



# Presenting Clearly

## Introduction

Integrating literacies means recognizing and addressing the needs of people with literacy and learning difficulties. This handout was developed for guest speakers in community learning programs. It includes reminders about ways to support understanding and ideas to prepare clear handouts.

## Background

Adult participants in community programs or training courses may have difficulties with some of the literacy requirements of their program. Some struggle with reading and writing tasks. Others can read, but not easily, and some speak English as an additional language.

Participants also have different learning styles. Some prefer to learn by watching and listening, while others learn best from hands-on activities.

## Support understanding

### Before you present

It is good practice to build on what participants already know and want to know. Adult learners often have clear goals for their learning. Try to tailor your presentation to participants' knowledge, needs and interests.

You can invite participants to brainstorm ideas and questions about the topic before you start your presentation. If possible, print participants' responses on a whiteboard or flipchart. This encourages ownership of ideas, a chance to see them in print, and time to process new learning.

### As you present

- Outline what you are going to present at the beginning and provide a summary at the end.
- Encourage participants to ask questions during your presentation. It is better to respond to questions during the presentation, rather than only at the end.

Written by Michael Wallace, 2009.

Widening Access for Adult Literacies Project.  
[www.wideningaccessforliteracies.ca](http://www.wideningaccessforliteracies.ca)

- Use a mind map to illustrate the key parts of your presentation. This will give a visual guide for participants, and increase their chances of following your presentation. (See page 4 for an example.)
- Use pictures, graphics or models to illustrate your ideas. Visuals can add to the clarity of a presentation and reinforce what you say. Be sure that your visuals are of high quality and large enough for everyone to see. Keep in mind that people “read” pictures too. Check that your pictures convey the message you want to communicate.
- Speak clearly and slowly, and take your time. Vary the pitch, tone and speed of your voice. Pause between ideas. Ask if your audience can see and hear you clearly.
- Provide a glossary of terms handout, and explain new terminology as you introduce it. Avoid using unfamiliar terms or jargon, acronyms or idioms that may be unfamiliar to participants.
- Repeat key ideas. Repetition helps build learning.

### After you present

Adult learners appreciate opportunities to discuss and evaluate their learning. Make time for discussion and reflection after your presentation.

See page 5 for an example of a learning activity that will help you use these approaches.

### Use clear writing principles

Do you plan to use handouts, overheads, PowerPoint slides or other printed materials during your presentation?

If so, you can check the readability of your materials. Microsoft Word has a program to do this (see page 3). Aim for a Flesch/Kincaid readability level of between 4 and 7; many program participants may be able to read materials at this level.

Here are some steps to take to increase the readability of printed materials.

- Keep your readers in mind when writing or re-writing.
- Use a large clean font which is easy to read at a distance. Use lots of white space.
- Express ideas clearly and in a logical and well organized way.
- Write short simple sentences.
- Use short paragraphs. Keep each paragraph to one subject.
- Use common words and simple direct phrases.
- Avoid jargon, acronyms and idioms.
- Use active voice wherever possible.
- Use question and answer format where appropriate.

## Using MS Word tools to check readability

Open Tools. Select *Spelling and Grammar— Options*.  
Check off the following:

- ✓ Check spelling as you type
  - ✓ Always suggest corrections
  - ✓ Check grammar as you type
  - ✓ Check grammar with spelling
  - ✓ Show readability statistics
- Press OK.

Open Tools.  
Select *Spelling and Grammar – Options*.  
Go to Writing style (This needs to be *Standard* or *Grammar and Style*).  
Open Settings:  
✓ Check everything under grammar except *numbers*.  
✓ Check everything under style except *use of first person*.  
Press OK.

To check a whole document:

Open Tools. Click on *Spelling and Grammar*.  
Change or ignore each item that the spelling and grammar checker identifies (red or green underline).  
The *Readability Statistics* will appear when the check is complete.

To check over part of a document:

Highlight the section. Follow the steps to check spelling and grammar for the section.

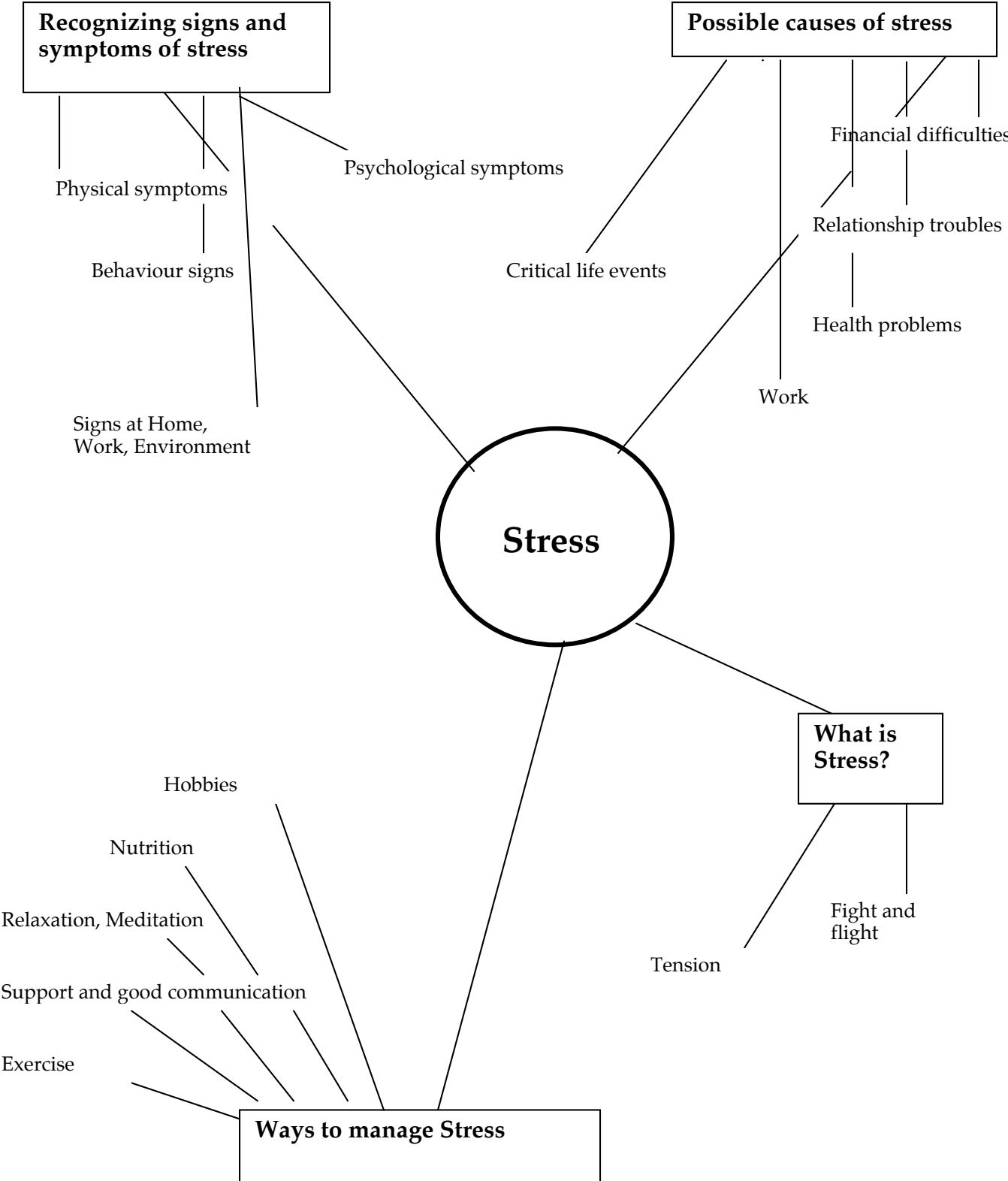
When the check is complete, a box will appear: “Word finished checking the selection. Do you want to continue checking the rest of the document?”

Select *No*. The *Readability Statistics* will appear.

Readability Statistics to aim for:

Average words per sentence: below 20 words  
Passive sentences: close to 0%  
Flesch reading ease: as high as possible: aim for 65–75%  
Flesch-Kincaid grade level: Grade 7 or below for average readers, and between Grades 4 and 7 for less able readers.

Mind Map (Stress)



## KWL<sup>1</sup>

K What do I already KNOW	W What do I WANT to learn	L What did I LEARN ?

K - Ask yourself: What do I know about the subject? Write your ideas under the first column.

W - Ask questions about what you want to know. Write your ideas under the second column.

L - After the presentation writer answers to your question about what you learned under the third column.

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<sup>1</sup> Ogle, D. (1986). K-W-L: A teaching model that develops active reading of expository text. *The Reading Teacher*, 39, 564-571.