

Guideline

for communication-friendly questionnaires

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What is the purpose of this guideline?

People who make use of healthcare services often encounter it: filling in questionnaires. People often find this very difficult. The questionnaires are too long, too difficult or simply unappealing. As a result, a lot of their energy goes to waste.



Drawbacks encountered by clients

- Frustration
- Loss of self-confidence
- Loss of energy
- Confrontation with own limitations/disabilities



Drawbacks encountered by professionals

- Loss of time
- Medical errors
- Relationship of trust at stake

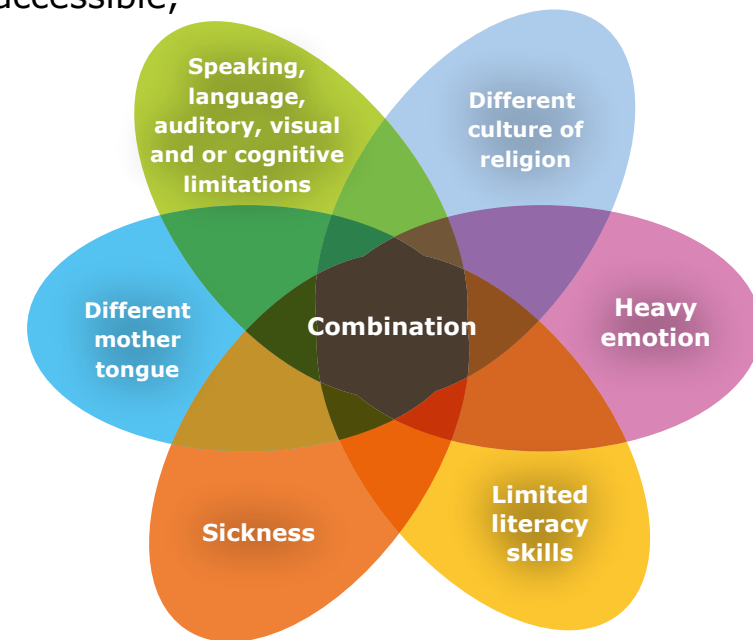


Do you want to make questionnaires more straightforward and accessible?

Use this guideline!

- ✔ The guideline helps you identify how straightforward the questionnaire you want to use is.
- ✔ The guideline provides action points to help make this questionnaire accessible, including for people who are communicatively vulnerable.
- ✔ For each action point, you will find explanations and tips so you can tackle these issues.

The guideline helps you identify how straightforward the questionnaire you want to use is. The guideline provides action points to help make this questionnaire accessible, including for people who are communicatively vulnerable. For each action point, you will find explanations and tips so you can tackle these issues.



What benefits does it yield?

Have you mapped the questionnaire with the guideline?

Have you then adapted the questionnaire in a communication-friendly way?

If so, you can put it to use in practice!

- ✔ The client has a better understanding of the question.
- ✔ This allows the client to give an answer appropriate to their situation.
- ✔ As a professional, you get reliable answers.
- ✔ You can draw up an action/care plan that matches the client's question.
- ✔ Both parties benefit!

At the end of the guideline you will find an overview of the literature that was consulted



How did this guideline come to be?

This guideline was developed as a result of the RAAK-Public research project `See & Hear the Client` and was therefore partially made possible through SIA (Stichting Innovatie Alliantie). This project was conducted by researchers together with clients, professionals and experts. They examined what helps to make questionnaires more straightforward for people who are communicatively vulnerable. To do this, they:

- ✔ Reviewed scientific literature
- ✔ Conducted observations and interviews
- ✔ Created design rules for communication-friendly questionnaires
- ✔ Drafted communication-friendly questions
- ✔ Tested and further adapted these questions in a pilot study
- ✔ Adapted 3 existing questionnaires according to these design rules
- ✔ Tested these 3 adapted questionnaires for reliability and validity through more than 300 measurements

How can you use this guideline?

- 1 Take the questionnaire you want to get started with.
- 2 Select 1 of the 4 topics.
- 3 Answer all the questions within the topic.

If your answer is orange, you are on the right track, but there is room for improvement.

If your answer is red, then you should address this issue.

Click the 'my action points' button and check what you need to work on.

- 4 You will then move to the next question, until you have answered all the questions in this topic.
- 5 Then select the next topic and go through steps 3 to 5 again.

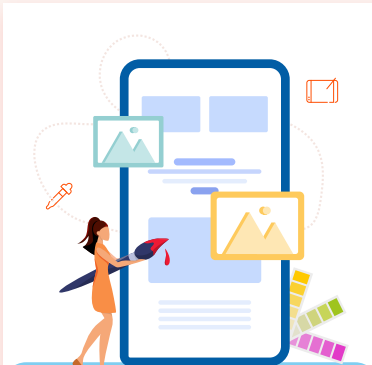
It is best to check all the topics. That way, you will get a full picture of how clear the questionnaire is.

You can also choose to work with 1 topic. You can do this if you don't have much time to change things, but you do want to improve the questionnaire to make it more straightforward.


Overview

Communication-friendly measurement

👉 Click to open the desired checklist



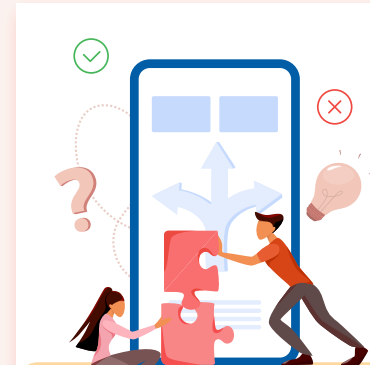
Visualisations



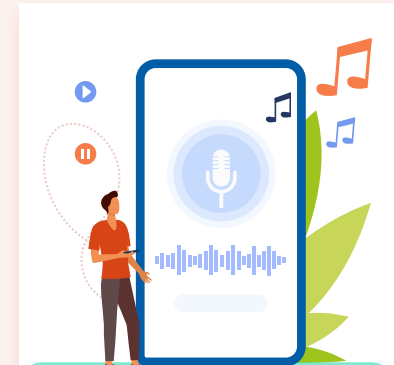
Representation of language



Meaning of language



Answer scale






Structure

Visualisations

Question 1

Does the questionnaire support questions with a coloured photograph?

-  Coloured photograph appropriate to the context
-  Coloured drawing or pictogram
-  No image

[➤ Continue](#)

i Clients indicate that they prefer photos to drawings and prefer drawings to pictograms. They also prefer colour to black-and-white pictures. Questions supported in the project with a coloured photograph were answered fastest and most correctly. Scientific literature and previous research conducted by the research group suggests that texts become more comprehensible when images are used. Choose an image that fits the core concept in the message.



Visualisations

Question 2

Does the questionnaire support questions about fast, hard-to-see movement (e.g.: coughing) with a GIF?

- 😊 GIF appropriate to context
- 😐 GIF not matching the context
- 😞 No GIF

Continue

i Some actions are so fast that they are difficult to represent in a photo. For these questions, it is better to use a GIF. A GIF stands for Graphics Interchange Format. A GIF has the ability to store several images in a row, making it a short animation. For example, for the question 'Do you often choke during restaurant visits?', it would be best to use a GIF showing someone choking while sitting at the dinner table.



Visualisations

Question 3

Does the questionnaire support questions about an action with a picture of that action?

- 😊 Photo of the action with clear contrast
- 😐 Sometimes use of action photo, sometimes use of object photo
- 😐 Drawing of the action with clear contrast
- 😞 No image of the action

➤ Continue





i A question about an action is better understood if the question is also supported with a picture of the action. For example, if the question is about gardening, it is better to use a picture of someone gardening rather than, say, a shovel. Make sure the action photo is sharp and shows the action. Make sure there is a clear contrast and that there are no distracting details in the background.



Visualisations

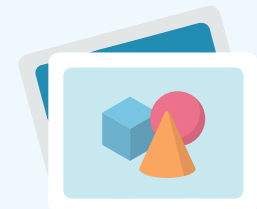
Question 4

Does the questionnaire support questions about an object with a picture of that object?

-  Photo of the object with clear contrast
-  Sometimes use of photo of the object, sometimes use of photo of an action related to the object
-  Drawing of the object with clear contrast
-  No photo of the object

[> Continue](#)

- i** Questions about objects are more clear when accompanied by a picture of the object. For example, if the question is about food, it is better to use a picture of a plate with food, rather than of someone eating. Make sure the photo of the object is sharp and focuses on the object. Make sure there is a clear contrast and that there are no distracting details in the background.



Visualisations

Question 5

Does the questionnaire support questions about an emotion with a portrait image?

- 😊 Portrait photo with clear focus and contrast
- 😐 Sometimes use of portrait photo, sometimes of a situation
- 😐 Use of portrait drawing with clear focus and contrast
- 😞 No portrait image

➤ Continue





i Questions about an emotion are more clear when accompanied by a portrait photo of someone showing the emotion. For example, if the question is about anger, it is better to use a picture of someone looking very angry, than of someone hacking away with an axe. Make sure the portrait photo is sharp and focuses on the subject with clear contrast and no distracting details in the background.



Visualisations

Question 6

Do the visualisations fit the context for the target audience?

-  The photos were taken in the context of the target group
-  Photos fit the context of the target group, but were taken from the internet
-  Drawings fit the context of the target group
-  Images do not fit the context of the target group

[Continue](#)





i In the various meetings held with clients throughout this project, they indicated that it is very important that photos are taken in their own environment/context. For example, if the questionnaire is about satisfaction with a healthcare facility, it is important to them that the photos are also taken in that healthcare facility and not in another context.




Visualisations

Question 7

Can the target audience of the questionnaire identify with the images?

-  The photos were taken with the target audience functioning as actors
-  The pictures fit the target audience, but come from the internet
-  The drawings fit the target audience
-  The target audience cannot identify with the photos

[Continue >](#)

-  In the various meetings held with clients throughout this project, they indicated that it is very important that they can recognise themselves in the photos. The more personalised and appropriate the photo is to the context of the target group, the easier it is to interpret it correctly. For example, if the target group is aimed at adults and the elderly, it is important that the person in the photo is not a child.



Visualisations

Question 8

Are the images clear/sharp?

- 😊 The pictures are clear/sharp
- 😐 The drawings are clear/sharp
- 😞 The pictures are blurry

➤ Continue





i Photos should be taken in a sufficiently high resolution with sufficient contrast. This way, the object/portrait/act is sharply delineated. A photo of good quality has a resolution of 300 pixels per inch. If the photo has 600 pixels per inch, it is of excellent quality.




Visualisations

Question 9

Do the images have few distracting details?

-  The photos focus on the core concept of the question and have no distracting details
-  The photos have some details that are not in the foreground
-  The drawings focus on the core concept without distracting details
-  The images have details that distract from the core concept

[➤ Continue](#)

-  A distracting object is an object that distracts the eye from the subject, preventing you from achieving the goal with the viewer you had in mind. There are many free apps to blur or remove distracting objects from photos.



Visualisations

Question 10

Are the images used literally?

- Literal use of the image
- Metaphorical use of the image

[Continue](#)



i When trying out the design rules in this study, it was found that the metaphorical use of images to make abstract concepts clear does not contribute to greater comprehensibility. For example, the concept of isolation is better depicted with someone standing on the sidelines of the group, while the others are having fun at a distance, than with a picture of someone alone on an island.




Visualisations

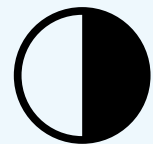
Question 11

Does the colour of the text stand in contrast to the background colour?

-  Colour of text and background stand in contrast
-  Colour of text and background do not stand in contrast

[➤ Continue](#)

-  For a questionnaire, it is best to choose the combination black/white, yellow/white-black. Some people prefer a light background with black letters and others prefer a black background with light letters. It is good if both options are offered, so that it can be adapted to the person's preference.



Representation of language

Question 1

Does the questionnaire use an appropriate amount of blank space?

- 😊 It is visually clear which sentences belong together and the page layout exudes tranquillity
- 😐 It is visually clear which sentences belong together, but the page layout lacks order
- 😞 It is not visually clear which sentences belong together

➤ Continue




i The page layout of a page is the arrangement of that page, viewed as the ratio of the printed area (= typesetting area) to the margins (unprinted edges). You create a neat page layout by using sufficient white space, margins, consistent layout, text blocks and headings. By visibly grouping text that belongs together, you can better understand the message.




Representation of language

Question 2

Does the questionnaire ask 1 question per question?

-  The question contains 1 question and is always on 1 page.
-  The question contains 1 question, but there are multiple questions on 1 page.
-  The question contains several questions.

 Continue

-  Avoid asking more than 1 question in 1 item. If multiple questions are contained in 1 item, it is not clear what you have to answer/receive. Moreover, comprehensibility increases if the person can focus on 1 question at a time. You achieve this by asking only 1 question per page.

1



Representation of language

Question 3

Does each sentence start on a new line?

- 😊 1 sentence per line at a readable font size
- 😐 1 sentence is longer than 1 line, but a new sentence starts on a new line
- 😞 1 sentence is longer than 1 line and is immediately followed by a new sentence that does not start on a new line

➤ Continue

- i** Make sure that each sentence fits on 1 line. This means your sentence cannot be longer than max 10-15 words. By placing each new sentence on a new line, the reader can focus on 1 message at a time.



Representation of language

Question 4

Does the questionnaire use the font 'Verdana'?

- 😊 The questionnaire uses Verdana
- 😐 The questionnaire uses a sans serif font but not Verdana (e.g.: Arial, Calibri)
- 😞 The questionnaire uses a serif font (e.g. Times New Roman, Cambria, Constantia)

➤ Continue

i Several aspects determine the readability of a font: its height, thickness, width, line contrast and design. Verdana font is a sans serif font where these aspects relate to each other optimally. The distance between the letters and the thickness of the delineation leads to better comprehension. Very light and heavily printed fonts are harder to read. Higher fonts are easier to read than lower fonts. Avoid fonts with too many curlicues, choose a simple design such as Verdana.

Aa



Representation of language

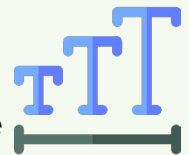
Question 5

Does the questionnaire use an appropriate font size?

- 😊 Font size is readable and leads to a calm page layout
- 😐 Font size is readable but inconsistently applied
- 😞 Font size is unreadable (too large or small) for the page layout

➤ Continue

i Depending on the medium you use, adjust the font size: the font size on an A4 is smaller than in a PowerPoint presentation. It is important that the font size is easy to read and contributes to a calm page layout. Apply a simple, consistent conceptual structure in the document that is recurrent. E.g. use a larger font size for a title (e.g. Verdana 14) than for the text (e.g. Verdana 12). Do not use a font size smaller than 12.



Representation of language

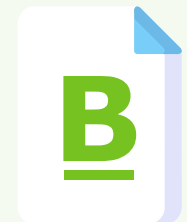
Question 6

Are key words bold in the questions?

- 😊 Per sentence, 1 or max 2 content words are bolded.
- 😐 There are too many words in bold
- 😐 Unimportant words are in bold
- 😞 Key words are not in bold

➤ Continue

i A key word is the most important word in a phrase or sentence that you cannot leave out. Making the key words in a question bold supports the reader's understanding.



Representation of language

Question 7

Gebruikt de vragenlijst regelafstand 1.5 in de tekst?

- Line spacing is 1.5 in text blocks per topic
- Line spacing is irregular
- Line spacing is applied too rigidly at the expense of calm and clear page layout
- Line spacing in the text is less or more than 1.5

[Continue](#)

i Line spacing 1.5 contributes to the comprehensibility of text.



Representation of language

Question 8

Is the question positioned above the image?

- 😊 The question is positioned just above the image
- 😐 The question is positioned below the image
- 😞 The question is next to or not near the image

➤ Continue

i During the design meetings, clients indicate that they like it best when the question is positioned above the image. This allows them to read the question first and then look at the support provided by the image, making the question even easier to understand.



Representation of language

Question 9

Is the question positioned below the moving image (GIF)?

- 😊 The question is positioned just below the GIF
- 😐 The question is above the GIF
- 😞 The question is next to or not near the GIF

[Continue](#)



- i** During the design meetings, clients indicated that, due to TV and film use, they are used to subtitles being under moving images. They like it better that when using GIFs, the question is also positioned below the GIF.



Representation of language

Question 10

Are numbers in Q&A scales represented as numbers?

- In questions, numbers are represented as numbers
- In questions, numbers are sometimes represented as words, sometimes as numbers
- In questions, numbers are represented as words

➤ Continue




i Do not use numbers in questions unless there is no other way. If there is a number in a question, this number is better understood if it is represented as a number, so 4 instead of four, 312 instead of three hundred and twelve. Numbers from 1 to 10 can also be better represented as numbers rather than words to increase comprehensibility.



Meaning of language

Question 1

Does the questionnaire always use the same word for the same concept?

-  Questionnaire consistently uses 1 word for 1 concept
-  The questionnaire occasionally uses synonyms for 1 same concept
-  Questionnaire uses many different synonyms for 1 same concept

[➤ Continue](#)




i Using 1 word for 1 concept makes information processing less stressful and a learning effect occurs more easily. This is called priming.



Meaning of language

Question 2

Does the questionnaire use short words with a simple structure?

-  The questionnaire mostly uses short singular words
-  The questionnaire regularly uses multi-syllabic words and words with many clusters of consonants
-  The questionnaire uses many multi-syllabic words and words with many clusters of consonants

[➤ Continue](#)

i The shorter the word, the easier to understand. Words with many syllables and/or consonants in succession are more difficult to analyse and require more processing time, e.g. prefer: ball to round-shaped object.



Meaning of language

Question 3

Does the questionnaire use language level b1?

- 😊 Language level is b1 or lower
- 😐 The language level is b2
- 😞 The language level is c1 or higher

➤ Continue




i In order to compare language levels, the European Framework of Reference for Languages has been established. We would like to refer to: <https://detaalbrigade.nl/taalniveaus/> for further explanation. There are several more interesting links such as [ishetb1.co.uk](https://www.accessibility.nl/tools/leesniveau) ; <https://www.accessibility.nl/tools/leesniveau> ; <https://www.zoekeenvoudigewoorden.nl/>



Meaning of language

Question 4

Does the questionnaire use high-frequency words?

-  The questionnaire uses high-frequency words
-  The questionnaire occasionally uses low-frequency words
-  The questionnaire uses low-frequency words

[➤ Continue](#)

i High-frequency words are words that are often used in everyday life and that people therefore already pick up through conversations. Low-frequency words are words that are only used in certain situations such as in professional language, in newspapers, poetry and other situations.



Meaning of language

Question 5

Does the questionnaire use highly imaginable words?

- The questionnaire uses concrete words wherever possible
- The questionnaire occasionally uses unnecessarily abstract words
- The questionnaire uses unnecessarily abstract words

➤ Continue

i Highly imaginable words are concrete concepts that you can easily represent in pictures or with gestures or point to (example finger). Low-imaginable words are abstract concepts example shame). Avoid low-imaginable words if there is a highly-imaginable alternative, for example use paperwork (highly-imaginable) instead of administration (low-imaginable).



Meaning of language

Question 6

Does the questionnaire avoid negations in the questions?

- 😊 The questionnaire uses only positive questions
- 😐 The questions with a negation use `not` instead of `no` and the word `not` in bold type
- 😞 The questionnaire uses negations without making them bold

➤ Continue

i A question that is positively worded (i.e. without the use of a negation word) is easier to understand and answer.



Meaning of language

Question 7

Does the questionnaire use verbs actively in the questions?

- 😊 The questionnaire consistently uses verbs actively in the questions
- 😐 The questionnaire sometimes uses verbs passively in the questions
- 😞 The questionnaire uses verbs passively in the questions

➤ Continue

i Verbs in active form are easier to understand.



Meaning of language

Question 8

Does the questionnaire avoid verb derivatives in the questions?

- The questionnaire uses the verb instead of a derived noun
- The questionnaire sometimes uses nouns derived from verbs
- The questionnaire uses nouns derived from verbs

[➤ Continue](#)

i It is easier to understand when you say `I am presenting`, instead of `I am giving a presentation`, this also limits the number of words you need to convey your message which means less information has to be processed.



Meaning of language

Question 9

Does the questionnaire use questions of maximum 8-12 words?

- 😊 The questionnaire uses short single questions of maximum 8-12 words
- 😐 Compound sentences in a question are split into single sentences
- 😞 Questions are longer than 15 words and consist of compound sentences

➤ Continue

- i** Short questions consisting of single sentences (i.e. without juxtaposition or subordination) require less information processing and are therefore easier to understand.



Meaning of language

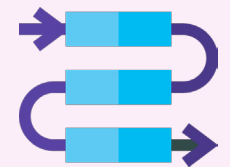
Question 10

Does the questionnaire use a set information structure in the questions?

- 😊 The questionnaire uses the same information structure for all questions, important information is at the front of the question
- 😐 The questionnaire uses the same information structure but important information is hidden in the question
- 😞 The questionnaire always uses a different sentence structure

➤ Continue

i Always using the same sentence structure in the questions with the important information at the front of the question creates a learning effect and helps people process the information faster.



Meaning of language

Question 11

Does the questionnaire use words that make it clear which sentences belong together?

- 😊 Content cohesion between sentences is clear
- 😐 The content coherence between sentences is clear but lead to compound sentences
- 😞 The content coherence between sentences is not clear

➤ Continue

i If several sentences are required in a question, it is important that the connection between the sentences is clear. Be careful with referring words where it is not clear what one is referring to.



Answer scale

Question 1

Is the text positioned above the answer image?

- 😊 Text is positioned above each answer image
- 😐 Text and answer image are present, but the text is in an illogical place
- 😞 No text or answer image

➤ Continue

i Clients indicate during the design meetings that they would like it if each answer option also has an image and that the text is above the answer image.



Answer scale

Question 2

Is the answer image in an appropriate colour?

- 😊 There is an appropriate and recognisable colour in the answer image
- 😐 There is no appropriate colour for the answer image
- 😞 The answer image is absent

➤ Continue




i Colours evoke associations: red stands for stop, green for continue, red is more likely to stand for disagreement, green for agreement, yellow in turn is more likely to be neutral.




Answer scale

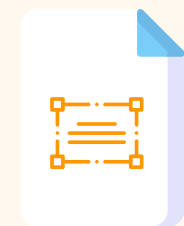
Question 3

Does the questionnaire use appropriate response options for the questions?

-  Questionnaire uses appropriate response options
-  The questionnaire uses answer options that are incomplete
-  The questionnaire uses illogical answer options that do not match the question

[> Continue](#)

-  An illogical answer option is an answer option that does not match the question, e.g. for the question 'are you in a lot of pain?' The given answer options are: completely agree-disagree, instead of a lot of pain-moderate pain-no pain. Sometimes the moderate pain option is missing, making the answer option incomplete and preventing the respondent from giving an appropriate answer appropriate to their experience.



Structure

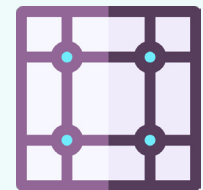
Question 1

Does the questionnaire use a constant grid?

- 😊 The questionnaire uses the same set structure and representation
- 😐 The questionnaire uses the same set structure for all questions, but different types of images (drawing/picto/photo)
- 😞 The questionnaire uses a different structure and representation for different questions

➤ Continue

i A grid is a set of baselines that represents a fixed structure of the page layout. This way, you consistently use the same structure per page (e.g. use the same margins on every page, the same distance between question and image, the same type of images, the same position of the question on the page). This creates calmness and allows the person to better focus on the question and results in a learning effect.



Structure

Question 2

Does the questionnaire offer the option to go back to the previous question?

- 😊 There is a back button that allows you to go to the previous question and adjust your answer
- 😐 There is possibility to go back, but you cannot change your answer
- 😞 There is no possibility to go back to the previous question

➤ Continue

i In questionnaires that deal with people's experiences/wants/needs, it is important that there is an opportunity to change your answer after a choice has been made.



Structure

Question 3

Does the questionnaire clearly indicate how to go to the next question?

- 😊 It is made clear how to go to the next question
- 😞 It is not clear how you can go to the next question

➤ Continue

i It is important that it is clear how you can go to the next question, this can be done by using a clear arrow at the bottom of the page to the right or a continue button.



Structure

Question 4

Can one resume the questionnaire at a later time?

- 😊 The questionnaire can be interrupted and collected data is retained
- 😐 The questionnaire can be interrupted, but collected data will be lost
- 😞 All questions should be completed in 1 go

➤ Continue




i It is important that the participant can complete the list with full attention and concentration. There should be a possibility to briefly pause the questionnaire, or to resume it at a later time without losing data.




Structure

Question 5

Are the questions supported by audio?

-  It is incorporated into the questionnaire
-  The professional has the opportunity to read aloud
-  There is no possibility to read out loud

[➤ Continue](#)

-  It helps people who are communicatively vulnerable if the message is offered simultaneously by several communication channels: so in addition to asking the question via text and visual support, it is best to offer the text aurally as well.



Checklist action points

Check your points of improvement here

Visualisations

- Coloured image
- Moving image (GIF)
- Image of action
- Image of object
- Image of emotion
- Coloured image
- Context of image
- Identifying
- Few details
- Metaphors
- Contrast

Representation of language

- Use of white space
- 1 item per page
- 1 sentence per line
- Font readability
- Font size
- Bold print keyword
- Line spacing 1.5
- Text static image
- Text moving image
- Representation of numbers

Meaning of language

- Priming: concept
- Word length
- Language level
- High-frequent words
- Highly imaginable words
- Avoiding negation
- Action-oriented
- Avoid distractions
- Sentence length (8/12 words)
- Priming: information structure
- Coherence

Answer scale

- Positioning of text and image
- Response colour
- Response options

Structure

- Set grid
- Option 'back'
- Option continue
- Option 'resume'
- Audio

Contact

Want to know more about this project or have any questions?
Please feel free to get in touch.

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