

5.2 Background Information on Health Literacy

Note: Most of the resources in this section are written for a health care/ public health audience.

- **[Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit](#)**
This toolkit explains health literacy to physicians and gives them recommendations on how to improve doctor-patient communication in their practice.
- **[American Medical Association: Health Literacy and Patient Safety Video](#)**
This video is used to raise health care providers' awareness of health literacy challenges in their patient population. It contains eye-opening interviews in which adults with low health literacy share their experiences in U.S. health care.
- **[Center for Health Literacy Promotion: Health Literacy Definitions](#)**
This page lists a wide variety of definitions that have been put forth to explain "health literacy."
- **[Harvard School of Public Health: Health Literacy Studies](#)**
This website presents background, research, policy, and practice information for the health care and adult education fields.
- **[Health Literacy Out Loud Podcasts](#)**
These diverse podcasts created by health literacy consultant Helen Osborne feature interviews with health literacy specialists from a wide variety of disciplines.
- **[Institute of Medicine of the National Academies: Attributes of a Health Literate Organization](#)**
This brief paper outlines what health care providers and insurers need to do to meet health literacy needs of employees and patients.
- **[Joint Commission: Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family- Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals](#)**
This document from the main accrediting organization for U.S. hospitals, the Joint Commission, sets out criteria for accommodating patient and family health literacy, language, and cultural needs by which hospitals are evaluated.



- **[Low Health Literacy: Implications for National Health Policy](#)**
This 2007 report provides an estimate of how much money low health literacy costs the U.S. annually. It was co-authored by John A. Vernon, Antonio Trujillo, Sara Rosenbaum, and Barbara DeBuono.
- **[Plain Language: It's the Law](#)**
The Plain Writing Act of 2010 is a federal law that requires federal agencies (including Medicaid, Medicare, and other health-related programs and departments) to communicate in ways that the public can understand and use.
- **[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Quick Guide to Health Literacy](#)**
This reader-friendly guide gives general information on health literacy, written from a health care/public health perspective.
- **[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration: Health Literacy Online Course](#)**
The free, self-paced Effective Communication Tools for Healthcare Professionals online course provides general information on health literacy, written from a public health perspective.

