

Tip sheet for writing posters

Six best practices

- Find a central focus (message, idea)
- Write in plain language
- Write text for scanning
- Edit
- Use official style consistently (e.g., Chicago or APA style)

Plain language “top 7” checklist

- Active voice (verbs)
- Use “you” and “we” to speak to the reader
- Use capital letters sparingly (equivalent of shouting)
- Use concrete, familiar words, not jargon or acronyms
- Omit unnecessary words
- Use the simplest tense possible—often the present
- Use short sentences (15 to 20 words)
- One idea per paragraph; three sentences per paragraph

Write text for scanning

- Reduce the word count (by half if possible)
- Distinctive titles/headings and subheadings/titles
- Bulleted lists

Titles/headlines “top 8” checklist

- 5 – 7 words
- First two words are most important: this is what people read
- Active voice (call to action)
- Present tense
- Old, boring and familiar words: not easily misunderstood
- Minimize capital letter: They take 57% longer to read than lowercase letters
- Use contractions: Less formal and more conversational (e.g., don’t)