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.
- \square Sentences are short, simple, and direct.
- \square 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).
- \square Important points are highlighted.
- \square Study purpose is presented early in the text.
- □ Titles, subtitles, and other headers help to clarify organization of text.
- \square Headers are simple and close to text.
- □ Underline, bold, or boxes (rather than all caps or italics) give emphasis.
- \square Layout balances white space with words and graphics.
- □□ Left margins are justified. Right margins are ragged.
- □ Upper and lower case letters are used.
- \square 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).

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes of Health

Graphics are:

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

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

National Institutes