

# Plain Language Principles

Grounded in real science and continuous community input, Expecting Health works collectively with organizations, healthcare professionals, people, and communities to provide the right information at the right time - from planning a pregnancy to early infant care. At Expecting Health, we use clear, simple language in our communications to communities, partner organizations, and the general public.

## WE USE PLAIN LANGUAGE TO ENSURE:

- We get messages across clearly and receive responses and action quickly
- The reader understands what news and health information means for their life
- Families, communities, and lay leaders can be actively involved
- The public has the opportunity to engage in projects and programs

## QUALITY MATERIALS WRITTEN IN PLAIN LANGUAGE:

- are visually appealing
- make good use of white space
- are organized and flow logically from one idea to the next
- are understood quickly and easily provide clear, actionable information

## PLAIN LANGUAGE ESSENTIALS

### Keep it Brief

Sometimes we overdo it with words. A rule of thumb: be simple and direct, use familiar and accessible words, and write in a conversational tone.

### Break Down Jargon

Use common words, break dense information into smaller pieces, spell out abbreviations, and use examples to illustrate technical points.

## NEED MORE HELP?

### Center for Plain Language

<http://centerforplainlanguage.org/>

### CDC's Health Literacy Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy>

### Paint a Picture

Make good use of white space and add visual elements like headers, pictures, icons, bulleted lists, and graphs to help your reader connect and follow along.

### Include an Action

Make sure the reader knows what to do. Place the "call-to-action" or takeaway message at the beginning of your material.

### CDC's Clear Communication Index

<https://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/index.html>

### Plain Language Action & Information Network

<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

PLAIN LANGUAGE  
=  
your audience  
understanding the first  
time they read or hear it