

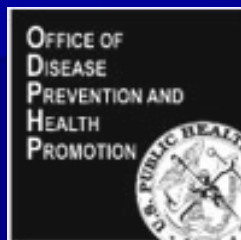
# Writing and Designing Effective Web-Based Health Promotion Content for Limited Literacy Users

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# Project Objective

- Establish an evidence-base for communicating prevention information to limited literacy users to ensure that vulnerable populations gain access to understandable and actionable guidance on healthy decisionmaking.

# Rationale

- More Americans are expected to take responsibility for managing their health.
- Understandable and accessible health information is increasingly important.
- Internet is a key source of health information.
  - 80% of Internet users have looked for health information online.

# Rationale

- Current online health information landscape creates more stress than support.
- People cannot find the information they seek on Web sites about 60% of the time.
- Much of the health content on the Internet is focused on disease diagnosis and treatment (rather than prevention).



# Guiding Principles

1. Information on a Web site must be easy to locate, navigate, and use.
2. Health information written for the public should improve understanding, build knowledge of the body and the causes of disease, and facilitate healthy decisionmaking.
3. To influence behavior change, information must be relevant, motivating, and include specific steps for taking action.

# Evidence Base

- Existing research-based recommendations from HHS
- Leading theories of health behavior change and health communication
- Original research conducted using an iterative design process with more than 600 participants ages 18-84

# Original Research

- Descriptive Analysis
- Expert Panel Review
- Structured Interviews
- Mental Models Research
- Card Sort Study
- Prototype Evaluation  
(Web-based and in person)
- Usability Studies



# What we Learned...

1. Writing content
2. Navigation and site structure
3. Features and tools
4. Page layout and design
5. Accessibility
6. Usability testing



# Writing Content

# User Motivations

3 segments of online health information seekers (based on motivation):

1. Those seeking information about a problem affecting them or someone they know.
2. Those seeking to find out if they have a problem or reason to be concerned.
3. Those seeking information on how to prevent the onset of health problems.

# Audience Segments

Users shift frequently between segments.

“I want information about a topic.”



“Should I be concerned?”



“I want to do something.”

# Formula: Behavior, Benefits, Action

## Get Active

Main Menu

The Basics

The Benefits

Get Started!

### ■ The Basics

Adults should aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity 5 days per week or 20 minutes of vigorous activity 3 days per week.



### ■ The Benefits

People of all ages benefit from exercise. It doesn't matter how out-of-shape you feel or how long you have been inactive.

### ■ Get Started!

First, think about your exercise goals. It may help to write them down.

If you are Trying to Help Someone Get Active ... [Get tips to help](#)

# Tone and Style

- Users want “just the basics” about a topic.
- Use everyday language and examples.
- Give users positive reasons to change their behavior.
- Avoid blanket recommendations – be specific.
- Tell users how to do the behavior. Break it down into small steps.
- Don't dwell on barriers. Provide tools and encouragement.

# Small Steps Approach

Instead of:

- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and low-fat milk products.
- Avoid saturated fats, sodium, and added sugars.

Give action steps:

## Get Started!

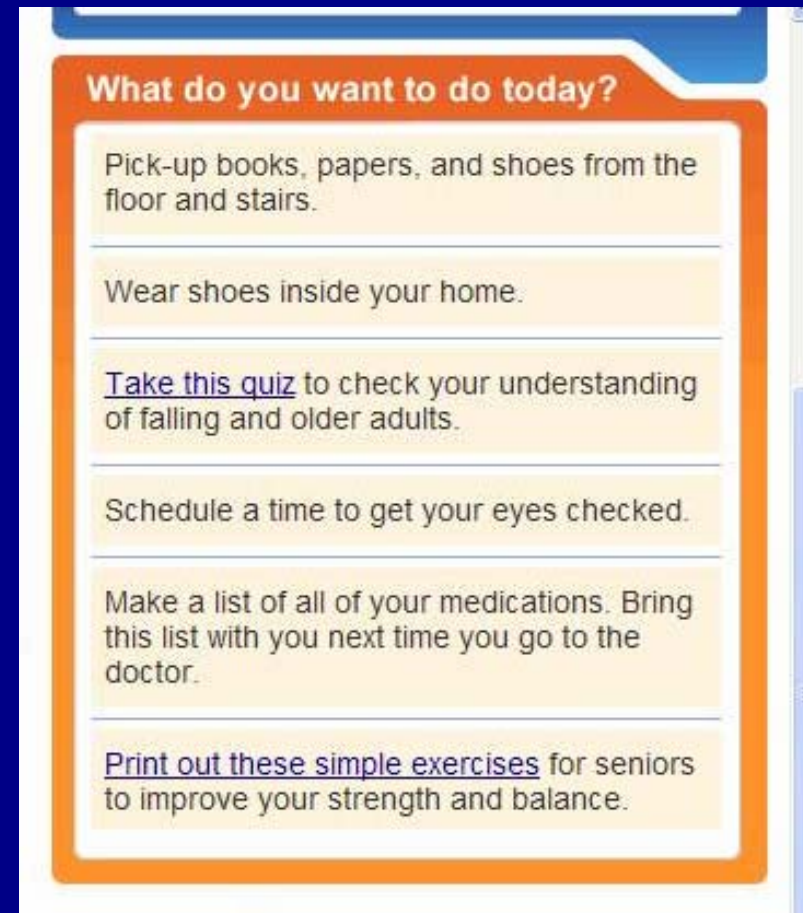
### Shop Smart at the Grocery Store

Here are some tips for the next time you go shopping:

- Never go to the grocery store hungry!
- Always use a shopping list.
- Buy a variety of vegetables in different colors.
- Look for the low-salt (low-sodium) brands of canned soup, vegetables, and beans.
- Try the low-fat brand of your favorite dairy products like yogurt or cheese.
- Choose whole-grain bread and crackers.
- Buy foods when they are on sale or in season to save money.

# Small Steps Approach, cont'd

- Include simple actions that users can do right away.
- This reinforces behavior and improves self-efficacy.



What do you want to do today?

Pick-up books, papers, and shoes from the floor and stairs.

Wear shoes inside your home.

[Take this quiz](#) to check your understanding of falling and older adults.

Schedule a time to get your eyes checked.

Make a list of all of your medications. Bring this list with you next time you go to the doctor.

[Print out these simple exercises](#) for seniors to improve your strength and balance.

# Writing Style

Before

The screenshot shows the 'Eat Healthy' page with the 'The Benefits' tab selected. The text is dense and lacks visual structure. A callout box highlights the sentence: 'Eating healthy and getting active can protect you from heart disease, overweight and obesity, and colorectal cancer.' Below it, a 'What do you want to do today?' section contains three items: 'Drink water instead of soda or juice.', 'Print out this food diary to keep track of what you eat.', and 'Pick a new recipe from this list of heart-healthy recipes.'

After

The screenshot shows the 'Eat Healthy' page with the 'The Basics' tab selected. The text is more organized and uses bullet points. A callout box highlights the same sentence as in the 'Before' version. The 'What do you want to do today?' section is now a list of three items: 'Drink water instead of soda or juice.', 'Print out this food diary to keep track of what you eat.', and 'Pick a new recipe from this list of heart-healthy recipes.'



# Navigation and Site Structure

# Simple Home Page Design



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

[www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov)



## healthfinder.gov

Your guide to healthy living

[About Us](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Contact Us](#)

### The 5 Most Important Things You Can Do To Stay Healthy



#### [Eat Healthy](#)

Small changes in your eating habits can make a big difference in your life.



#### [Get Active](#)

Simple strategies to keep you moving.



#### [Watch Your Weight](#)

If you are not getting active every day, you are at risk for becoming overweight. To lose weight, you need to eat fewer calories than you burn.



#### [Quit Smoking](#)

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you will ever do. Smoking is the most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States.



#### [Get Screened](#)

Get important screening tests for health conditions such as heart disease and cancer.

### Other Ways To Stay Healthy

#### my healthfinder

Find healthy recommendations for you or someone you care about.

Who are you trying to help today?

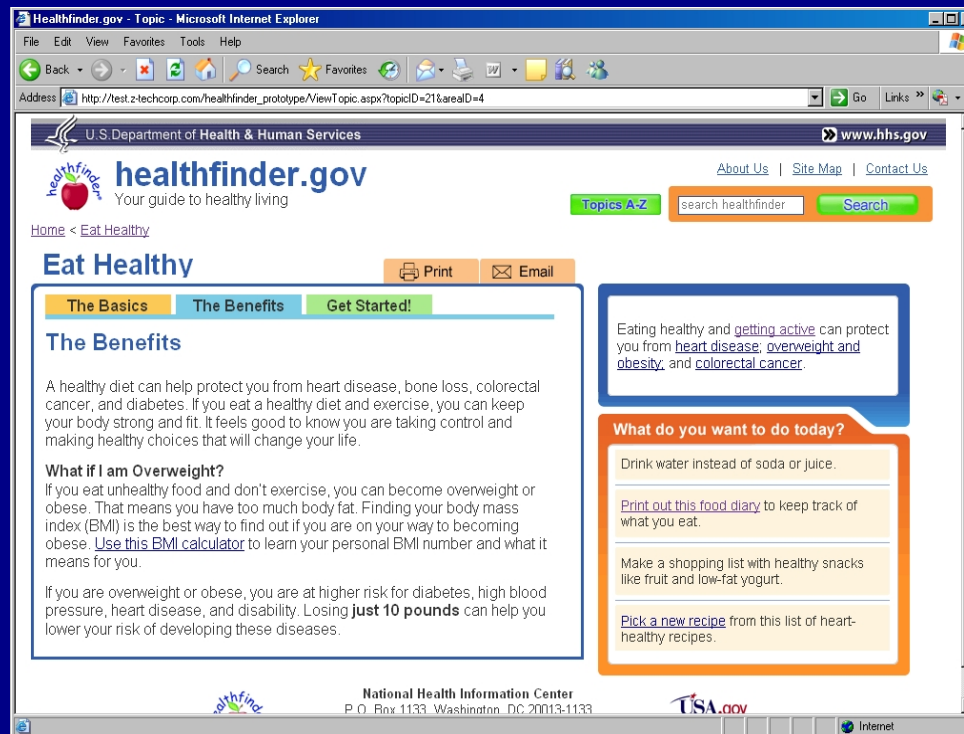
- Me  
 Someone Else

Age:

Sex:  Female  
 Male

# Stay “Above the Fold”

“Above the fold” refers to the portion of a Web page that is visible without scrolling.



# Linear Information Paths

The screenshot shows the Healthfinder website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services logo and the URL www.hhs.gov. Below this is the Healthfinder logo and the title "Prevention Toolkit" with the tagline "Your guide to healthy living". A search bar is located on the right side of the page, with a "Search" button. Below the search bar are links for "Home", "About Us", "Site Map", and "Contact Us".

The main content area is titled "Get Your Blood Pressure Checked". Below this title are four tabs: "Home", "The Basics", "The Benefits", and "Get Started!". The "The Basics" tab is selected and highlighted. Below the tabs is a pagination control showing "Page: 1 2 3" with arrows, where the number "1" is circled in red. The main text under "The Basics" reads: "Starting at age 18, you should check your blood pressure at least every 2 years. High blood pressure has no signs or symptoms. The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to get tested. It is important to check your blood pressure often, especially if you are over 40 years old."

On the right side of the page, there are "Print" and "Email" buttons. Below these is a blue-bordered box containing the text: "Lowering your blood pressure can [reduce your risk of heart disease](#)." Below this is an orange-bordered box titled "What do you want to do today?" containing three items: "Find out which pharmacies or grocery stores near you have a blood pressure machine.", "Remove the salt shaker from your table.", and "Learn more about [how to get active](#) and [eat healthy to lower blood pressure](#)."

At the bottom of the page, there is the Healthfinder logo, the National Health Information Center address (P.O. Box 1133, Washington, DC 20013-1133) and email (healthfinder@nhic.org), and the USA.gov logo.

# Make Tools Immediate and Relevant

**my healthfinder**  
Find healthy recommendations for you or someone you care about.

Who are you trying to help today?

Me  
 Someone Else

Age:

Sex:  Female  
 Male

[Get Started](#)

## Watch Your Weight

[Main Menu](#) [The Basics](#) [The Benefits](#) [Get Started!](#)

Page: < **1** 2 >

### The Basics

To stay at a healthy weight, you need to balance the calories you eat with the calories you use up (or burn) by being active. To lose weight, you need to use more calories than you eat. A healthy diet and exercise can help you reach your goal.

There is a right number of calories for you to eat each day. [Use this tool](#) to **find the number of calories you need each day** to maintain your current weight.

# User Feedback

"It actually tells you what to do!"

"It's easy for everyday people like me to read. No big words or medical terms."

"I like this Web site because it gives you the information you want right away. It gives the basics, not too much to read."

" This [Web site] makes me want to sit down and get busy today. "