



## Basic Guidelines for Developing Effective Print Materials for Low-Literacy Intended Audiences

*Adapted from [www.LEP.gov](http://www.LEP.gov)*

- Use **short** sentences and paragraphs.
- Write in the **active voice**.
- Clarify concepts with **examples**.
- **Avoid jargon**, technical terms, abbreviations, and acronyms.
- Include a glossary if necessary (but **define key words within the sentence**).
- Give the reader an **action step** he or she can take right away (e.g., call your clinic, send in a request); this tends to improve the retention of information and encourages the reader to begin practicing the desired behaviors immediately.
- Use **graphics and design to make the reader's job easier** and to increase comprehension and recall; make sure they support, rather than compete with, the text.
- **Don't assume that pictorial signs, symbols, and charts are more effective than words** for low-literacy intended audiences. Some experts suggest "universal" symbols, such as a stop sign, an arrow, or big black "X," usually test well. Don't confuse this intended audience with large, busy matrices – for example, functionally illiterate individuals have trouble using a bus schedule.
- **Avoid using all capital letters**; they are more difficult for everyone to read, particularly for less skilled readers.
- **Use captioned illustrations** that are relevant to the subject matter and model the desired behavior.
- **Use headings and subheadings** to convey a message and help reinforce the flow and content.
- **Use bullets and other graphic devices** to highlight key messages and to avoid large blocks of print.
- **Avoid right-justified margins**.