literacy Research

‘Low health literacy is consistently associated with poorer diabetes knowledge’

Al Sayah, et. Al. (2012) Health Literacy and Health Outcomes in Diabetes: A Systematic Review, Accepted October 2012 (J Gen Intern Med)

‘Physicians’ application of interactive communication to assess recall or comprehension was associated with better glycemic control for diabetic patients.’

Schillinger (2003) Closing the loop, Arch Intern Med, Vol 163

# Health Literacy Research

Patient's literacy skills can be 3-4 grades below their reported educational status

(Davis, et.al., *J Fam Pract.* 1990;31:533-8)

“...studies have demonstrated that even patients with higher literacy skills often prefer lower literacy materials.”

(Vanderbilt University, Literacy and Numeracy Toolkit for Diabetes Provider's Manual, 2009)

## Low Literacy and Diabetes Knowledge

	All subjects (N= 217)	Low Literacy* (n= 83)	High Literacy (n= 134)	
Knowledge of:	% Correct	% Correct	% Correct	p
Signs of hyperglycemia	59	52	64	.11
Signs of hypoglycemia	30	21	36	<.05
Treatment of hypoglycemia	78	69	84	<.01
Frequency of foot care	59	43	68	<.001
Importance of foot care	65	55	72	<.05
Frequency of eye exams	64	55	72	<.05
Normal Fasting glucose (70-120mg/dl)	26	14	34	<.01
Normal A1C ( $\leq 6.0\%$ or goal $\leq 7.0\%$ )	8	2	11	<.05
Frequency of exercise	31	17	40	<.001
Long-term complications of diabetes	76	63	84	<.001
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>

\*Low literacy =  $\leq 6^{\text{th}}$ -grade level on REALM; high literacy =  $> 6^{\text{th}}$ -grade level on REALM



# Impact of Low Healthy Literacy

Patients with limited reading skills have poorer health outcomes:

- Less likely to engage in screening and preventative action
- Less likely to have chronic disease under control
- More likely to be hospitalized
- More likely to report poor health
- More likely to die earlier

# Health Literacy Video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch  
?v=ubPkdpGHWAAQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubPkdpGHWAAQ)

# Activity

- Looking back, have there been times when you suspected that a person might have low literacy?
- What were the signs?
- Some signs are:
  - ‘I forgot my glasses today’
  - ‘I’ll read these at home’
  - Others.....

# A more positive note

A small increase in health literacy levels can result in significant health behaviour change.

*(von Wagner et al. 2007)*

# What we need to do

‘Failure to provide patients with information about their care in ways that they can understand, will continue to undermine other efforts to improve safety.’

*(“What Did the Doctor Say?:”Improving Health Literacy to Protect Patient Safety,  
Public Policy White Paper, The Joint Commission, 2007)*

# Research suggests...

## **Universal precaution**

A whole of organisation approach to:

- Improving thinking, decision making and practice around health literacy, to.....
- Minimise the risk of any client not understanding the information they are given, thus allowing them to make informed decisions about their health care.

# HEALTH LITERACY CLIENT SCREENING

# Shouldn't we just give people a test so we know what their health literacy level is?

Evidence suggests that possible harm outweighs any current benefits; therefore, clinical screening for literacy should not be recommended at this time

(Paasche-Orlow & Wolf, 2007, 2008 & Thomacos presentation at HealthWest Forum, 2010)

# Well how do we find out then?

## ➤ Simple question:

- “How often do you have someone help you when you read instructions, pamphlets, or other written material from your doctor or pharmacy?”

## ➤ Other strategies:

- Asking clients to clarify what has been discussed
- Checking if they find written materials provided to them useful or clear or whether they would like further explanation of the contents of the information provided

# Language



## **Complex Language**

It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the Council by way of the envelope provided.

## **Plain Language**

Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.

[www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

**Easy English** has four elements and is easier to understand:

- **Language**
- **Images**
- **Layout and design**
- **Consumer Engagement.**

For example:

- Read all the information on page 13
- Fill in the blue form
- Put the form in the envelope
- Send the envelope to me by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May, 2005.



Easy English recommended for the following people:

1. Intellectual disability
2. Low literacy
3. English as second language; and
4. Older people



# Verbal communication

# Teach back is.....

- Asking clients to repeat **in their own words** what they need to know or do, in a non-shaming way.
- **NOT** a test of the client, but of how well **you** explained a concept.
- A chance to check understanding
- If necessary, re-phrase or re-teach the information and check understanding again.
- If they still do not understand, consider other strategies.
- **Confirm understanding before providing additional new information.**

# Teach back is supported by research

- ‘Asking that patients recall and restate what they have been told is one of 11 top patient safety practices based on the strength of scientific evidence.’

ARHQ, 2001 Report, Making Health Care Safer

- ‘Physicians’ application of interactive communication to assess recall or comprehension was associated with better glycemic control for diabetic patients.’

Schillinger (2003) Closing the loop, Arch Intern Med,  
Vol 163

# Teach back method

- Don't ask closed (yes/no) questions like:
  - “Do you understand?”
  - “Do you have any questions?”
- If providing education on more than one topic then ‘Chunk & Check’
- Teach 2-3 main points for first topic & then use teach back
- Then go onto the next topic

From Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

# Teach back examples

Ask clients to demonstrate their understanding **using their own words:**

- “I want to be sure I explained everything clearly to you. Can you please explain it back to me so I can be sure I did?”
- “What will you tell you wife/husband about the changes we made to your food intake today?”
- We’ve gone over a lot of information about a lot of things to do to get more exercise into your day. In your words, can you tell me what we talked about and how will you make it work for you at home?

# Teach back video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4r9NRbK9MRk>

## Ask Me 3

A patient education program designed to promote communication between healthcare providers & patients to improve health outcomes:

1. **What is my main problem?**
2. **What do I need to do?**
3. **Why is it important for me to do it?**

# Readability



# What improves readability of written materials?

# Write as simply as you can

- Avoid using jargon
- Use the simpler word choice

## Activity - Easy English

Common expression	Simpler choice
in relation to	about
assistance	help
at such time as	when
prior to	before
following	after
intervention	help, care
as a consequence of	because
at the moment	now

# Alternative words

## **PDF file**

- A to Z of Alternative words
- Plain Language Thesaurus
- How to write medical information in Plain Language

## **Websites**

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/plain-language-dictionary>

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>

## **App.**

- Plain Med – iPhone & Android

# Write as simply as you can

- Simple, short sentences
- Write what the reader needs to know, not what is nice to know
- One idea per sentence
- Write in a sequence of clear steps
- Limit the number of messages
- If you can't change difficult words, explain them
  - Cardiovascular disease is a condition that can effect your heart and brain.

# Write as if you are talking to a friend

- Use words that are simple and informal

- Be friendly and conversational

**Instead of writing:** Most people do not develop complications from having the flu vaccine.

**Write:** Flu shots are okay for most people.

- Call the reader 'you' and refer to your organisation as 'we.'

# Respect and value your readers

- Instead of writing 'a diabetic person' write 'a person with diabetes.'
- Choose words that are familiar and culturally appropriate for your readers
- Be positive
  - **Instead of writing:** Some forms of arthritis are very serious and, if left untreated, can result in substantial or complete disability.
  - **Write:** Treatment for some forms of arthritis can help prevent serious disabilities.
- Tell your readers how to get more help or information

# A new language for diabetes

(Diabetes Australia – Vic)



## Position Statement

### A new language for diabetes

Improving communications with and about people with diabetes

#### Summary

- Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic condition in Australia, affecting 1.7 million Australians. It is a progressive condition, which can reduce both quantity and quality of life, and requires daily self-care. On average, people with diabetes have higher levels of emotional distress than those without diabetes. Distress can continue throughout life with diabetes.
- The way language is used – both verbal and written – reflects and shapes our thoughts, beliefs and behaviours. Language has the power to persuade, change or reinforce beliefs, discourse and stereotypes – for better or for worse. Words do more than reflect people's reality: they create reality.
- Language needs to engage people with diabetes and support their daily self-care efforts. Importantly, language that de-motivates or induces fear, guilt or distress needs to be avoided and countered.
- Diabetes Australia believes optimal communication increases the motivation, health and well-being of people with diabetes; furthermore, that careless or negative language can be de-motivating, is often inaccurate, and can be harmful.
- The aim of this position statement is to encourage greater awareness of the language surrounding diabetes, and identify potential improvements.

***“Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind”***

Rudyard Kipling

#### The power of language

People are sensitive to the implications of the words and phrases used to describe, categorise and label aspects of their identity, language can define them and the attitudes it reflects, can affect self-confidence and motivation, and influence health and well-being directly or indirectly. Certain words and phrases can be de-motivating, inaccurate or even harmful. So, when communicating with and about people with diabetes, it is important to consider how your choice of language could affect their thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

Diabetes Australia recommends using language that encourages positive interactions, and positive outcomes when the person with diabetes leaves the interaction. Careful use of language applies equally to the conduct of health services, health professionals, family, friends and colleagues of people with diabetes, and the media. Furthermore, people with diabetes may do themselves a disservice if they also use negative language.

# Use the active voice

More direct and 'punchy', less formal

**Passive:** You will **be asked** to give information about your medical history.

**Active:** We will ask you for information about your medical history.

**Passive:** More fruits, vegetables and whole grains should **be eaten**.

**Active:** Eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

# Avoid Nominalisation

Nominalisation = changing a an action (verb) to a thing (noun)

Here are some examples of scientific verbs and their nominalizations:

Action	Nominalisation
to regulate	regulation
to analyze	analysis
to occur	occurance
to understand	understanding
to investigate	investigation
to delineate	deliniation
to perform	performance

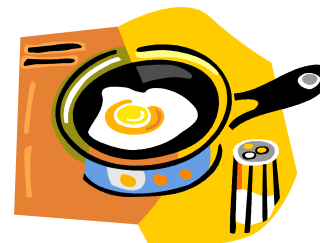
# Good design

## Avoid light text on a dark background

- Avoid using ALL CAPS
- Arial font at least size 14 (headings larger)
- **Bold** key words – avoid underlining
- Lots of white space
- Don't split a word between two lines
- Finish a sentence on page it starts on
- Use headings, subheadings and **dot points** (**no more than 5 at a time**) to break up information
- Do not centre text – keep it all to the left

# Include images

- Help to explain the text
- Should be at least 3cm X 3cm
- Photographs work best for showing real life events, people and emotions. Simple line drawings work well for client education
- Use cartoons and symbols with caution
- Make sure images are culturally appropriate
- Ensure images are high quality and clear



# How to check readability of written materials?

# Readability Tools

## Articles:

1. <http://www.readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php>

OR

**Microsoft word** – though only Flesch Kinkaid & Flesch Reading Ease

2. [http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability\\_test\\_and\\_improve.jsp](http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp)

## Resources

SAM (Suitability Assessment of Materials)

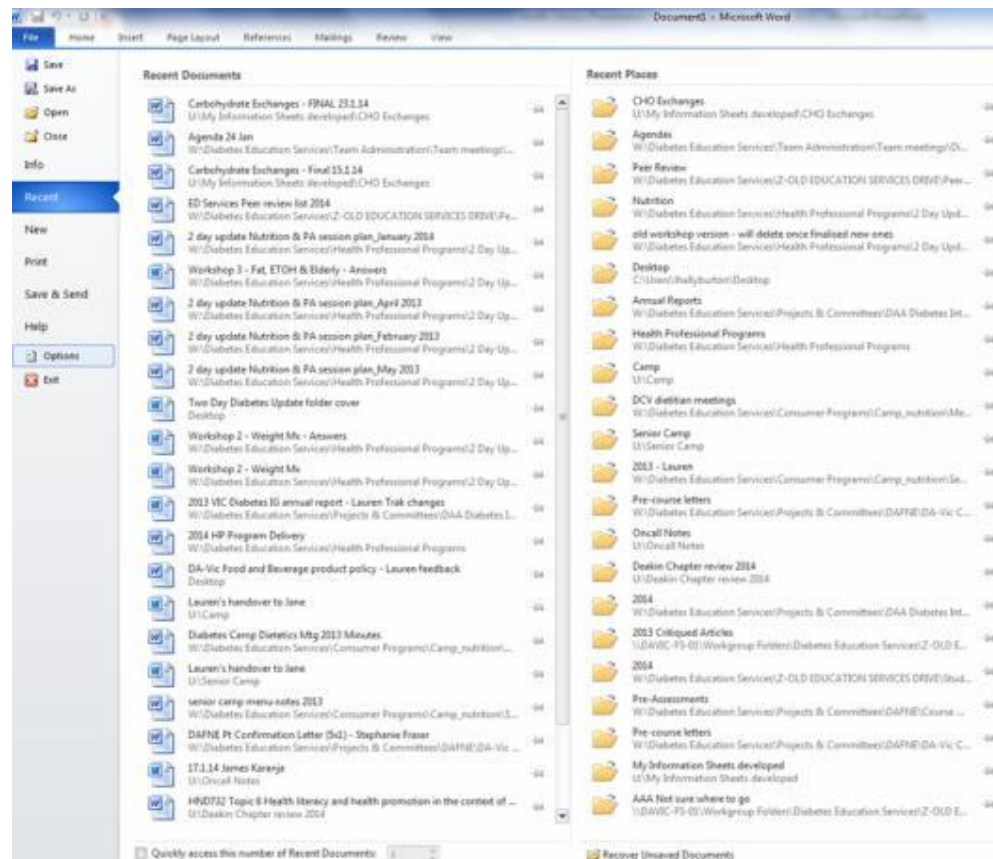
<http://www.readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php>

The screenshot displays the 'Free Text Readability Consensus Calculator' on the website. The page is divided into several sections:

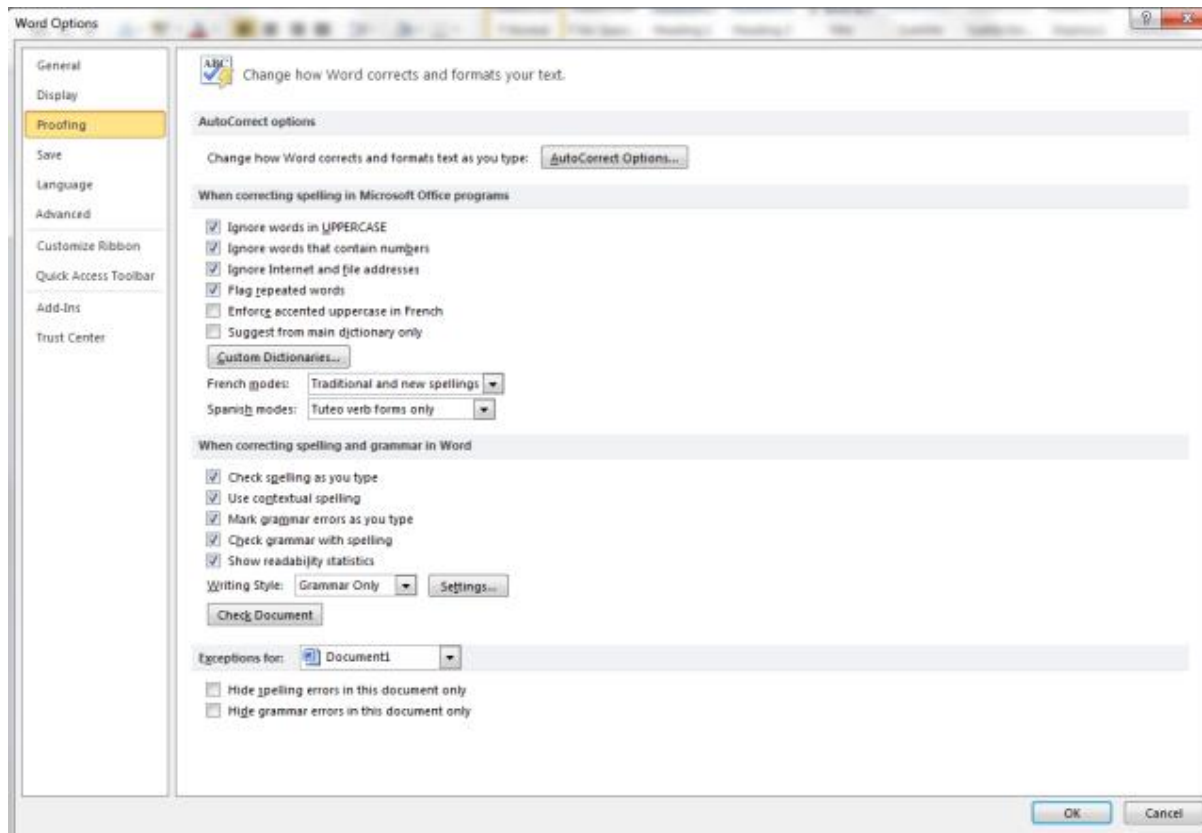
- Free Text Readability Consensus Calculator:** This section explains the tool's purpose: to calculate the number of sentences, words, syllables, and characters in a sample of text and plug them into 7 popular readability formulas. It includes a note about separate tools for grade levels and a 'CHECK TEXT READABILITY' button.
- Free Text Readability Consensus Calculator:** This section provides a sample of text for testing, which is a paragraph about gestational diabetes. It includes a 'Check Text Readability' button.
- Free Text Readability Consensus Calculator:** This section displays the results of the calculation, including the Flesch Reading Ease score (30.3), Gunning Fog score (10.9), Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level (12.4), The Coleman-Liau Index (13), The SMOG Index (11.6), Automated Readability Index (12.1), and Lincoer-Wills Formula (13.2).
- Readability Consensus:** This section provides a summary of the results, stating that the text is 'difficult to read' and that the reader's age is '17-18 yrs. old (12th graders)'.

The page also features a sidebar with links to various readability formulas and a 'STUDY ONLINE TODAY' banner at the bottom.

# Tools to assist in writing in Plain/Easy English



# Tools to assist in writing in Plain/Easy English



# [http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability\\_test\\_and\\_improve.jsp](http://www.online-utility.org/english/readability_test_and_improve.jsp)

**Online-Utility.org**  
Utilities for Online Operating System

Online Utility - English Language - Text - Math - Other -

## Tests Document Readability

### Readability Calculator

This free online software tool calculates readability : Coleman Liau index, Flesch Kincaid Grade Level, ARI (Automated Readability Index), SMOG. The measure of readability used here is the indication of number of years of education that a person needs to be able to understand the text easily on the first reading. Comprehension tests and skills training.

This tool is made primarily for English texts but might work also for some other languages. In general, these tests penalize writers for polysyllabic words and long, complex sentences. Your writing will score better when you use simpler diction, write short sentences. It also displays complicated sentences (with many words and syllables) with suggestions for what you might do to improve its readability.

Basic text statistics are also displayed, including number of characters, words, sentences, and average number of characters per word, syllables per word, and words per sentence.

Enter text (copy and paste is fine) here:

or read it from a website (only plain text .TXT) :

#### Tests Document Readability

##### Readability Calculator

Number of characters (without spaces) : 1,055.00  
 Number of words : 203.00  
 Number of sentences : 11.00  
 Average number of characters per word : 5.20  
 Average number of syllables per word : 1.84  
 Average number of words per sentence : 18.45

Indication of the number of years of formal education that a person requires in order to easily understand the text on the first reading

Gunning Fog index :	14.87
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Approximate representation of the U.S. grade level needed to comprehend the text :

Coleman Liau index :	13.18
Flesch Kincaid Grade level :	13.35
ARI (Automated Readability Index) :	12.28
SMOG :	14.20

Flesch Reading Ease : 32.24

#### List of sentences which we suggest you should consider to rewrite to improve readability of the text :

- If you are taking blood glucose lowering medications or insulin, you could experience low blood glucose levels soon after meals and then high blood glucose levels later on.
- Once other causes of your symptoms have been ruled out your doctor will perform one of the available gastric emptying tests to confirm a diagnosis of gastroparesis.
- It is important to check your blood glucose levels more frequently after you eat as this can help to provide more information to assist in your management.

# SAM

- SAM = Suitability Assessment of Materials
- Rates materials in these six areas
  1. Content
  2. Literacy Demand
  3. Graphics
  4. Layout and Type
  5. Learning Stimulation & Motivation
  6. Cultural Appropriateness

# Questions?

# Where to from here?

## Acknowledgements

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