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# Assessment of Informational Materials (AIM) Tool

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# AIM Tool

| Factor to be Rated   | Score |
|--|-------|
| 1. Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Purpose</li> <li>b. Scope</li> <li>c. Summary and Review</li> </ul>   |       |
| 2. Word and Sentence Complexity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Reading Grade Level</li> <li>b. Writing Style               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Active Voice</li> <li>ii. Clear Pronoun References</li> <li>iii. Simple Sentences</li> <li>iv. Background Information</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Vocabulary</li> </ul>  |       |
| 3. Page Layout <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Typography               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Critical Font Items</li> <li>ii. Additional Font Items</li> <li>iii. Colour Supports</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Spacing               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Letter, Word, and Line Spacing</li> <li>ii. Paragraph Spacing</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Pictorial Representation of Information               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Relevance</li> <li>ii. Charts, Graphs, Lists, and Maps</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |       |
| 4. Building Self Efficacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Conversational Language</li> <li>b. Chunking</li> <li>c. Controlled use of Lines</li> </ul>  |       |
| 5. Cultural Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Inclusive Images</li> <li>b. Appropriate Representation</li> </ul>   |       |
| Total  |       |

## 1. Content

*Evaluate a document's content by its demonstrated purpose, scope, and summary.*

### a. Purpose

Purpose is the main idea or main goal of the document. Demonstrate a clear purpose in the title, cover illustration and introduction.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The title and cover illustration clearly demonstrate the document's purpose. If applicable, purpose is stated in the intro. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The title, cover illustration and intro lack or incorrectly demonstrate the document's purpose.                             |

### b. Scope

Scope is the range or breadth of the topic. Are all the details necessary?

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | A large amount of details necessary and related to the purpose are in most of the document. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | A large amount of details unnecessary and unrelated to the purpose are in the document.     |

### c. Summary and Review

A summary should review or retell the document's key ideas in different words, phrases, or images.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | A summary retells most of the key ideas in different words, phrases, or images.                  |
| Not Suitable | 0 | A summary contains significant amount of unrelated ideas in different words, phrases, or images. |

## 2. Word and Sentence Complexity

*Make sure that reading level, writing style, vocabulary and background information suits the reading ability of the audience.*

### a. Reading Grade Level

Use the Text Readability Tester at [https://webprod.extn.ualberta.ca/dale\\_chall/](https://webprod.extn.ualberta.ca/dale_chall/) to calculate the appropriate grade level. The tester rates the text by calculating the average sentence length and average number of syllables per word.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material is at an 8th grade level or lower according to the Flesch-Kincaid. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material is at a 9th grade level or higher according to the Flesch-Kincaid. |

### b. Writing Style

Change the writing style to maximize reading comprehension. Easy to read writing style includes active voice, clear pronoun references and simple sentences. (DuBay, 2004, p. 2)

i. Writing Style Factor #1: Active Voice

Use the Readability Statistics option built in the Microsoft Word program to calculate the percentage of passive voice. The passive percentage score will be in the spelling and grammar report. If unsure how to activate the readability, search readability statistics in the help menu of the Microsoft Word program and implement.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material uses active voice 51-100% of the time. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material uses active voice 0-50% of the time.   |

ii. Writing Style Factor #2: Clear Pronoun References

Pronouns are words like

it/they/them/their/theirs/this/that/these/those/yours/some/each...

Be sure that pronouns clearly refer to a specific noun.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material uses clear pronoun reference 51-100% of the time. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material uses clear pronoun reference 0-50% of the time.   |

iii. Writing Style Factor #3: Simple Sentences

Change compound and complex sentences to simple sentences.

A simple sentence has a subject and a verb. A simple sentence has a complete thought.

i.e. Our workers pay taxes.

A compound sentence is two simple sentences joined together. Compound sentences use these words: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

i.e. Our workers pay taxes, but they do not pay health care premiums.

Easier to read: Our workers pay taxes. But, our workers do not pay health care premiums.

A complex sentence joins a simple sentence to an incomplete sentence. Complex sentences use conjunctions like: although, therefore, whereas, while, when, because, as, since... at the beginning of the incomplete sentence. Remove the conjunction and make two simple sentences.

i.e. We offer many services for newcomers; therefore, people come to our office for help with immigration.

Easier to read: We offer many services for newcomers. People come to our office for help with immigration.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material uses simple sentences 51-100% of the time. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material uses simple sentences 0-50% of the time.   |

iv. Writing Style Factor #4: Background Information.

Give background information before new topics. The reader needs to connect the new topic to their prior knowledge.

|          |   |  |
|----------|---|--|
| Adequate | 1 | The content provides background information. |
|----------|---|--|

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Not Suitable | 0 | The content does not provide background information. |
|--------------|---|--|

### c. Vocabulary

Use the Text Readability Tester at [https://webprod.extn.ualberta.ca/dale\\_chall/](https://webprod.extn.ualberta.ca/dale_chall/) or the Dale Chall word list to choose common vocabulary. The Dale Chall word list has 3,000 words that more than 80% of readers at a grade 4 level can read.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material uses common, explicit vocabulary indicated in the Dale Chall Word List 51-100% of the time. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material uses common, explicit vocabulary indicated in the Dale Chall Word List 0-50% of the time.   |

## 3. Page Layout

*Layout is the arrangement of text and visuals on the page. Good page layout will make the document easier to read.*

### a. Typography

Use these typography factors for maximum readability.

#### i. Critical Font Items

1. Use a font size that is large enough and plain enough to be easily read.
2. Use high contrast between font and page colors. For example, black font on a white page is more easily read than pale blue on white.
3. Use upper and lower case. Do not use ALL CAPS in long headers or running text.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | All of the font factors present.   |
| Not Suitable | 0 | Font factors 1 is present, but either font factor 2 or 3 is not present. |

#### ii. Additional Font Items

1. Use no more than two different font families in one document.
2. Use typography cues (bold, all caps, color, italics) for emphasis only.
3. Use no more than two types of typography cues (bold, all caps, color, and italics).

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | Are all of the font factors present throughout the document? |
| Not Suitable | 0 | Font factors 1, 2, and 3 are not present.                    |

#### iii. Colour Supports

Use colour so that it supports the message. Readers should not need colour codes to understand and use the message.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The colour supports the message.        |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The colour doesn't support the message. |

b. Spacing

Use consistent, adequate spacing between letters, words, lines and sections of text (paragraphs). This allows the reader to read more quickly, find personally relevant information, and understand the document's organization

i. Letter, Word, and Line Spacing

Use more space between letters of smaller type size. Separate words with a minimum space the width of a lowercase "i". Separate lines with a space larger than the height of the lines themselves.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | There is consistent, adequate spacing between letters, words, and lines.     |
| Not Suitable | 0 | There is inconsistent, inadequate spacing between letters, words, and lines. |

ii. Paragraph Spacing

Indent paragraphs, or add additional space between paragraphs. Do not indent the first paragraph. If the document is double sided, align sections of text with those on the other side of the page.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | There is adequate paragraph spacing and alignment.                             |
| Not Suitable | 0 | There is inconsistent and inadequate spacing and alignment between paragraphs. |

c. Pictorial Representation of Information

*Charts, graphs, lists, or maps allow readers to more easily decode information than presenting it as linked sentences. These types of representations must be relevant and easy to decipher.*

i. Relevance

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | All of the pictorial representations support and augment key messages visually.   |
| Not Suitable | 0 | All of the pictorial representations are unrelated to key ideas in the text and/or misleading. Or there are NO pictorial representations. |

ii. Charts, Graphs, Lists, and Maps

Graphs, charts, lists, and maps should be easy to decipher.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | All graphs, charts, lists, and maps are easy to decipher.                         |
| Not Suitable | 0 | All graphs, charts, lists, and maps are unrelated and/or challenging to decipher. |

**4. Building Self-Efficacy**

a. Conversational Language

Use language that speaks directly to the reader. Adults are engaged and learn more when the information speaks directly to them.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The material speaks directly to the reader using imperative statements or second person (“you” and “your”) 51-100% of the time. |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material speaks directly to the reader using imperative statements or second person (“you” and “your”) 0-50% of the time.   |

**b. Chunking**

Break text and graphics into short chunks of related information. (Boiarsky, p. 384)  
 Group textual and graphic items under descriptive subheadings. Space items in lists using bullets and headings. Do not write lists in continuous text. (Hartley, p. 46-47)

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | Topics with multiple components and graphics are divided into small understandable parts.   |
| Not Suitable | 0 | Complex topics and graphics are presented in large unbroken parts. It is difficult for the reader to experience small successes in comprehension. |

**c. Controlled Use of Lines**

Readers often ignore print because it looks overwhelming. Controlled use of lines addresses this problem. Control the use of lines by limiting the number of characters per line and by justifying the text at the left.

|              |   |  |
|--------------|---|--|
| Adequate     | 1 | There are fewer than 60 characters (counting both letters and spaces) per line and the text is justified at the left.      |
| Not Suitable | 0 | There are more than 60 characters (counting both letters and spaces) per line and/or the text isn't justified at the left. |

**5. Cultural Relevance**

*Use culturally relevant material. This way, the reader can decide if the content applies to them. Choose images and examples that are culturally inclusive and culturally appropriate.*

**a. Inclusive Images**

Choose images and examples that are adult appropriate, and that the reader can recognize and relate to. Culturally inclusive images display a variety of the target culture’s characteristics such as:

- ethnic background
- age
- physical characteristics
- gender
- sexual orientation

Readers should see themselves in the images.

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
| Adequate | 1 | The document’s images and examples include as many members of the target group as possible. The images represent a broad range of the target population. Images are adult appropriate.<br><br>(e.g. Images in a brochure for a Canadian Aboriginal Policing Program would represent both genders from various aboriginal groups and a |
|----------|---|---|

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
|              |   | variety of age groups).   |
| Not Suitable | 0 | There is a deficiency of images representative of the target culture. It is difficult for the majority of the target group to see themselves in the images.<br><br>(e.g. Images and examples in a brochure for a Canadian Aboriginal Policing Program would not represent the aboriginal population). |

**b. Appropriate Representation**

Choose colours, images, testimonials and questions that represent the target audience in positive ways and without stereotypes.

|              |   |   |
|--------------|---|---|
| Adequate     | 1 | The document's colour choices, images, and content in testimonials and questions represent the target audience in positive ways and without stereotypes.                    |
| Not Suitable | 0 | The material contains stereotypes or negative representations of the target culture.<br><br>(e.g. exaggerated or caricatured cultural characteristics, actions or examples) |