



How do they know what to do if they don't understand what you said?


8 Steps to Better Communication

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Most importantly **Adopt Universal Precautions**

Since you can't always tell by looking....

- Take actions that minimize risk for everyone
- Use plain language with everyone





8 Steps to Better Communication




Create Shame-Free Environment

Even highly educated people prefer simple, understandable health information.





Practice plain, simple language

20% of American adults read at or below the **5th grade** level.




Most health care materials are written above the **10th grade** level.



Avoid Jargon

What do these mean?

ACA	CMS
HIPAA	CBC
HSA	FAQ
EOB	LOL




Use Plain Language

Prevents osteoporosis


↓

Keeps bones strong




What is a way to say each of these words in plain language?

Prior authorization	
Pulmonary	
Regimen	
Antibiotic	
Immunization	



Use Short Words & Sentences

- Return in one week.
- Bring your insurance card with you.
- Please sign in.
- Pay your premium by next Friday.
- Drink plenty of orange juice.




Use one-idea sentences

Sentences with one idea

No: Help may be available for you to pay your medical bills and to find out if you qualify, here's what you should do.

Yes: We may be able to help you pay your medical bills. Find out if you qualify. Follow these steps.




Use active voice

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


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

Avoid:	Use:
It shall be signed	You must sign
You will be notified	We will notify you



Use concrete language (say what you mean)

Exercise <u>regularly</u>	Exercise 3-5 days per week for 40 minutes
Don't lift anything <u>heavy</u>	Don't lift anything over 10 pounds.
Get <u>adequate</u> rest	Get at least 7 hours/night



Only “need to know” concepts

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3 Show or draw pictures

Fever 	Chills 	Body aches
Cough 	Sleepy 	Headache
Sore throat 	Runny nose 	Sneeze

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Relevant pictures

Which would be best to illustrate a stop smoking message?

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4 Slow down

Speak clearly and at a moderate pace.

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5 Organize for understanding

Chunking:

- Break up material into manageable chunks
- Limit to 5 pieces of information at a time; 3 even better

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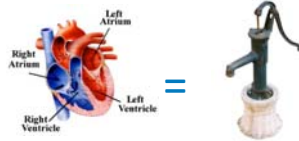
Text and White Space

- **12 pt. or larger font size**
Arial, Times Roman, not Century Gothic
- **Avoid ALL CAPS and script**
EAT VEGETABLES *Eat Vegetables*
Eat Vegetables Eat Vegetables
- **Use boldface type and underlining**
- **Use white space**

Wisconsin health literacy

Use Analogies

“The heart is like a pump.”



Help with numbers

- Less is more—only relevant information
- Reduce need for calculations
- Pictographs, diagrams
- Frequency, not percent
- Familiar objects as analogies
 - (3 oz. meat = deck of cards)



Verify understanding using “Teach Back”

- Asking people to repeat **in their own words** what they need to know or do, in a non-shaming way.
- **NOT** a test of the person, but of how well **you** explained a concept.
- A chance to check for understanding and, if necessary, re-teach the information.



Using Teach Back...

- Ask to **demonstrate** understanding

“We have gone over a lot of information today. What will you tell your son about your surgery?”

“I want to be sure I explained everything clearly, so can you please tell me how you will use your asthma medication?”

- **Do not** ask: “Do you understand?”



Teach Back Practice

Jane went to her yearly check-up—free with her health insurance. She got a bill 2 months later. She called her insurance to ask why she was charged. During the check-up, the provider looked at a rash on her feet and diagnosed it as athlete’s foot. You explain the check-up was free but Jane was charged because the provider diagnosed her medical problem.



Teach Back Practice

Mr. Bollig has just been diagnosed with high blood pressure. The patient has an average blood pressure of 150/92 over the last 4 visits. You are explaining what the patient will need to do to treat this condition, including taking medicine, making changes to his diet and increasing physical activity.



Teach Back Tips

- Start slowly – once a day?
- Plan and practice your approach
- Use handouts

Once you get used to Teach-Back, it doesn't take any more time.



Ask the right questions

– Is there something else you want to address in the visit today?

– Is there anything else you want to address in the visit today?

Reducing patients' unmet concerns in primary care: The difference one word can make. Heritage J, et al. J Gen Int Med 2007;22:1429-1433.



Encouraging questions

- "What questions do you have?"
- "Tell me your questions."



Questions?

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