



Communication techniques

Ranked in order of perceived effectiveness

1. Plain, non-medical language (most effective)
2. Family member
3. Teach Back
4. Speaking slowly
5. Pictures
6. Follow-up telephone call
7. Models
8. Writing instructions
9. Reading aloud instructions
10. Underlining key points
11. Having patients follow up with office staff
12. Asking patients how they will follow instructions at home
13. Two or three concepts
14. Printed materials (least effective)

Communication techniques for patients with low health literacy: a survey of physicians, nurses, and pharmacists. Schwartzberg JG, et al. Am J Health Behav. 2007 Sep-Oct;31 Suppl 1:S96-104. Permission granted from Editor-in-Chief, Elbert D. Glover, PhD.

Examples of using plain, non-medical language	
Provider	Patient
Arthritis	Joint Pain
Benign	Harmless; not cancer
Carcinoma	Cancer
Cardiac	Heart
Chronic	Happens again and again; does not end
Enlarge	Get bigger
Fatigue	Tired
Prenatal	Before the baby is born
Screening	Test