

How to Write Clear Advertisements to Recruit Research Participants

Make your recruitment materials clear and easy-to-understand by keeping health literacy in mind. This will help you quickly get the right families to enroll in your research study, reducing the amount of time you have to spend on the recruitment process.

Health literacy is the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.

Use these tips for writing clear advertisements. Each tip includes one or more examples.

Write in a conversational tone, using “you” and “your” to help engage the reader.

You and other teens will meet together with a member of our team so we can hear your thoughts about the program.

Instead of: Participants will be asked to give feedback about the program in a focus group discussion with other teens.

Use an active voice. This means making the subject of your sentence the do-er of the action.

Active voice: You can get this medicine at Seattle Children’s.

Passive voice: This medicine can be obtained at Seattle Children’s.

Active voice: We will ask you to answer written questions about your child’s sleep.

Passive voice: Written questions about your child’s sleep will need to be answered by you.

Active voice: We will use this information to develop tools to help families with care planning.

Passive voice: From this information tools will be developed to assist families with care planning.

Use short sentences, aiming for less than 20 words.

These surveys take 10 to 20 minutes each. They ask questions about the treatment plan, your family and your child’s general health.

Instead of: These surveys take 10 to 20 minutes each and ask questions about the treatment plan, your family and your child’s general health.

Use simple words rather than jargon.

‘High blood pressure,’ instead of ‘hyperglycemia’

‘Show signs,’ instead of ‘exhibit symptoms’

‘Not enough,’ instead of ‘deficient’

‘Stomach area,’ instead of ‘abdomen’

‘About,’ instead of ‘approximately’

Delete unnecessary words.

We are ~~currently~~ looking for ~~volunteer~~ families to take part in a research study about sleep.

The study will take place at the Seattle Children’s Hospital main campus, ~~which is located~~ at 4800 Sand Point Way NE, in northeast Seattle.

Define any technical words that you must use with simple terms.

This research study is looking at the development of babies born with a birth defect called craniosynostosis. Craniosynostosis happens when the plates of a baby’s skull grow together too early.

Define abbreviations by spelling out what they stand for on first reference.

We are looking for children who have had a confirmed case of West Nile virus (WNV).

Use words rather than symbols.

‘More than,’ not >

‘and,’ rather than /

Be consistent with words in the text.

For example, use ‘teens’ instead of switching between ‘teenagers,’ ‘adolescents’ and ‘teens.’

Use bulleted lists when listing multiple requirements a potential participant must meet, or multiple steps a participant must complete.

Your family may be able to take part if mom, dad and child:

- Are related by blood.
- Are willing and able to give a small blood sample.
- Were not born with a heart defect.

If you choose to take part in the study, we will ask you to:

- Come to Seattle Children’s for a check-up and some tests to find out about your exercise fitness.
- Answer written questions.

- Come to an exercise program and social group at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Use sentence case and avoid underlining, italics and colored text.

Does your teen have type 1 diabetes?

Instead of DOES YOUR TEEN HAVE TYPE 1 DIABETES?

Use an unjustified, or “ragged-right,” margin.

Dfasdkljfl asdjf eiweouz eiuc uejcl wenv ieao jlcmla weiald ptio wiuiour ieopiu cnsd
wieeo iqiouep queru cjklajd iupwe dkjc ll iewoq iewourp iourekjda eiupeoru mckj eioupi
Dfasdkljfl asdjf eiweouz eiuc uejcl wenv ieao jlcmla weiald ptio wiuiour ieopiu truepqld

Dfasdkljfl asdjf eiweouz eiuc uejcl wenv ieao jlcmla weiald ptio wiuiour ieopiu cnsd
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Follow [Seattle Children’s editorial style and usage guidelines](#).

Use photos that are relevant to the message.

Make sure to show correct behaviors, like biking with helmets, swimming with life jackets, etc.

Resources:

- [Health Literacy Overview from the CDC](#)
- [Everyday Words for Public Health Communication](#)
- www.Plainlanguage.gov
- [We ♥ Health Literacy](#)