

# A public health messaging tool: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Clear Communication Index

## A summary of

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). CDC Clear Communication Index. A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/> &nbsp;



National Collaborating Centre  
for Methods and Tools  
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des méthodes et outils

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## Categories:

Tool, Communication, Knowledge dissemination, Knowledge exchange

## Date posted:

November 14, 2016

## Date updated:

September 18, 2017

## Tool

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## Relevance For Public Health

The Index was developed by the CDC and is intended to be used for communication with the public. The tool can be used for public health websites and any public health communication messages or fact sheets, brochures, or other materials to inform, educate, or motivate the public to learn about and follow public health recommendations or convey public health during outbreaks or emergency response situations.

## Description

The purpose of the CDC Clear Communication Index tool is to help develop and review public health communication materials using science-based criteria for clear communication.

The purpose of the CDC Clear Communication Index tool is to help develop and review public communication materials for clarity, encourage collaboration between writers and reviewers to ensure accuracy and assess ease of use of a communication material. The tool focuses on criteria that enhance clarity and help in understanding, and provides a quantitative score to help evaluate communication materials. The Index fills a gap in existing communication checklists and readability formulas by considering the audience, purpose and communication characteristics that are known to enhance clarity and help in understanding.

The Index provides a quantitative score to help evaluate communication materials. There is a score sheet with 20 items that are scored as Yes (1 point) or No (zero points). The 20 items are divided into four sections: Core (Part A, 11 questions), Behavioural Recommendations (Part B, 3 questions), Numbers (Part C, 3 questions) and Risk (Part D, 3 questions). A *modified* score sheet includes 13 items that are divided into four sections for short form (e.g., Facebook) and oral communication materials. A widget and an Index scoresheet that can be downloaded and saved is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/>.

## Implementing the Tool

### Who is Involved?

The Index is intended for anyone who develops public health communication materials.

### Steps for Using Tool

The Index is a 20-item score sheet divided into in four sections: Core (Part A, 11 questions), Behavioural Recommendations (Part B, 3 questions), Numbers (Part C, 3 questions) and Risk (Part D, 3 questions). The Index assesses communication materials in the following seven areas: main message and call to action, language, information design, state of the science, behavioural recommendations, numbers, and risk.

A *modified* score sheet also exists consisting of 13 items divided into four sections, which can be used for

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These summaries are written by the NCCMT to condense and to provide an overview of the resources listed in the [Registry of Methods and Tools](#) and to give suggestions for their use in a public health context. For more information on individual methods and tools included in the review, please consult the authors/developers of the original resources.

short form (e.g., Facebook) and oral communication materials.

Prior to using the Index, the user should find out four key pieces of information:

1. Who is the primary audience?
2. What do you know about the health literacy skills of the audience?
3. What is the primary communication objective?
4. What is the main message of the material?

## Evaluation and Measurement Characteristics

### Evaluation



Has been evaluated.

In the publication by [Baur et al.](#), materials revised using the CDC Index were rated higher than the original materials. On average, 22% more people correctly identified the main message in the revised material than in the original material. Easy to understand, easy to find relevant information, and less unfamiliar words or numbers were among the benefits shown when using the CDC Index to enhance the public health communication message.

### Validity

Information not available

### Reliability

Information not available

### Methodological Rating



Unknown/No evidence

## Tool Development

### Developers

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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

### Method of Development

CDC staff, contractors, and an expert panel developed the Index through a nine-step, iterative process that involved multiple pretesting and testing activities and engaged scientists and communication professionals inside and outside of CDC. To summarize, the Index process involved CDC subject matter experts in communication and public health, contract support from communication experts, an expert panel of social science researchers, an online consumer panel, and a convenience sample of users of CDC's website (CDC.gov).

### Release Date

2013

### Contact Person

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## Resources

<b>Title of Primary Resource</b>	CDC Clear Communication Index: A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products
<b>File Attachment</b>	None
<b>Web-link</b>	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/">http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/</a>
<b>Reference</b>	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). <i>CDC Clear Communication Index. A Tool for Developing and Assessing CDC Public Communication Products</i> . Retrieved from <a href="http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/">http://www.cdc.gov/ccindex/</a>
<b>Type of Material</b>	Scoresheet
<b>Format</b>	On-line Access
<b>Cost to Access</b>	None.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Conditions for Use</b>	None

<b>Title of Supplementary Resource</b>	The CDC Clear Communication Index is a New Evidence-Based Tool to Prepare and Review Health Information
<b>File Attachment</b>	None
<b>Web-link</b>	<a href="http://hpp.sagepub.com/content/15/5/629.full.pdf+html">http://hpp.sagepub.com/content/15/5/629.full.pdf+html</a>
<b>Reference</b>	Baur, C. & Prue, C. (2014). The CDC clear communication index is a new evidence-based tool to prepare and review health information. <i>Health Promotion Practice, 15</i> , 629-637.
<b>Type of Material</b>	Journal
<b>Format</b>	Periodical
<b>Cost to Access</b>	None.
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Conditions for Use</b>	© 2014 Society for Public Health Education