

# Assessing Tobacco Cessation Materials for Health Literacy

When assessing a printed piece for health literacy principles, evaluate the material using the criteria described below. This review will create a critical assessment to determine how well the piece incorporates health literacy principles.

## Health Content

---

*Having a clear goal for your materials will help focus the content and clarify your messages. Your materials should aim to persuade the reader to adopt a quitting behavior or take a specific action.*

---

### *Purpose*

Is the purpose of the material clear from the title, cover and introduction?

### *Quitting Behaviors*

Are the desired quitting behaviors or specific action steps clearly identified for the reader?

### *Health Benefits*

Are the specific health benefits of quitting smoking described (from the reader's point of view)?  
Are these health benefits proven to spur behavior?

### *Scope*

Is the content limited to 3 to 5 key messages?  
Is information that is "nice to know" – but not necessary – left out?

### *Health Language*

Has jargon and technical language been removed?  
Are the remaining health terms clearly defined and explained?

### *Use of Illustrations/Photos*

Are key quitting behaviors and benefits shown with illustrations/photos next to relevant text?

### *Reader Interaction*

Are there opportunities to engage readers (checklists, etc.)?  
Are there opportunities for readers to tailor the material to their situation?

## Organization

---

*Low-level and busy readers give up reading more easily, and need guidance to read longer sections.*

---

### *Set up*

Is the purpose and content of the piece described in the introduction?

### *Headings and Subheads*

Are action-oriented headings and subheads used?

### *Grouping*

Are complete ideas presented on a single page or on two facing pages?

### *Summary*

Does the summary reiterate the key messages?

## **Language**

---

*Determine the reading level of the text. Follow other language recommendations to make the text as easy to read as possible.*

---

### *Readability score*

Is the Fry reading level score below 5<sup>th</sup> grade?

### *Writing style*

Are active voice and a friendly, conversational style used?

Are short sentences (8-10 words) and short words (one or two syllables) used?

### *Vocabulary/Word choice*

Are lay terms used to discuss cessation and health effects of smoking/quitting?

Are abbreviations, acronyms and statistics avoided?

## **Appearance**

---

*A simpler, less complicated design will aid comprehension. The reader's eye follows text more easily if blocks are broken up with cues and space.*

---

### *Typography*

Is the type size large enough to read (at least 12 point)?

Is a serif font used for body text?

Are ALL CAPS and other type treatments avoided?

Is the line spacing adequate so that text doesn't appear too dense?

### *Layout*

Is there adequate white space (margins at least ½ inch)?

Is the right margin unjustified?

Is the line length appropriate (40-50 characters)?

### *Design organizers*

Are visual cuing devices used (bold, shaded boxes, icons)?

Are bullets used effectively (no more than 5 items, appropriate size, spacing)?

### *Color*

Is color used to aid readability (avoiding color overload)?

Is reverse type avoided?

### *Illustrations*

Is the meaning of each illustration clear? Are captions and labels used?

Are multi-step illustrations used to convey processes?

