



Pretesting

It is important to pretest your materials before finalizing and distributing them. The purpose of pretesting the materials is to assess whether they are understandable, relevant, attractive and acceptable to the target audience.

The best way to see if your materials are easy-to-read and understood by clients is to conduct a focus group. By holding a focus group, you get feedback to help your materials be even more understandable, relevant, attractive and culturally competent.

Ideally, your focus group would be 5-7 people who are in the target audience for the publication (in terms of gender, ethnicity, primary language, etc.). A sample focus group protocol follows. Before your focus group begins, develop questions, both general and specific in order to guide the conversation.

If you are unable to hold a full focus group, then try to ask individuals to critique your materials. Again, it is ideal to have people from the target audience do this. At the very least, have 2 or 3 coworkers review the materials. You can ask the same questions as you would to a focus group, but keep in mind that individuals may not be as open with criticism as they might be in a group setting.

See the following page for a sample focus group protocol.

Online resources for conducting focus groups:

The Free Management Library's webpage on conducting focus groups
http://www.managementhelp.org/grp_skill/focusgrp/focusgrp.htm

A website with tips on conducting focus groups by the Market Navigation, Inc.
http://www.mnav.com/qualitative_research.htm

The Community Toolbox provides over 6,000 pages of practical skill-building information on over 250 different topics. Topic sections include step-by-step instruction, examples, check-lists, and related resources.
<http://ctb.ku.edu/index.jsp>

A guide to conducting focus groups with youth, including sample questions developed by the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency to help support children in military families (pdf).

http://www.cfpsa.com/en/psp/youth/resources/focusGroupQuestions_e.pdf





Sample Focus Group Protocol

Location
Date
Time

Purpose of focus group:

To review and critique the Brochure on Prescription XYZ.

I. INTRODUCTION

- a) Hi everybody and thank you for being here. My name is Jane Doe and I am here to ask you questions about a brochure that our organization wants to hand out. This is my colleague John Smith, who is here to listen and take notes. Thank you for taking time to participate in this discussion group. We will keep the meeting to about 1 hour. We won't take any breaks during the session, so please get up to use the bathroom or get food as you need. If any of you have a cell phone, please turn it off.
- b) We are really looking for honest feedback, so please don't hold back. The questions we ask you today are all designed to help us create better informational materials in order to provide better health care. All of the information you share with us today will be confidential. We are interested in anything and everything that you have to say.
- c) As moderator for our discussion, my job is to make sure that we stay focused on the topic, get to all the questions, and see that everybody gets to participate. Your job is to give your ideas, and share your experiences related to my questions and to comments made by other members of the group. Please remember that there are no right or wrong answers! Everything you tell us is valuable. Please speak loudly and clearly, one person at a time. Be respectful of what others have to say, but if you don't agree we want to hear why. We ask that you respect each other's privacy and keep all discussion comments to yourself after this focus group so that we can create a safe and comfortable environment during our conversation.

II. PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM-UP

Let's start by having everybody introduce himself: please tell us a first name and age.





III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- a) Please take a few minutes and read through the Brochure on Prescription XYZ. When you're reading, feel free to circle or mark any words that you don't understand or any confusing sentences.
- b) What is your first impression when you look at the Brochure on Prescription XYZ? What do you think it is about? Does it look like something you would read?
- c) Do you like the title "the Brochure on Prescription XYZ"?
- d) What do you think of the pictures and/or drawings?
- e) What is the main thing you learned from reading the Brochure on Prescription XYZ?
- f) Are there any words or sentences that you had a hard time understanding or didn't make sense?
- g) Can you tell me in your own words how you would take this prescription?
- h) Can you tell me in your own words who should **not** take this prescription?
- i) Do you have any other comments you would like to make about Brochure on Prescription XYZ?

IV. WRAP-UP

Thank you so much for your time and input. Again, this information is very important to help make our information easier to understand and to make sure people are taking their medicine correctly. You all have our contact information, so if you think of anything else that we should know or have a comment that you were not comfortable sharing with the group, feel free to get in touch with us. Thank you!





Note on Informed Consent

When conducting a focus group or pretesting your materials in another way, it is important to have the participant sign an informed consent form. Often times, due to legal jargon, informed consent materials are written at an extremely high literacy level. It is important to consider the audience that will be reading and signing the informed consent form and try to make it as close to their literacy level as possible. This toolkit does not go into detail on making informed consent documents easy-to-read, but there are a number of resources available online should you want to review your organization's current paperwork.

Resources

This paper provides techniques to develop easy-to-read consent forms along with examples of standard consent forms rewritten in a plain language format.
<http://www.texashealth.org/ContentStore/IRBResearchReadabilityMay2003.pdf>

This document gives a checklist for a writer to consider when creating a plain language consent form; it also has a glossary of common hard-to-read consent language with plain language synonyms.
<http://www.wfu.edu/rsp/irb/documents/Checklist%20for%20Easy-to-Read%20Informed%20Consent.doc>

