Checklist for Easy-to-Read Informed Consent Documents Text

☐ Words are familiar to the reader. Any scientific, medical, or legal words are defined clearly.
☐ Words and terminology are consistent throughout the document.
☐ Sentences are short, simple, and direct.
☐ Line length is limited to 30-50 characters and spaces.
☐ Paragraphs are short. Convey one idea per paragraph.
☐ Verbs are in active voice (i.e., the subject is the doer of the act).
☐ Personal pronouns are used to increase personal identification.
☐ Each idea is clear and logically sequenced (according to audience logic).
☐ Important points are highlighted.
☐ Study purpose is presented early in the text.
☐ Titles, subtitles, and other headers help to clarify organization of text.
☐ Headers are simple and close to text.
☐ Underline, bold, or boxes (rather than all caps or italics) give emphasis.
☐ Layout balances white space with words and graphics.
☐ Left margins are justified. Right margins are ragged.
☐ Upper and lower case letters are used.
☐ Style of print is easy to read.
☐ Type size is at least 12 point or larger for elderly populations and those with sight impairment.
☐ Readability analysis is done to determine reading level (should be eighth grade or lower).
☐ Avoid:
  - Abbreviations and acronyms.
  - Large blocks of print.
  - Words containing more than three syllables (where possible).

Graphics
☐ Helpful in explaining the text.
☐ Easy to understand.
☐ Meaningful to the audience.
☐ Appropriately located; text and graphics go together.
☐ Simple and uncluttered.
☐ Images reflect cultural context.
☐ Visuals have captions.
☐ Each visual is directly related to one message.
☐ Cues, such as circles or arrows, point out key information.
☐ Colors, when used, are appealing to the audience.
☐ Avoid graphics that won’t reproduce well.

Source: National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, MD.