



TOOLKIT for Making Written Material Clear
and Effective

SECTION 4: Special topics for writing and design

PART 10

“Before and after” example: Using this
Toolkit’s guidelines to revise a brochure

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services



TOOLKIT Part 10

“Before and after” example: Using this Toolkit’s guidelines to revise a brochure

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This document is Part 10 of the *Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective*. The Toolkit has 11 Parts. It was written for the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) by Jeanne McGee, McGee & Evers Consulting, Inc. The guidelines and other parts of the Toolkit reflect the views of the writer. CMS offers this Toolkit as practical assistance to help you make your written material clear and effective (not as requirements from CMS).



Introduction

Background on the Toolkit

The *Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective* is an 11-part health literacy resource from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). For background on the Toolkit, see Toolkit Part 1, *About the Toolkit and how it can help you*, and Toolkit Part 2, *Using a reader-centered approach to develop and test written material*.

In earlier parts of this Toolkit, we offer a detailed set of guidelines for writing and design (the full list is in Toolkit Part 3, *Summary List of the “Toolkit Guidelines for Writing and Design”*). The Toolkit discusses each guideline, one at a time, telling why it is important, how you can apply it to your own materials, and giving examples (see Toolkit Part 4, *Understanding and using the “Toolkit Guidelines for Writing”* and Toolkit Part 5, *Understanding and using the “Toolkit Guidelines for Graphic Design”*).

When you go through the guidelines one-by-one, as we do in other parts of the Toolkit, it can be hard to envision the *combined impact* of applying them to a written piece. This Toolkit Part 10 may help. It has a “before and after” example that uses selected guidelines to analyze and improve a brochure for a state-operated tobacco quit line.

About this makeover example

We are grateful to the *Tobacco Prevention and Education Program* at the Oregon Department of Human Services for supplying the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line brochure and allowing us to use it as a “makeover” example in this Toolkit. (For further acknowledgments, see the end of this document.)

Here is some background about the brochure:

- **The purpose of this brochure is to inform Oregonians about the quit line and encourage them to use it.** This particular brochure is the general brochure for the Quit Line. It was written for a diverse audience of Oregon residents that includes people with low literacy skills. In addition to this general brochure, the State of Oregon uses other means and materials to publicize the quit line, including brochures written for specific subgroups such as teen smokers.
- **The brochure is a standard size tri-fold, designed to fit in a literature rack.** The brochure is printed on both sides of a sheet of paper that is approximately 8 ½ by 11 inches. It has three narrow panels on each side. When folded, it measures 3 ¾ by 8 ½ inches. Since it’s important that the brochure fit in a literature rack, we needed to maintain the tri-fold design and size in our

makeover. (For discussion of the navigation challenges of tri-fold brochures, see Figure 5-2-f in Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2, *Guidelines for overall design and page layout*.)

Here are some things to keep in mind about the way we show the Quit Line brochure:

- **In this book, the brochure (including the size of the print) looks smaller than it really is.** The pages of this Toolkit are not large enough for us to reproduce the brochure in actual size. When you examine such things as size of print, please bear in mind that the pages we reproduce are smaller than the actual brochure.
- **The brochure is printed in orange and black, but we can only show it in shades of gray.** Since this part of the Toolkit is designed to be printed using black with an accent color of green, we are not able to show you the orange and black color scheme of the original brochure. Instead, we show it in shades of gray and describe the color scheme in words.
- **Although we can’t show the original brochure in color, we do show the revised version in color.** We do this in order to illustrate how you might use an accent color. For this purpose, we use black with green (because these are the colors of this part of the Toolkit).



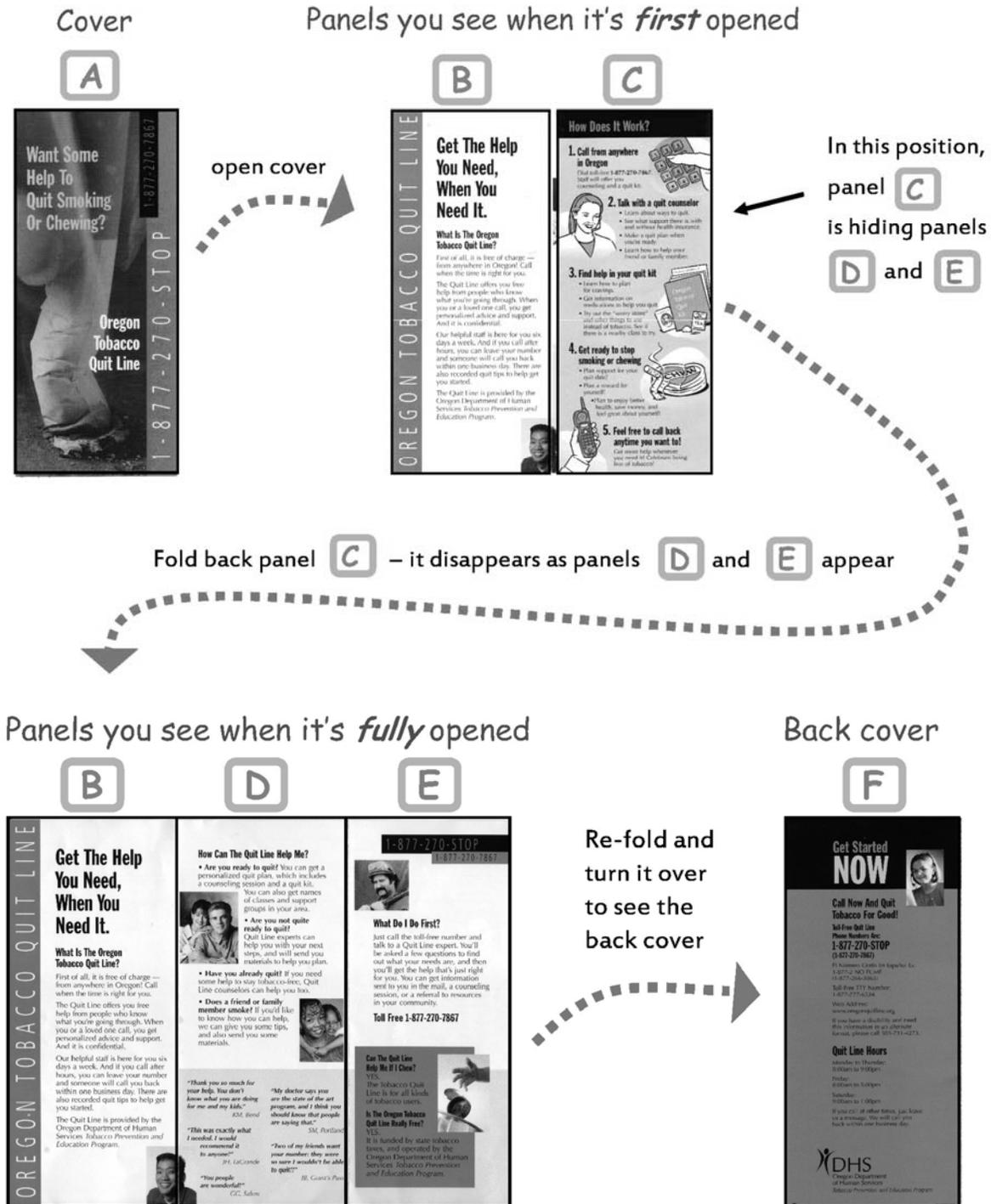
Panel-by-panel commentary on the *original* brochure

Figure 10-a below shows the brochure that we used as our starting point (for convenience, we sometimes call this the “BEFORE” version).

- **First, an overview.** Figure 10-a below starts by showing you the panels of the brochure in miniature size. This will give you a general sense of how it looks and show you how it opens. For easy reference, we’ve labeled the panels of the brochure with letters from “A” to “F.”
- **Then a panel-by-panel commentary on the brochure.** The commentary in Figure 10-a includes many references to specific guidelines that are part of the “*Toolkit Guidelines for Writing and Design*.” For easy reference, all Toolkit guidelines it mentions are included in a later section of this document that begins on page 29.

Figure

10-a. The **original** Quit Line brochure (shown first in miniature, and then followed by a panel-by-panel commentary).



A Original cover



Main title text is fine, but formatting makes it hard to read

- The title text is informative and has a friendly tone. It gives readers a clear signal about the purpose of the brochure.
- Contrast is weak between the light orange title text and the background photo in a duotone of orange and gray.
- Printing the title on top of the photo makes it harder to read. Also, capitalizing all words of the title makes it harder to read.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 5.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, and 6.8.*

The subtitle stands out best

Printed in white, this subtitle pops out because it has the greatest contrast on the page. Since it is more prominent than the main title, it may draw attention first, and could cause some readers to overlook the main title.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 5.3 and 6.7.*

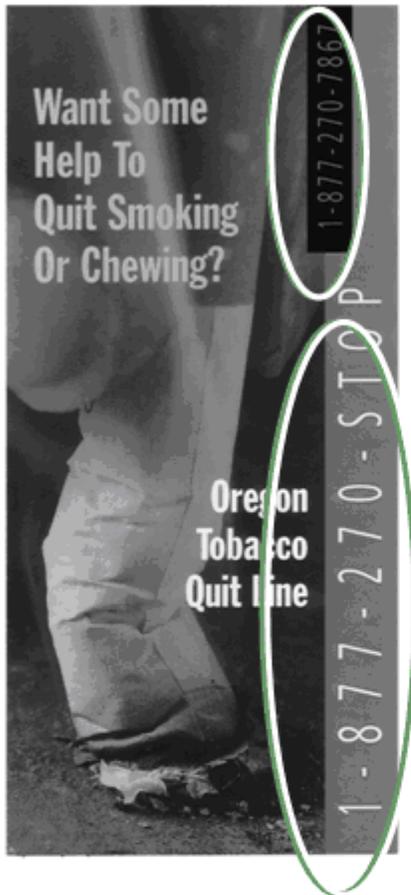
What the cover photo is showing is unclear at first glance

This photo is an extreme close-up of fingers stubbing out a cigarette. You have to study it for a moment to figure this out (especially if the cover text is not there to give you clues).

Photos that are unclear at first glance have less impact and tend to distract and confuse readers.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 9.1 and 9.2.*

A **Original cover**, *continued*:



Printing the numbers sideways makes them hard to read

When text is printed sideways, readers have to make an extra effort to read it. If they don't make this effort, then the text is essentially decorative rather than functional.

See Toolkit Guideline 6.8.

Formatting the numbers in such different ways obscures the connection between them

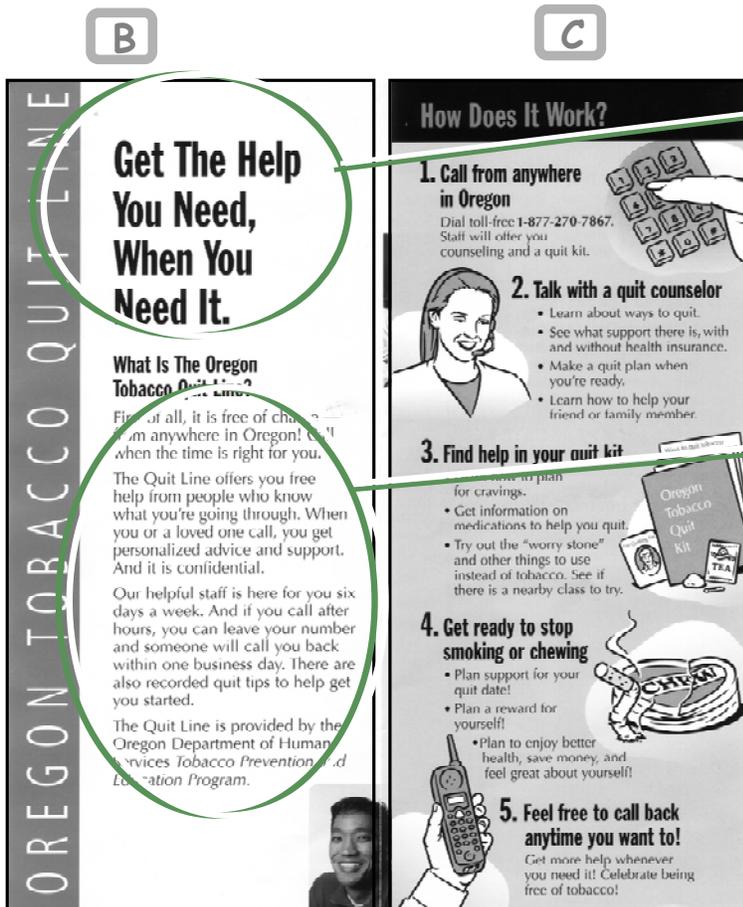
The small phone number at the top is in light orange type on a black background.

The large phone number is in white on a medium orange solid background (this combination shows up better here in black and white than it does in color).

These are actually two versions of the same phone number, one in all numbers, the other with the word “Stop.” But separating them and formatting them in such different ways breaks the link between them. This might make a reader pause to ponder why there are two numbers. It's best to avoid doing anything that might distract your readers.

See Toolkit Guidelines 6.7 and 6.8.

Original - here are the panels you see when you first open the brochure



Size, contrast, and the surrounding white space help make this title in the upper left corner an entry point into this two-page spread. Capitalizing only the first word of the title would make it easier to read.

It is hard for this block of unbroken text that follows the main heading to compete with the strong visual interest on the right hand side. Readers may skip over this text and go straight to panel C.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 2.1, 5.3, and 6.5.*

There’s a lot going on here – where do you look first?

The illustrations and photograph break up the text and add appeal. Did they draw your eye first? What did you look at next?

Readers of text written in English typically start at the top left corner and work their way back and forth across the page until they reach the bottom right corner. This is called “**reading gravity;**” see Figures 5-2-c and 5-2-d in Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2 (page layout). Keeping your layout consistent with reading gravity helps readers notice everything on the page.

Original - here are the panels you see when you first open the brochure, *continued*:



The step-by-step approach on panel C is helpful and appealing

- Breaking a process down into a series of steps makes it seem more manageable and helps people understand what they need to do.
- Headings for each step are prominent and informative. The brief text and bulleted points make it easy for readers to pick up the main points.
- The combination of good headings, brief text, and bulleted points increases the appeal of this panel and makes it easy to skim (much easier to skim than panel B on the left side).

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3.

Poor contrast makes the text in panel C harder to read

The heading at the top “How does it work?” is printed in orange against a black background. Contrast is so weak that you hardly notice it. The rest of panel C is printed against a light orange shaded background:

- This colored background does two things that are helpful: it sets panel C apart from panel B, and it draws attention (though the images do this well enough on their own).
- However, these advantages are outweighed by the problem it causes: the shading reduces the contrast considerably, making the text harder read. Compare, for example, how easy it is to read the regular text on panel B compared to panel C.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 6.7, 6.8, and 8.2.

The step-by-step guidance on panel C disappears when people open the brochure all the way

Panel C is the one that folds back. This panel is not a good place to put crucial information or points that should remain visible for easy reference as people go through the brochure.

See *Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2, Figure 5-2-f, “Why it is tricky to design a tri-fold for ease of navigation”*.

Original - here are the panels you see when you first open the brochure, *continued*:



◀ **This image is hard to understand at first glance**

Could you tell immediately that this image is part of a finger pushing a key on the phone?

Images of body parts in isolation or that are cropped (trimmed) in odd ways can be confusing and unappealing to readers. The keypad is also shown in isolation from the telephone. Showing it out of context makes it harder to recognize at a quick glance.

See *Toolkit Guideline 9.1*.

The position of this photo is problematic

This photo is printed across the fold and so it is half-hidden until the brochure is fully opened. Printing images or text across a fold in this way is distracting and reduces their impact.

Also, notice the visual impact of placing the smiling man right next to the illustration of the hand holding a phone:

- The two images are not in good proportion to each other (the hand is as big as the man’s head) and the styles are quite different (photo v. line drawing). These differences distract from the impact of both images.
- So does placing them so close together. (And if you glance very quickly, it might seem that a hand is coming out of the man’s shoulder.)

See *Toolkit Guidelines 9.1, 9.2 and 9.7*.

Original - here are the panels you see
when the brochure is fully opened



Text is simple and supportive

This text is friendly and informative. It invites people to call, whatever their stage of readiness to quit. Writing style is clear and simple, direct and specific.

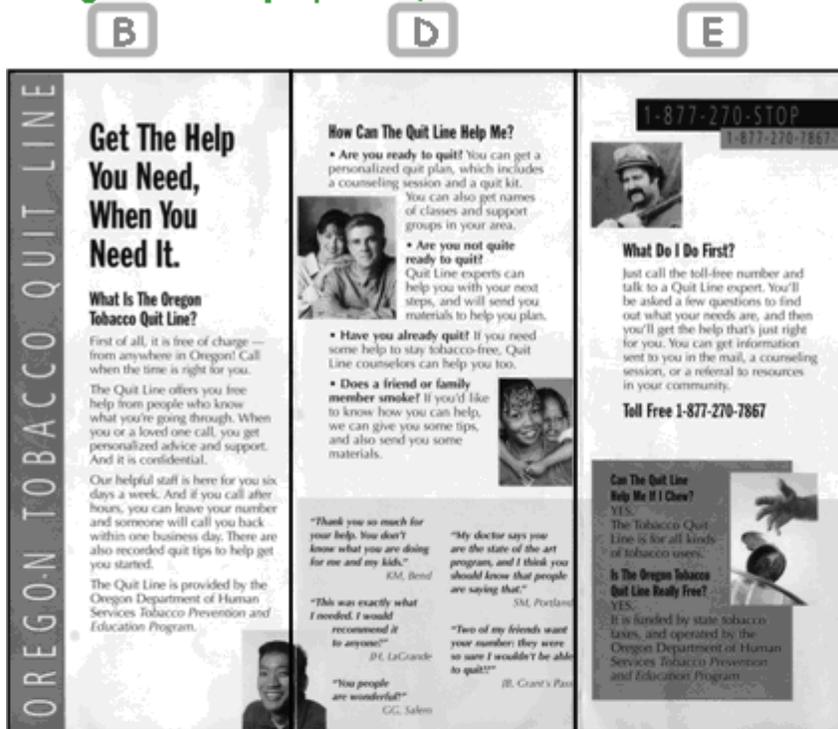
See Toolkit Guidelines 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.8, 4.1, and 4.3.

Uses testimonial quotations to reassure; uses Q&A to address possible questions

Upeat quotations help reassure readers about the Quit Line. The message they convey is, "Other people have had good experiences – I will, too!" The Q&A anticipates two questions readers may have and repeats the answers here for emphasis.

See Toolkit Guidelines 1.2, 3.1, and 4.2.

Original - fully opened, continued:



The faces and quotations help signal that the Quit Line is for all Oregonians

- Besides adding warmth and visual interest, the faces reflect diversity of age, gender, and race. Including a couple and a mother-daughter in the images may help reinforce that message that quitting benefits your family, too, and that the Quit Line assists people who want to support a loved one who is trying to quit.
- The testimonial quotations are from people who live in a variety of urban and rural locations throughout the state of Oregon.

See *Toolkit Guideline 9.3*.

The poses have a weak connection to the subject matter of the brochure

Since images have such strong impact, it's helpful to choose images that relate closely to the topics you cover and help reinforce main points. The images on these panels simply show people smiling into the camera.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 9.1 and 9.4*.

Original - fully opened, continued:



This text is hard to read

This text is printed on a bright orange background. This adds color to the layout, but at the expense of reducing the contrast significantly. Poor contrast makes the words hard to read, and people often skip over text that is hard to read.

See *Toolkit Guideline 6.7.*

Checking on suitability of images

When you choose images for written material, it can be hard to tell how readers will interpret and relate to them. For example, in this brochure, is the young mother's hairstyle too extreme? Is that man who is carrying something across his shoulders a construction worker or a soldier? Do readers find the pose of the couple appealing? To check on the cultural appropriateness of images, it's important to get feedback directly from your intended readers.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.7 and 9.8.*

This image is hard to understand at first glance

Can you tell immediately that this image shows someone throwing away a can of chewing tobacco?

This image looks awkward (a hand cut off at the wrist floating above the rest of the image) and is hard to interpret (that curve is apparently the edge of a wastebasket).

Including an image that's not clear reduces the impact of the image. It also slows readers down and may distract them from the main messages.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 9.1 and 9.2.*

F Original back cover

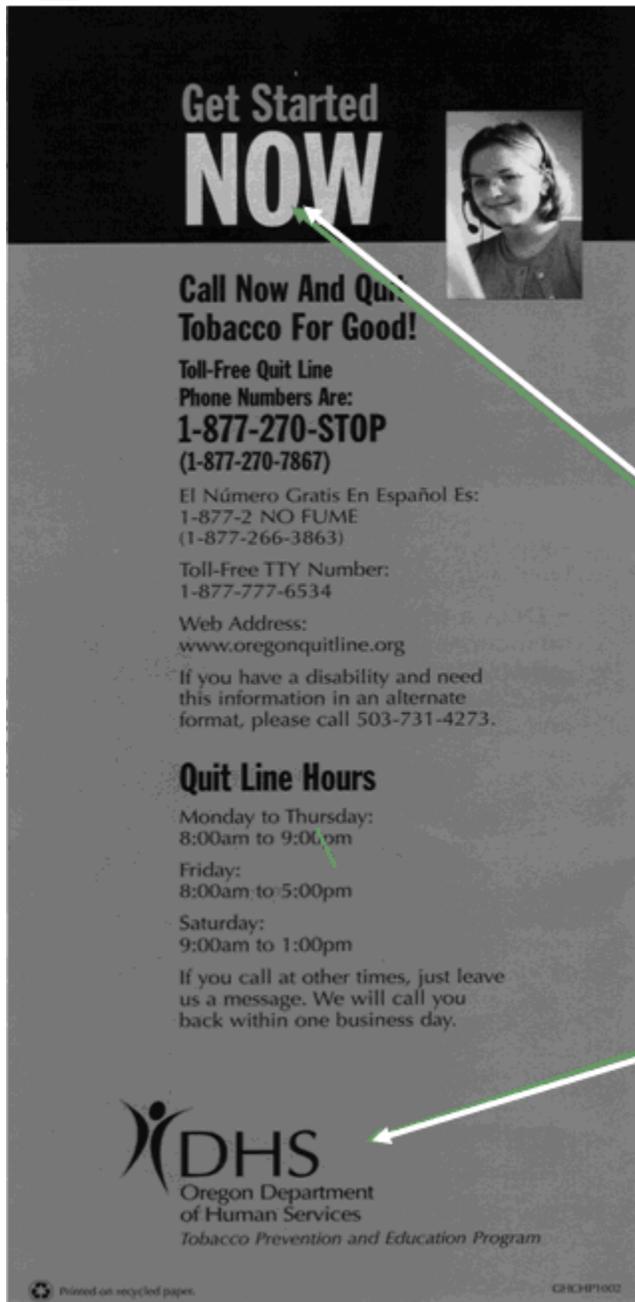


Photo adds visual interest and a friendly touch

By showing an operator with a headset, this photo reinforces the content of the brochure. It helps that she looks pleasant and approachable.

This word pops out

Other than the photo, it’s the word “NOW” that stands out the most on this page.

Since high contrast draws readers’ attention, it’s best to use it to reinforce the most important points. Does putting so much emphasis on “NOW” de-emphasize other important information on this page?

Good place for the logo

The back cover is a good place to put acknowledgments and contact information for the organization that issued the brochure. It’s also the place to put a publication number and date.

See Toolkit Guidelines 1.7, 7.1, 7.2, 9.1, and 9.4.

F Original back cover, *continued*:



Important information is buried here on the back cover

The back cover of a brochure is not in a prominent position, and readers sometimes overlook it. This means that the back cover is not a good place to put vital information or to put answers to questions that may come up when people begin reading the brochure.

- The back cover is the *only place* in the brochure that shows the alternate numbers for Spanish speakers and the TTY number for people with hearing limitations.
- The back cover is also the *only place* on the brochure that gives the Quit Line hours.

Poor contrast makes everything on this page hard to read

The text is black on a bright orange background. Printing text on a shaded background reduces the contrast and makes it hard to read. Much of the print is relatively small, which makes it even harder to read.

Lack of headings or other emphasis makes the block of numbers hard to skim

Because there are no headings or text emphasis to draw attention to key words such as “Spanish” and “TTY,” people who don’t happen to read through the whole block of numbers may miss this information.

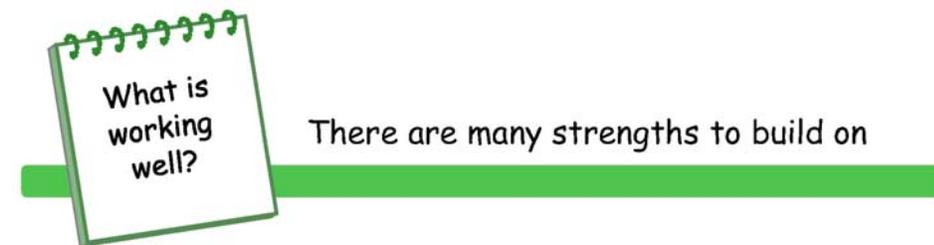
The orange and black color scheme is intense

With the medium orange background and band of black at the top, color tends to dominate this page and distract from the content. To some readers, this combination may suggest Halloween.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 5.3, 6.4, 6.7, 7.1, 7.2, 8.1, 8.2, and 8.3.

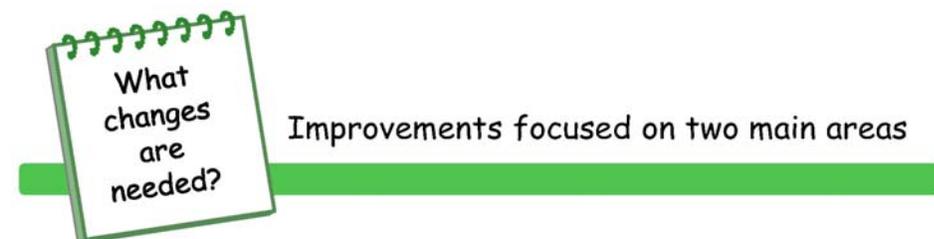
Source: Oregon Tobacco Quit Line brochure. Used with permission from the State of Oregon. Commentary added for use in this Toolkit.

Changes to be made in revising the brochure



As you can see from the panel-by-panel commentary in Figure 10-a above, there are numerous strengths to build on in revising the Quit Line brochure. These include:

- Content that was chosen based on knowledge of the intended readers
- Content that focuses on main messages
- Content that anticipates and answers questions the reader may have
- Clear and simple text that addresses the reader directly and has a friendly and supportive tone
- Use of devices that are helpful to readers, such as bulleted points and step-by-step explanations
- Use of images to help break up the text and add visual interest
- Sensitivity to issues of cultural appropriateness in choice of images



The commentary in Figure 10-a also suggests two main areas where improvements could be made. One involves how the material is organized, and the other involves making the text more readable by improving contrast.

1 Reorganize the content to create a tighter, smoother, and more logical flow of information

Before:

In the original brochure, a lot of the information about who should call the Quit Line, how to call, what happens when you call, and who sponsors the Quit Line is scattered and repeated in different places in the brochure. Some of the most important content is placed in the least prominent positions. For example, the step-by-step sequence is on panel C, which disappears from view when the brochure is fully opened. The calling hours and information for Spanish speakers and people with disabilities are on the back cover.

After:

As part of revising the brochure, we streamlined the content by reducing repetition and concentrating discussion of a given topic in just one place. We changed the way the content is grouped, labeled, and sequenced so that there is now one straight path through each panel of the brochure. Content that was set apart from the main text in the original brochure (such as the quotations and the sidebar on chewing tobacco) are now fully integrated into a single flow of text. We consolidated all of the information on hours and phone numbers into the step-by-step instructions and formatted this section to stand out clearly. To make the material easier to skim, we added more headings and more text emphasis (such as using boldface for the first sentence in a series of bulleted points).

2 Put all text on a white background to make it more readable

Before:

As shown in Figure 10-a, a good deal of the text in the original brochure is either printed in black on top of a shaded background (light orange or bright orange) or printed in light-colored text on top of a darker background. Both of these ways of printing text reduce the contrast and make it harder to read.

After:

To improve ease of reading, all text in the revised brochure is printed on a white background.

3 A few other changes, too

As you will see in Figure 10-b below, which shows the revised brochure, we made some other changes as well:

- **Changes in design.** We made a major change in the cover design. We also added a number of new design elements, including the spiral pad to emphasize the Quit Line hours and numbers, and the callouts on the back cover to emphasize the testimonial quotations.
- **Changes in content.** Working with staff members at the State of Oregon *Tobacco Prevention and Education Program*, we took advantage of this makeover opportunity to add some clarifications and updates to the content. These included the following edits:
 - Rewriting the description of what happens when people call the Quit Line to focus more on the personalized response and less on the Quit Kit.
 - Dropping the words “counselor” and “counseling” from the text.
 - Clarifying that *all* services provided by the Quit Line are free (not just the call).
 - Deleting the text that invited callers to leave a message if they call after hours (this practice had not worked well).

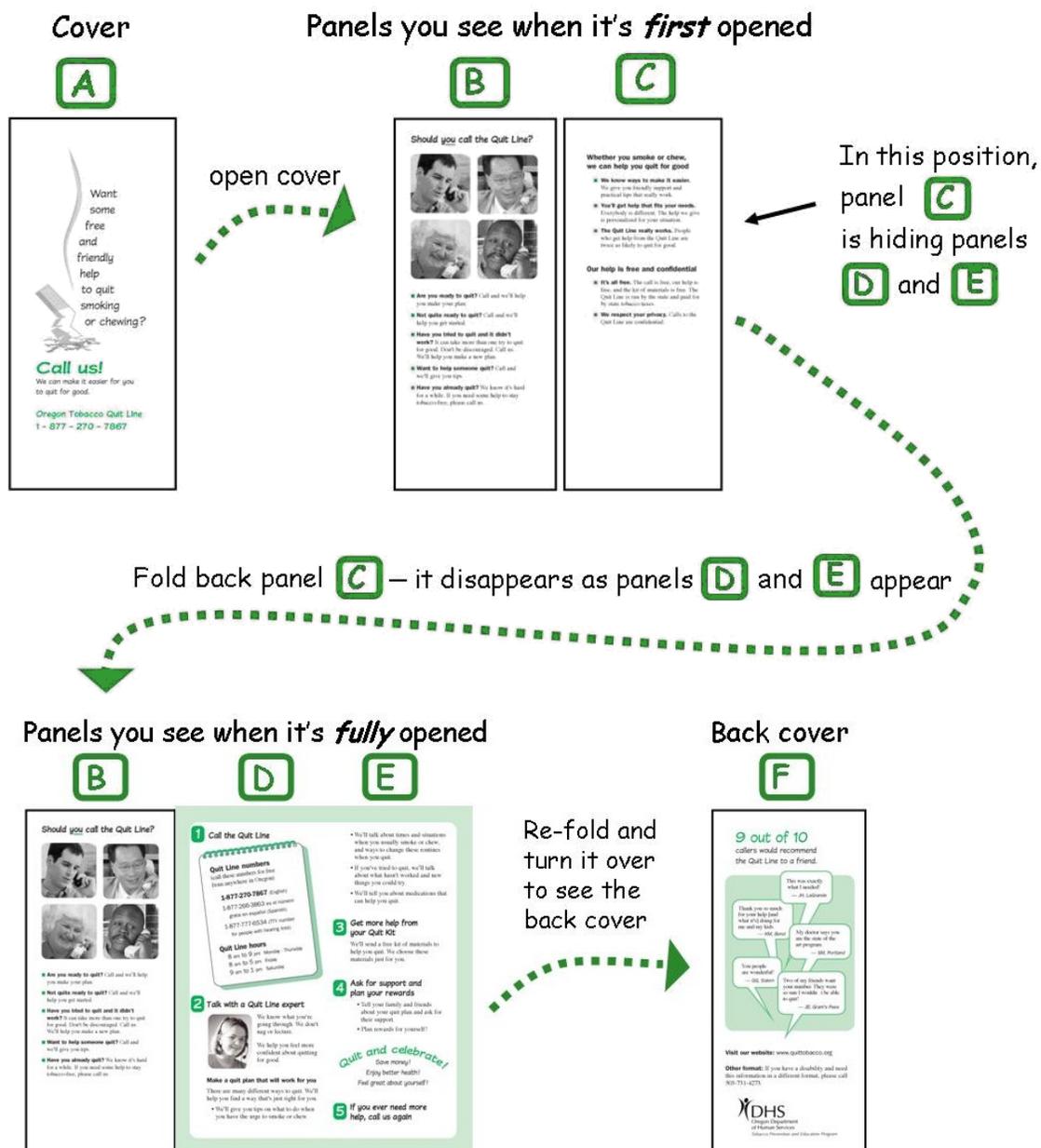
Figure 10-b below shows the revised Quit Line brochure. This figure includes a panel-by-panel commentary that explains the reasons for the changes and refers to specific Toolkit guidelines (the guidelines it mentions are listed in a later section of this document that begins on page 29).



Panel-by-panel commentary on the revised brochure

Figure

10-b. The revised Quit Line brochure (shown first in miniature, and then followed by a panel-by-panel commentary).



A REVISED cover



First impression: clean, friendly, uncluttered

A simple cover design with a few visual and color accents to lend interest.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 1.1 and 5.2*.

Sparing use of color as an accent to emphasize the most important information

Instead of using color to decorate, this cover uses color to help guide readers and emphasize key messages. The splash of colored text at the bottom of the cover helps draw the eye downward through all of the text, and it highlights the invitation to call.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 5.3, 7.4, and 8.2*.

Only one phone number

For a clean and simple look, the cover shows only the numeric version of the Quit Line phone number (not the 1-877-270-STOP version), and it spreads the numbers out for easy reading and emphasis.

- The all-numbers version is easiest to dial; hunting on the dialing keypad for the numbers that correspond to letters of a word slows people down.
- Moreover, changing the number from 1-877-270-7867 to 1-877-270-STOP does not simplify it enough to make it easy to remember.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 3.7, 7.2, and 7.4*.

A REVISED cover, *continued*:



Guided by feedback from readers, the cover text was revised to be more supportive in tone and to address possible barriers

Focus group research by the State of Oregon showed why some tobacco users were reluctant to call:

- **Concerns about cost.** They understood that a call to the Quit Line was toll-free, but figured there might be a charge for Quit Line services.
- **Concerns about being scolded.** Some thought the help from the Quit Line might be accompanied by criticism for using tobacco.
- **Skeptical that anything could help.** Some people with a history of unsuccessful attempts to quit saw little point to making a call.

To help address these concerns and encourage people to call the Quit Line:

- We **added the key words “free” and “friendly”** to the original title (which was “Want some help to quit smoking or chewing?”).
- We also added a **new tag line**: “We can make it easier for you to quit for good.” (Note that we used the word “easier” rather than “easy.”)

Besides reinforcing important messages, these additions to the text help establish a friendly and supportive tone before readers even open the brochure.

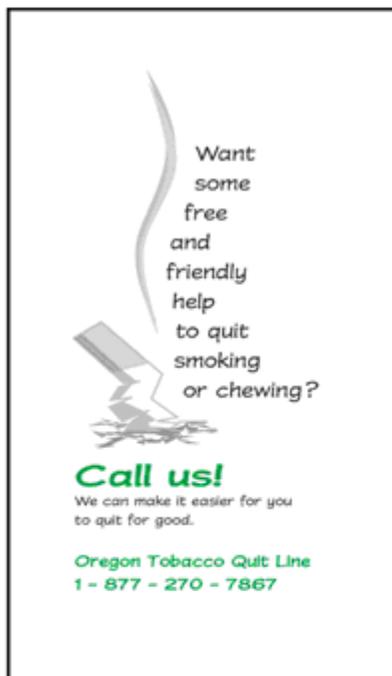
See *Toolkit Guidelines* 1.2, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, and 4.6.

A friendly yet readable font

For the cover text and main headings on the inside, we chose a font (“Wastrel”) that looks friendly and approachable but is also highly readable. Unlike many decorative fonts, Wastrel comes in multiple weights and styles. The “expanded” style is used to accent the words, “Call us!”

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, and 6.6.

A **REVISED cover,** *continued:*



The title is spread out across multiple lines and curved to follow the plume of smoke

This treatment of the title draws the eye and helps guide it down toward the rest of the text on the cover. *See Toolkit Guideline 5.3.*

However, in putting just a word or two on each line, this effect sacrifices some ease of reading. For discussion of appropriate line length, see *Toolkit Guideline 6.11*. This guideline advises against making lines of text either too short or too long.

The image of the cigarette being crushed

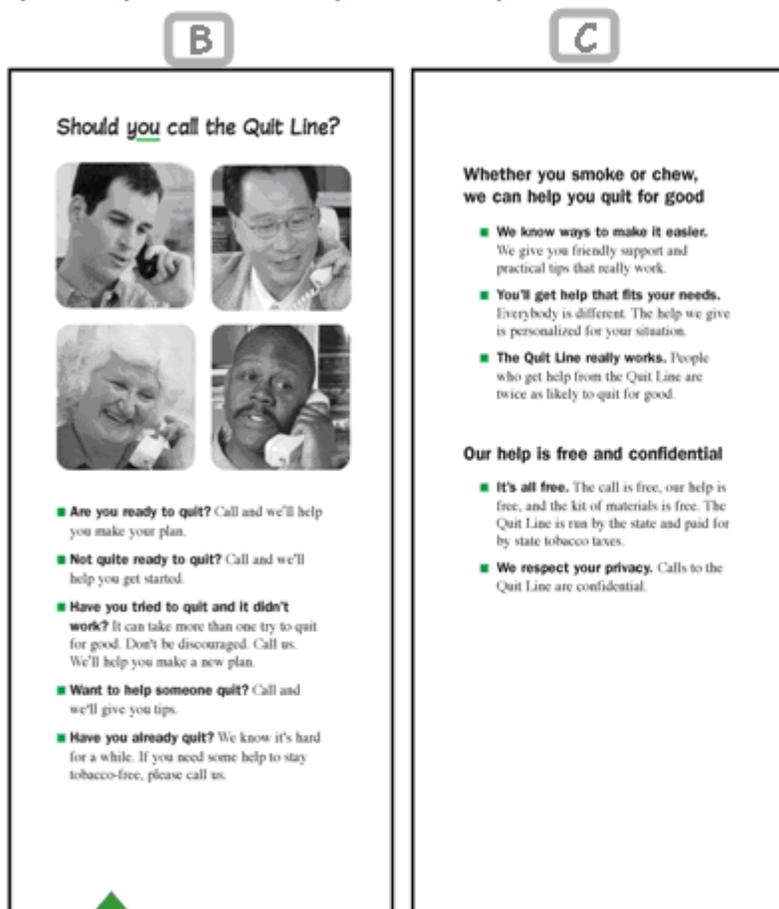
This clip art of a crushed cigarette has appeared in previous Quit Line material, and many Oregonians connect this image with the Quit Line. To capitalize on this recognition, we put the image on the cover of the brochure.

It is challenging to find appropriate images to convey tobacco cessation, and using this image raises a couple of concerns:

- Might it trigger a desire to smoke rather than a desire to quit?
- Does it emphasize cigarettes too much? Even though chewing tobacco is also mentioned in the title (“smoking or chewing”), the impact of the image might outweigh the words.

These concerns about the particular image that was chosen could be explored by getting feedback from the intended readers. *See Toolkit Part 6, How to collect and use feedback from readers. See also Toolkit Guidelines 9.1, 9.3, and 9.8.*

REVISED Panels B & C (these are the panels you see when you first open the brochure)



A clean look, with lots of white space

The tidy layout and large amount of white space on these two pages gives an open and easy feel, and encourages people to keep reading. The style is clear and consistent throughout the brochure.

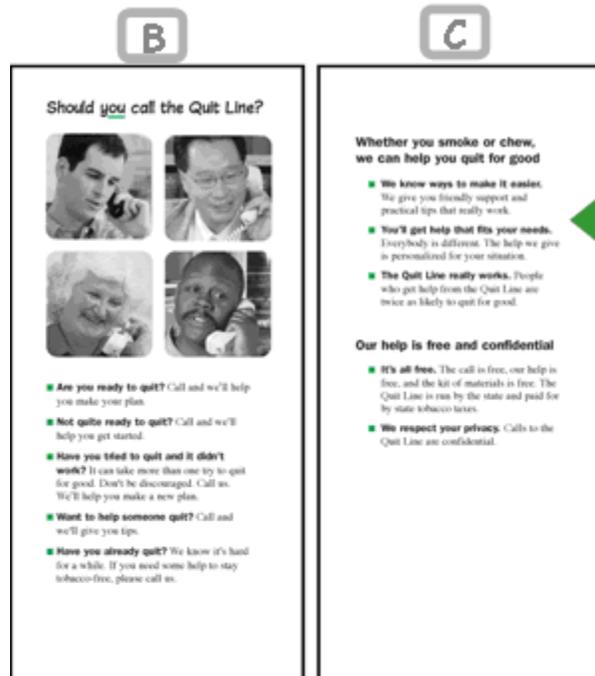
See *Toolkit Guidelines* 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4.

To enhance impact and minimize distraction, the photos are grouped and placed at the beginning

This block of photos is in the upper left corner, the spot where readers tend to look first as they enter a new page. Putting the photos in this top left-hand corner helps encourage readers to look at the photos first and then read the text that follows. *For more on this topic see the discussion of “reading gravity” in Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2, Guideline 5.3 and Figure 5-2-c.*

In contrast, if the photos were at the bottom of the panel instead, they might draw the reader’s eye immediately to the bottom of the panel. When readers start by looking at the bottom of the panel, they are less likely to notice and read the text that appears immediately above. *There is an illustration of this same brochure with the photos moved to the bottom in Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2, Figure 5-2-d.*

REVISED Panels B & C (the panels you see when you first open the brochure), *continued*:



Bulleted points are formatted for easy skimming

These bulleted points follow the Toolkit’s guidelines for formatting bulleted points (see *Toolkit Guideline 7.3* and *Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 4, Figure 5-4-c*).

This formatting makes the material easier to skim and helps reveal its underlying organization to the reader.

Features include:

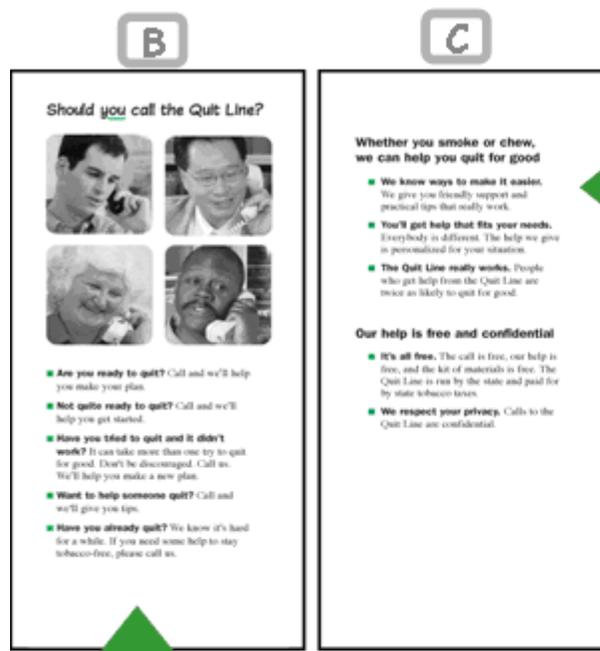
- Indenting the block of bulleted points under each heading
- Ample line space between each bulleted point
- Extra line space before the main headings to help signal the start of a new section of bulleted points

Easy to skim – headings and key sentences are prominent and informative

In this two-panel layout, someone who reads only the bolded text will pick up all of the main points.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 7.1* and *7.2*.

REVISED Panels B & C (the panels you see when you first open the brochure), *continued*:



Panel C states important messages in a clear and simple way

In a tri-fold brochure such as this, panel C is the panel that “disappears” when the brochure is fully opened. It’s a good place to put information that readers should see at an early stage but won’t need for reference after they have fully opened the brochure.

The content for this panel is based on research findings that identified cost, confidentiality, and individualized assistance as issues for potential users of the Quit Line. To encourage people to read this panel before they flip open the brochure, the text that addresses these issues is very brief and formatted for ease of skimming.

See Toolkit Guidelines 6.9 and 7.3.

These faces reflect diversity, add visual interest, and reinforce the topic

These poses reflect the subject matter of the brochure. All of the people are talking on the phone, as if they were calling the Quit Line. (But one concern: do some of the phones look too dated?)

These photos show a range of facial expressions that seem plausible for someone calling a Quit Line. In selecting these photos, we avoided poses with gloomy looks or huge smiles into the camera.

To help convey the message that the Quit Line is for all Oregonians, the photos reflect a mix of age, race, and gender. Are these good photos for this purpose? To find out, you could get feedback from readers.

See Toolkit Guidelines 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, and 9.4. See also Toolkit Part 6, How to collect and use feedback from readers.

REVISED Panels B & D & E (the panels you see when the brochure is fully opened)

B

Should you call the Quit Line?

- **Are you ready to quit?** Call and we'll help you make your plan.
- **Not quite ready to quit?** Call and we'll help you get started.
- **Have you tried to quit and it didn't work?** It can take more than one try to quit for good. Don't be discouraged. Call us. We'll help you make a new plan.
- **Want to help someone quit?** Call and we'll give you tips.
- **Have you already quit?** We know it's hard for a while. If you need some help to stay tobacco-free, please call us.

D

1 Call the Quit Line

Quit Line numbers
(call these numbers for free from anywhere in Oregon)

1-877-270-7867 (English)
1-877-266-3863 es el número gratis en español (Spanish)
1-877-777-6534 (TTY number for people with hearing loss)

Quit Line hours
8 am to 9 pm Monday - Thursday
8 am to 5 pm Friday
9 am to 1 pm Saturday

2 Talk with a Quit Line expert

We know what you're going through. We don't nag or lecture.

We help you feel more confident about quitting for good.

Make a quit plan that will work for you
There are many different ways to quit. We'll help you find a way that's just right for you.

- We'll give you tips on what to do when you have the urge to smoke or chew.

E

- We'll talk about times and situations when you usually smoke or chew, and ways to change these routines when you quit.
- If you've tried to quit, we'll talk about what hasn't worked and new things you could try.
- We'll tell you about medications that can help you quit.

3 Get more help from your Quit Kit
We'll send a free kit of materials to help you quit. We choose these materials just for you.

4 Ask for support and plan your rewards

- Tell your family and friends about your quit plan and ask for their support.
- Plan rewards for yourself!

Quit and celebrate!
Save money!
Enjoy better health!
Feel great about yourself!

5 If you ever need more help, call us again

The photos and messages on this panel stay visible and help reinforce the content of panels D & E

This panel fits well with the step-by-step instructions on panels D & E because it emphasizes that the Quit Line is welcoming to all types of callers and can help people in a variety of circumstances.

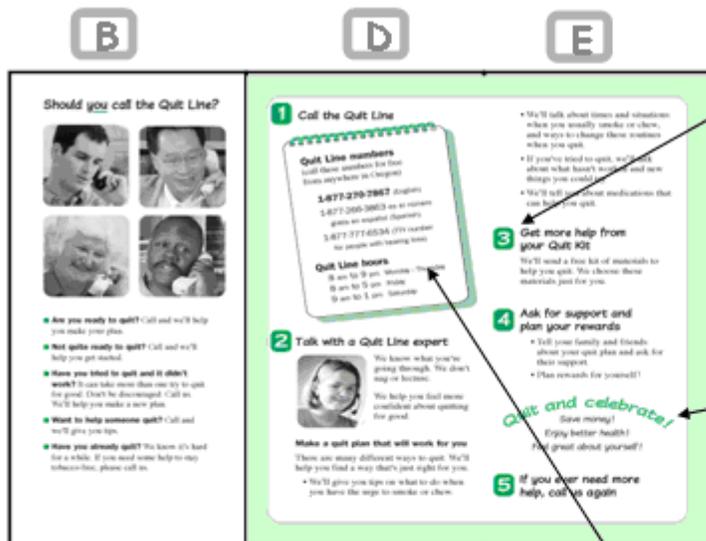
See *Toolkit Guidelines 4.1 and 4.3.*

Panels D and E are the core part of this brochure

All information about how to use the Quit Line is grouped together in one place, on panels D and E. The green border sets off this part of the brochure, which includes a spiral pad that shows Quit Line phone numbers and hours – **all in one place for easy reference.**

See *Toolkit Guidelines 2.2, 2.5, 7.1, and 7.4.*

REVISED Panels B & D & E (the panels you see when the brochure is fully opened), *continued*:



Numbers and headings

The large and bright green numbering and large main headings make this step-by-step guide easy to follow.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 2.5, 7.2, and 7.4.*

Curved text in green

This text draws attention to the rewards that come with quitting. It also helps unify the overall design by repeating one of the main design elements in the brochure (use of rounded corners and curved edges).

See *Toolkit Guidelines 5.4 and 7.4.*

Text is brief throughout

Limiting the amount of text and focusing on just the main points encourages people to read the whole thing. See *Toolkit Guidelines 1.6 and 3.2.*

All text is easy to read

The green shading is only around the outer edge, and all text is printed on a white background. Black text on a white background provides maximum contrast and makes the text easy to read.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 6.7 and 6.8.*

The text anticipates and addresses questions readers may have

For example, the text under numbered point 2 tells people a little about what to expect when they call and it also mentions medications.

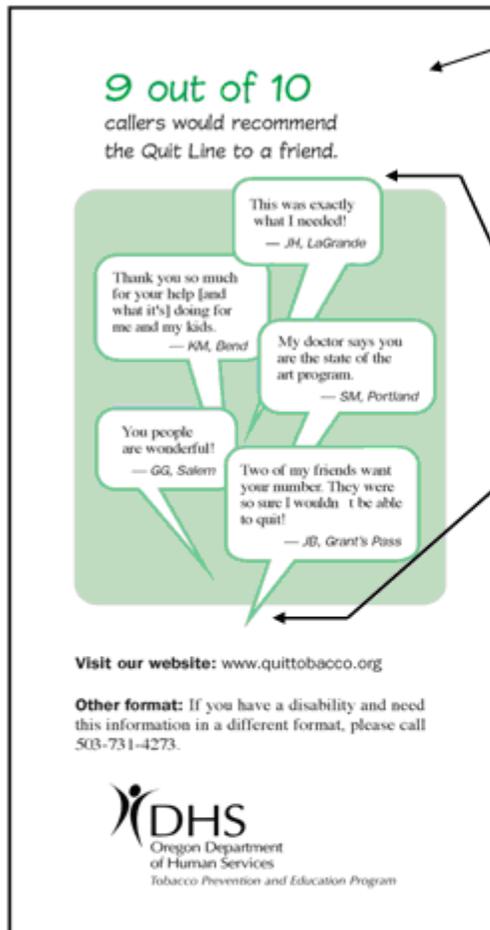
See *Toolkit Guidelines 1.2 and 1.3.*

Phone numbers and hours stand out

This spiral pad of phone numbers and hours is designed for easy reference. It has prominent headings to help readers skim and find what they are looking for. It is tilted slightly to draw more attention without interfering with ease of use.

See *Toolkit Guidelines 7.2 and 7.4.*

F REVISED back cover



Color-enhanced heading

Oversize type and color accent help lure readers to notice this title as well as the call out quotations. The title itself is informative; it conveys the main message even for those who don't read the quotes.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 2.3, 2.4, 5.3, 7.4, and 8.2.

Visual interest

Extending two of the callouts beyond the boundary of the colored block adds visual appeal to this design. So does the slight overlap of the callouts.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 5.2, 5.4, and 7.4.

Green background

It's bright enough for good contrast, but soft enough to keep from overwhelming the text or looking harsh. It adds contrast that draws attention to the callouts.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 5.4 and 8.2.

Repetition of similar design elements adds unity

Repeating the design element of rounded corners on this panel and other panels helps foster unity of design. The font used for the color-accented heading on this panel also has a rounded quality.

See *Toolkit Guidelines* 5.4 and 8.2.

F REVISED back cover, *continued*:



Appropriate content for the back cover

In revising the brochure, we moved the testimonial quotations from the inside of the brochure to the back cover. Since the back cover is sometimes overlooked by readers, it’s a good place for supplementary content that can “stand alone” – such as these testimonials. Since the quotations are an enhancement rather than a core message, readers who overlook this back cover will not miss vital information.

See *Toolkit Guideline 2.2*.

Formatting that draws attention without sacrificing ease of reading

In the original brochure, the testimonial quotations were in smaller print, italicized, enclosed in quotation marks, and printed on a shaded background – *all* of which made them harder to read.

In this version, the text is formatted for ease of reading. It has regular size type, without italics, printed on a white background. Using callouts or speech bubbles makes the clutter of quotation marks unnecessary and lends visual appeal.

In this Toolkit, we urge you to avoid putting text on shaded backgrounds because it reduces contrast and makes the text harder to read (and therefore less likely to be read). See *Toolkit Guidelines 6.7 and 6.8*.

The formatting on this panel shows how **you can use color to accent text without printing the text itself on a colored background**. For other suggestions, see *Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 4, Figure 5-4-d, “Replacing the shaded background and boxed-in text: Ideas for better ways of emphasizing important blocks of text.”*

Source: Makeover of Oregon Tobacco Quit Line brochure; with permission from the State of Oregon. Rewriting, redesign, and commentary created for use in this Toolkit.

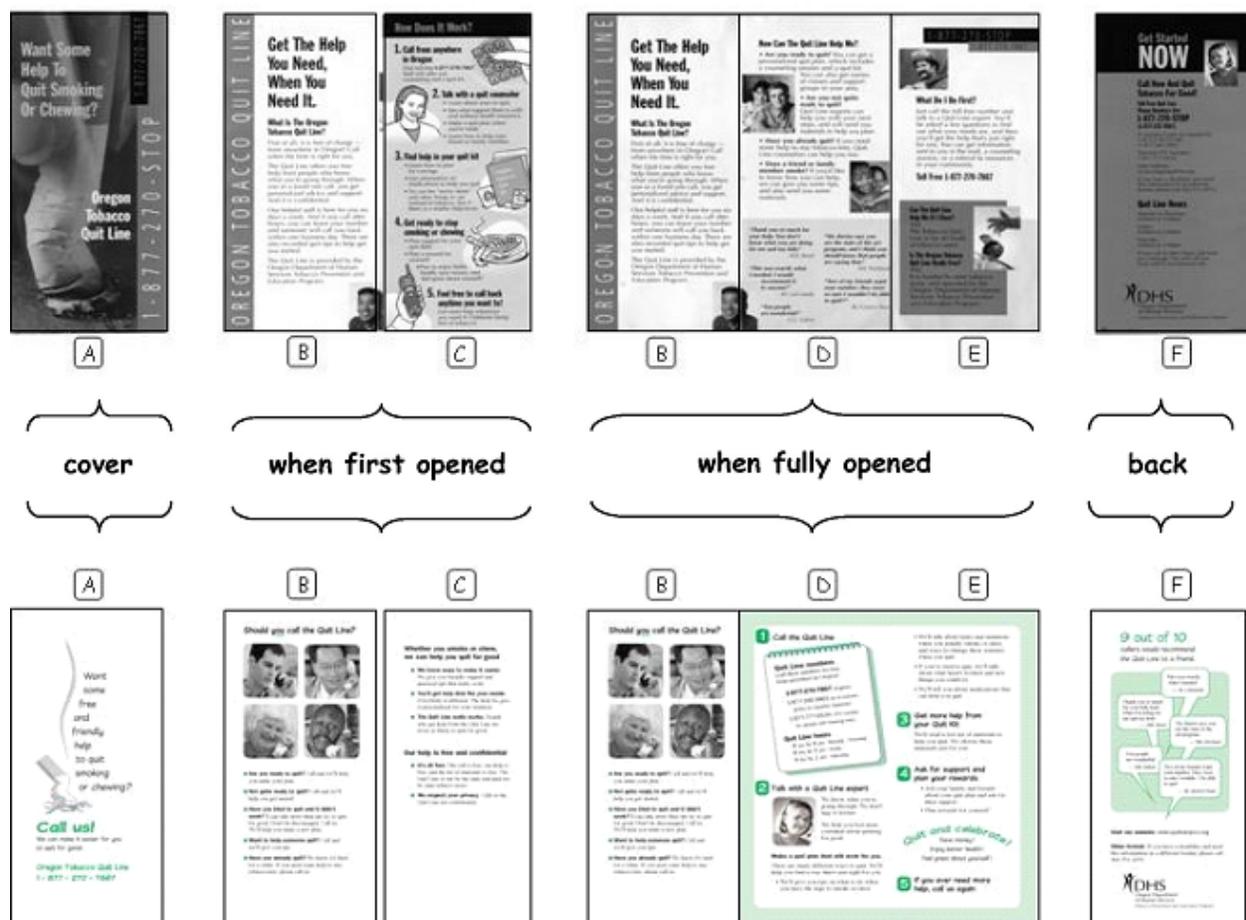


Comparing the original and revised brochures

To recap this makeover, Figure 10-c below compares the original brochure with the revised version.

Figure

10-c. Comparing the original and revised Quit Line brochures.



Source: Created for this Toolkit; adapted and used with permission from the State of Oregon.



Reference list of Toolkit guidelines

The page by page commentaries mention many, but not all, of the *Toolkit Guidelines for Writing and Design*. For easy reference while you are reading the page-by-page commentaries on the “before” and “after” versions of the Quit Line brochure, this section gives you the text of all guidelines mentioned in either or both of the commentaries. Guidelines for writing are grouped at the beginning, followed by guidelines for graphic design.

[Please note that **the reference list below does not include all of the guidelines**. There are some numbers missing from the sequence of guidelines because the list omits guidelines that were not mentioned in either of the panel-by-panel commentaries. For the full list of *Toolkit Guidelines for Writing and Design*, see Toolkit Part 3.]



Content

Toolkit Part 4, Chapter 1 shows how to apply these guidelines

- 1.1 Make the purpose and usefulness of the material immediately obvious.**
Use the title and other upfront text to make clear to readers what the material is about, who it is for, and how to use it. Remember that readers skim and make quick judgments about what’s worth reading.
- 1.2 In choosing which content to include, be guided by the readers’ interests, knowledge, and needs (which may be quite different from your own).**
Focus on what matters most to the intended readers. Address their issues and concerns, as well as areas of possible misunderstanding.
- 1.3 Show awareness of and respect for diversity among intended readers.**
Choose content that is culturally appropriate for the intended readers, reflecting and responding to differences in their experiences and situations.
- 1.4 Repeat new concepts and summarize the most important points.**
All readers need time to absorb new information. Repetition helps them remember it.

1.6 Limit the information to an amount that is reasonable for the intended readers.

Too much text can be overwhelming, especially to less-skilled readers. If the material is too long, consider other ways to package it. If you condense it, don’t oversimplify or drop the examples and explanations that readers really need.

1.7 Identify the organization that produced the material, and include a publication date and contact information.

Including contact information makes it easy for readers to follow up with questions or ask for permission to reprint the material. Including the date will help remind you when it’s time to update the information.



Organization (sequencing, grouping, and labeling)

Toolkit Part 4, Chapter 2 shows how to apply these guidelines

2.1 Group the information into meaningful “chunks” of reasonable size.

Readers can handle only a limited amount of information at one time. To avoid information overload, divide the text in ways that will make sense to the readers. Keep each segment or section of text relatively short. When you use bulleted lists, limit the number of bulleted points (group the points into sections if the list is long).

2.2 Organize the information in an order that will make sense to the intended readers.

Topics should build in a natural way, giving readers the background and context they need to understand new information.

2.3 Use headings, subheadings, and other devices to signal what’s coming next.

These devices are “advance organizers” that show readers how the material is grouped and sequenced, and prepare them for the next topic.

2.4 Use specific and informative wording for sections, headings, and subheadings.

To reinforce the main points and help readers skim, compose text for headings that is meaningful and explicit.

2.5 Use navigational tools to help orient readers and make important information easy to find.

For printed material, these tools include page numbers, headers and footers, table of contents, and index. Choose navigation tools that are appropriate for the intended readers and type of material.



Writing style

Toolkit Part 4, Chapter 3 shows how to apply these guidelines

3.1 Write in a conversational style, using the active voice.

To make your message informal and appealing, use “we” and “you.” To make it direct and easy to understand, write in the active voice.

3.2 Keep your sentences simple and relatively short.

Don’t pack too much information into a single sentence. Keep most of your sentences relatively short, and use simple conjunctions (*or*, *but*, *and*). To create good rhythm and natural tone, and avoid sounding choppy, vary the length of your sentences.

3.3 Be direct, specific, and concrete.

To help readers understand and use the information, spell out its implications, and be direct in saying what they should do.

3.5 Create cohesion by making strong, logical connections among your sentences and paragraphs.

Develop ideas in a logical progression that makes the connections between ideas explicit. Repeat key words and phrases to reinforce learning and create continuity.

3.7 Use technical terms and acronyms only when readers need to know them.

Technical terms can be difficult and intimidating; use simpler words whenever you can. It takes extra effort for readers to learn and remember a new acronym, so don’t use acronyms just out of habit.

3.8 **Write as simply you can, taking into account the reading skills of your intended audience.**

As a general goal, whatever your audience, write as simply as you can without sacrificing content or distorting meaning. (Be very cautious about using readability formulas or setting goals based on reading grade levels. Readability formulas predict the difficulty of words and sentences, usually based only on their length. Despite their name, readability formulas do not measure ease of reading or comprehension, and the scores from these formulas are not good indicators of overall suitability of material. For concerns and recommendations about using formulas to score written material, See Toolkit Part 7, *Using readability formulas: A cautionary note.*)



Engaging, supporting, and motivating your readers

Toolkit Part 4, Chapter 4 shows how to apply these guidelines

4.1 **Be friendly and positive.**

When your messages have a supportive tone, readers will be more receptive, especially if you are urging them to do something difficult or unfamiliar.

4.2 **Use devices that engage and involve your readers, such as stories and quotations, questions and answers, quiz formats, and blank spaces for them to fill in.**

When you get people actively involved with the material, they become more interested and learn more easily.

4.3 **When you give suggestions or instructions, make them specific, realistic, and culturally appropriate for your intended readers.**

To keep people from feeling frustrated or discouraged, be sure that the behavior you are urging seems feasible to them. If you raise awareness of risks or problems, tell people what they can do about them.

4.6 **Tell readers how and where to get help or more information.**

Make it easy for people to follow up on what they’ve just read by telling them what additional information or assistance is available and where they can get it.



Overall design and page layout

Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 2 shows how to apply these guidelines

5.2 **Make the material look appealing at first glance.**

Create uncluttered pages with generous margins and plenty of white space. Include something to catch the reader’s eye but not confuse it. A clean, crisp layout encourages readers by making the material look as if it’s going to be easy to read.

5.3 **Create a clear and obvious path for the eye to follow through each page.**

Design your layout to fit with a reader’s natural and deeply ingrained way of progressing through a printed page (called “reading gravity”). Place the headings, text, and images in a way that guides readers smoothly through all of the material without diverting or distracting them.

5.4 **Create an overall design for the material that has a clear and consistent style and structure.**

For a clean and well-organized look, use a page grid and style sheets to guide your design. Line up your headings, blocks of text, lists, illustrations, and other design elements in a clear and consistent way. Keep the same style or “look” throughout the material.



Fonts (typefaces), size of print, and contrast

Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 3 shows how to apply these guidelines

6.2 **For the headings in your printed materials, use an easy-to-read “sans serif” font, preferably one that is a “font family” with different weights (some bolder than others).**

To help readers skim and pick out the main points in your material, be sure that there is good contrast between the serif font you use for text and the sans serif font you use for headings. Choosing a font for headings that offers variations in weight is helpful because it gives you better options for creating good contrast.

6.3 In general, use no more than two or three different typefaces in a single piece of material.

Limiting the number of fonts will give your material a cleaner look and greater unity. For most information materials, it works well to use just one serif font for the text and one sans serif font for the titles and headings. Experiment a bit to be sure the fonts you have chosen work well together. You may want to add an additional font or two for a particular purpose, such as using a special font to accent the title.

6.4 Make the type size large enough for easy reading by your intended audience.

The best way to know whether your type is large enough is to get feedback from your intended readers. Older readers will need somewhat larger type than younger ones. You can use point size (such as “12 point font”) as a rough guide, but keep in mind that fonts in the same point size can vary a lot in actual physical size due to differences in style of the letters. These differences in lettering style can affect ease of reading as much or more than point size.

6.5 For all of your text, including titles and headings, use upper and lower case letters in combination – nothing written in “all caps.”

Text in all capital letters is hard to read, so use capital letters only at the beginning of sentences and other places where they are required. For ease of reading, try capitalizing only the first word in titles and headings (rather than capitalizing all of the important words).

6.6 To emphasize words and short phrases that are part of your regular text, use italics or boldface type.

Do not use underlining or put the text into all capital letters, because these make text hard to read. Be restrained in using italics, boldface, and other devices such as contrast in size or color accents on text. If you use these devices too often, they lose impact. If you use them on longer blocks of text, they make it hard to read.

6.7 For ease of reading, use dark colored text on a very light non-glossy background.

Make sure there is enough contrast between the printed text and the paper to be able to read everything easily. Black text on a white or cream-colored non-glossy background is best. Don’t use light-colored text on a dark background (this is called “reversed out” text), because it is too hard to read.

6.8 For ease of reading, do not print text sideways, on patterned or shaded backgrounds, or on top of photos or other images.

Printing a title or heading that runs vertically rather than horizontally puts a burden on readers to tilt their heads or twist the page in order to read it (and most won’t). When you put words on top of an image or pattern, the words and the background compete for attention, and both lose. The words are harder to read because of reduced contrast and distraction in the background, and the impact of the image is undermined by the words on top of it. Even a plain shaded background makes words harder to read, because it reduces the contrast between the text and background.

6.9 For ease of reading and a cleaner look, adjust the line spacing in your material.

To make blocks of text easier to read, add a little extra space between the lines. To help readers connect a heading with the text that follows it, leave a little less line space after the heading than you leave before it. To make bullet points stand out more clearly, put a little extra space between them. Keep these line spacing adjustments consistent throughout the document.

6.11 Keep your lines of text to an appropriate length for easy reading – neither too short nor too long.

For many materials, a line length of about five inches long works well. If the paper is wide, set the text in columns to maintain a readable line length. Avoid “wrapping” your text in awkward ways that make it hard to read.



Headings, bulleted lists, and emphasizing blocks of text

Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 4 shows how to apply these guidelines

7.1 To make the material easy to skim and show how it is organized, create a clear hierarchy of prominent headings and subheadings.

Left-justify the headings and subheadings, because readers sometimes miss headings that are centered. To emphasize how the material is structured, use contrast in fonts and maintain clear and consistent alignments, indentations, and spacing between headings and the text that follows.

7.2 Use contrast and other devices to make the main points stand out on each page.

Remember that your readers are skimming and looking for information of personal interest. Help them by using devices such as bulleted and numbered lists, captions for illustrations, emphasis on key words and phrases, and summaries of main points. Use design elements or images to accent important information, such as putting a picture of a phone next to the helpline number.

7.3 For ease of reading, use care in formatting bulleted lists.

To set off a list of bulleted points and connect it more closely with the sentence that introduces it, indent the entire list slightly. To make the bulleted points stand out clearly, add extra line space between them and use hanging indents. To set off each point without distracting readers, use bullets that are simple solid shapes. Bullets should be large enough to notice but not so large that they are distracting. Place bullets close to the text that follows them.

7.4 Choose effective ways to emphasize important blocks of text.

Outline boxes are often used to emphasize text, but they clutter your layout and readers sometimes ignore text that’s enclosed by a box. Shaded backgrounds tend to attract the eye, but they also reduce the contrast, making text less legible and therefore less likely to be read. Instead of using outline boxes or shaded backgrounds, try other methods that tend to work better for emphasizing blocks of text.



Use of color

Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 5 shows how to apply these guidelines

8.1 Choose colors that are appealing to the intended readers and free from unwanted connotations or problematic cultural significance.

Depending on your audience, there can be much variation in the appeal and cultural connotations of various colors and color combinations. To avoid possible problems, get audience reactions to your color choices.

8.2 Use color sparingly, in a consistent and deliberate way that reinforces the meaning of your messages and enhances their impact.

Resist the impulse to use color in decorative ways that may distract people from the text. For greatest impact, use color with restraint, since using too much color creates “color overload” that can overwhelm and distract your readers. Be cautious about using color coding as a device. If you use color coding, do it in a

consistent way and make the meaning clear to readers. Get feedback from readers to verify that they understand the color coding and find it helpful.

8.3 Verify that the color scheme and shades of color work well from a design standpoint (including when the material is photocopied or printed in black and white).

While color selection is partly a matter of taste, certain colors are less effective than others for text, shaded areas, and other design purposes. Check to be sure that the colors reproduce well when photocopied. If material with color is downloadable from a website, it may work best to produce a separate version for users who will print it in black and white. If you are using two colors in your material, it works best to make one of them black and use it for the text.



Photographs, illustrations, clip art, and symbols

Toolkit Part 5, Chapter 6 shows how to apply these guidelines

9.1 Use photos, illustrations, symbols, and other visuals that relate directly to the information in the material and reinforce your key messages.

Images have great impact, so select them carefully and use them to highlight key points. Instead of using images to decorate the pages, choose images that reflect the subject matter of your materials. Try to show only the behaviors you want to encourage. Avoid using images that are too abstract or hard for readers to understand, such as parts of the body shown in isolation, cross-sections, and highly magnified images.

9.2 Use images that are clear, uncluttered, and consistent in style.

For greatest appeal and impact on your readers, keep the images clear and simple, with good contrast that emphasizes the main subject. Avoid using photographs or illustrations with cluttered backgrounds or distracting detail (or edit them to remove the clutter). For a unified look, choose images that are compatible in style and color.

9.3 Use photos, illustrations, symbols, and other visuals that are culturally appropriate for your intended readers.

Choose images of people and activities that are contemporary and representative of the intended audience in their demographics, physical appearance, behavior, and cultural elements. Check to be sure that the images you use are free from unwanted connotations or problematic cultural significance.

9.4 When images include people, make sure that their poses, facial expressions, and body language are appropriate to the situation and appealing to the intended audience.

Poses that show people engaged in doing something may be more effective than stock photography shots of people smiling directly at the camera. If there is more than one person in the image, poses that show the people relating to each other tend to have more impact.

9.7 Pay careful attention to the total number, quality, size, placement, and labeling of the images you use.

For best impact, limit the number of images you use. Use images of high quality that will reproduce well, and make each one large enough for good impact. Keep images close to the text they reinforce. Place images in positions that fit with the natural progression of reading so that they do not cause your readers to overlook parts of the text.

9.8 Check for accuracy, if applicable, and pretest the images with your intended readers.

If your images include technical or medical subject matter, verify that the details are correct. Check on the appeal, cultural appropriateness, and comprehension of the images by getting feedback directly from members of the intended audience.



End notes

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the *Tobacco Prevention and Education Program* at the Oregon Department of Human Services for supplying the Oregon Tobacco Quit Line brochure and granting the Toolkit writer permission to do a makeover and publish it as an example in this Toolkit. In particular, we thank Cathryn Cushing, Nancy Clarke, and Karen Main for their assistance. We are grateful to all of the state staff and others who reviewed and commented on the changes made to the brochure for purposes of using it as an example in this Toolkit.

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To view, save, or print all or parts of this Toolkit from your personal computer, visit <http://www.cms.gov> and select Outreach & Education.

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