

Checklist for Building Health Literacy Principles Into Trainings

Use the checklist below when you're creating or updating a Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) training to make sure the training incorporates health literacy principles.

The checklist includes 2 sections:

- Information about health literacy to include in your trainings
- Health literacy and clear communication best practices that will make your trainings easy to understand and use

Share Information on Health Literacy

- Explain what health literacy means and why it matters.**
Start by defining health literacy and explaining why it matters within the context of your training. The idea is to highlight how health literacy affects everyone — and emphasize that participants can address health literacy in their work.

Be sure to explain both personal health literacy and organizational health literacy — you can pull health literacy definitions from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2030 initiative.
- Share strategies for addressing health literacy.**
Help people understand strategies they can use to communicate clearly. For example, if you're talking about reference interviews, remind training participants to define medical terms in plain language to make sure people understand health information. Try to explicitly tie strategies back to health literacy!
- Stress the importance of identifying and understanding your audience.**
Include information about identifying the intended audience early in the planning process. Explain that it's important to learn as much about the audience as possible.
- Explain how to tailor your approach.**
Offer tips for tailoring communications to meet the audience's needs. Remind training participants that it's important to consider their audience's characteristics — like age, cultural factors, and geographic location — when providing health information. You could note, for example, that teens who live in a neighborhood with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables need different information about healthy eating than older adults in a high-income community.

- Explain how to identify resources that follow health literacy best practices.**
Help participants understand what makes resources easy for people to access, use, and understand. Explain how you decide if a resource is reliable and accessible. For example, is it because the content is easy to read, actionable, and from a trustworthy source? Sharing your criteria can make it easier for participants to identify high-quality resources on their own.
- Connect participants to other health literacy resources.**
Think about the health literacy resources you consider the most useful. For example, would you suggest that participants check out another NNLM training more focused on health literacy?

Make Trainings Easy to Understand

- Clearly state the purpose of your training.**
When you promote a training, make sure you clearly explain its purpose and objectives. This will help people in your intended audience understand that the training is relevant to them.

It's also important during the training to make sure participants can tell right away what to expect. Introduce your topic, agenda, and objectives at the beginning.

- Design for easy viewing.**
If you're leading a webinar:
 - Keep slides clean and simple with plenty of white space
 - Use bullets to organize information
 - Use a sans serif font that's regular weight (not light or bold)

Tip: Remember that website screenshots can be blurry and hard to read. Instead, demo websites during the training, or share the site URL along with key points of what the site offers.

- If you're offering a class in Moodle:
- Break content up into chunks with clear, informative headers
 - Keep sentences and paragraphs short
 - Use bullets — remember to keep lists to 7 or fewer items
 - Emphasize key points with bolding and font size

- Divide trainings into short, manageable sections.**
Even if your training is long, you can help people follow along by breaking up the content into short sections. Limit each section to 1 idea, and look for opportunities to break longer sections into subsections. For example, if you're highlighting 15 resources, organize them into different categories (e.g., resources for parents, resources for teachers, and resources for kids).

Let people know when you're finishing 1 section and moving into the next. Clear headers and divider slides will help.

- Use common, everyday language.**
Use clear, simple words that people hear in everyday conversation. If you need to use unfamiliar words or technical terms, define them in plain language. If you're linking to outside resources, make sure they're written in plain language, too.
- Choose meaningful visuals.**
Use visuals like photos, illustrations, or graphics that support your key points and make information easier to understand. Avoid using "decorative" visuals — make sure any visuals support key messages in your training.
- Make sure numbers are easy to understand.**
Aim to use numbers only when they have a real purpose. Be sure you use simple numbers (like whole numbers rather than fractions or decimals) and numerals (2, 2nd) rather than spelled-out numbers (two, second).
- Provide clear, concrete action steps.**
Tell people exactly what they can do after the training to learn more or take action. Is there something they just learned that you can suggest they start doing right away? Be specific, and break actions into short, manageable steps. It's helpful to share action steps throughout the training and at the end.
- Emphasize and summarize key points.**
Think about what you want people to know when they finish the training. To help them remember that information, include key takeaways at the end of each section — and especially at the end of the training.