



How to write simply

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What we'll cover in this session:



How to plan your writing



How to write simply



How to check the reading age of your writing

Look at this leaflet and pick out anything you would change to make it easier to understand



Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to protect yourself and our patients and reduce the spread of infection

Most Healthcare Associated Infections are preventable through good hand hygiene, at the right time and in the correct way. Germs that naturally live on the skin and normally cause few problems may be more serious when brought into hospital. These germs are often passed from one person to another by physical contact so it is important that patients, visitors and staff reduce the risk of spreading infections by effectively washing their hands.

It's OK to ask!

Protect yourself by asking staff if they have cleaned their hands before they have any contact with you. Staff will not mind being reminded and it's important that you are reassured.

When to clean your hands?

We endeavour to do our best to protect you from infection but we need your help. Remember to wash your hands at these key times:

- If your hands are visibly dirty.
- Before eating or handling food.
- After using the toilet/ commode/ bed pan/ urinal.
- After changing nappies.
- If you are a patient and have diarrhoea and/or vomiting.
- After coughing or sneezing

Nursing staff will assist you if required, for example if you have any drips or dressings that make hand-washing difficult. Again, it's OK to ask.

It is especially important for patients, visitors and staff to wash hands with soap and water before entering and when leaving a ward or clinical area where there are patients experiencing symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting. Further advice should be sought from the Nurse in charge of the ward/department.

Hand Washing

This is sufficient for general social contact and most clinical care activities. Hand washing can be used to maintain personal hygiene and should always be used when hands are visibly dirty.

Alcohol Hand Gel

This is a quick and convenient alternative to hand washing for hands that are visibly clean. If hands are contaminated with dirt, alcohol gel is not effective and washing with soap and water is required.

Hand wipes

Patients may be offered hand wipes as an alternative to hand washing in some areas during their hospital stay. Please ensure you dispose of hand wipes in waste bins and not in toilets as this can lead to blockages.

Hand washing technique

For an effective hand wash, wet your hands on both sides, apply enough soap to cover hands, rub the palms of your hands together and then the backs of your hands making a good lather. Ensure you open your fingers so you can wash in between, rub the tips of your fingers and also wash your thumbs and wrists. Rinse well and then dry thoroughly. See diagram below.



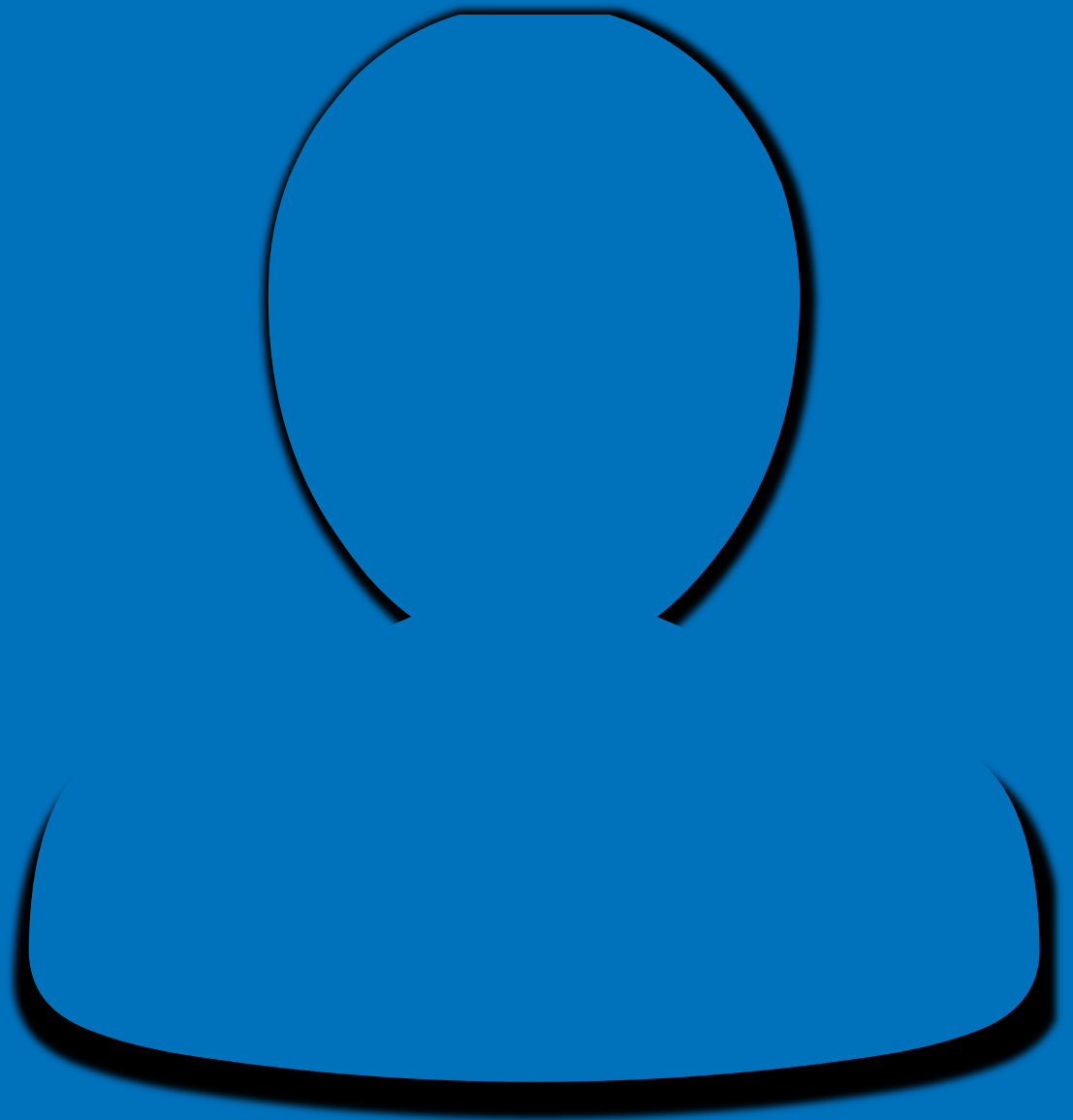


The average reading age is around 9 to 11 years old...

... but we don't write like that.

We asked local
people to read our
health information
leaflets.

This is what they
said...





“Daunting”



“Daunting”



“It sends you into a panic”



“Daunting”



“It sends you into a panic”



“It would scare me”



“Daunting”



“It sends you into a panic”



“It would scare me”



“That big block of text in the middle...
that would put me off coming back”

A large blue speech bubble with a white outline, pointing downwards and to the left. The text inside is white and centered.

What written information
do you give out now

Talk to BETTY
(from Boldon)



Think before you write:



Who are you talking to?

Think before you write:



Who are you talking to?



What do they need to know?

Think before you write:



Who are you talking to?



What do they need to know?



What don't they need to know?

Think before you write:



Who are you talking to?



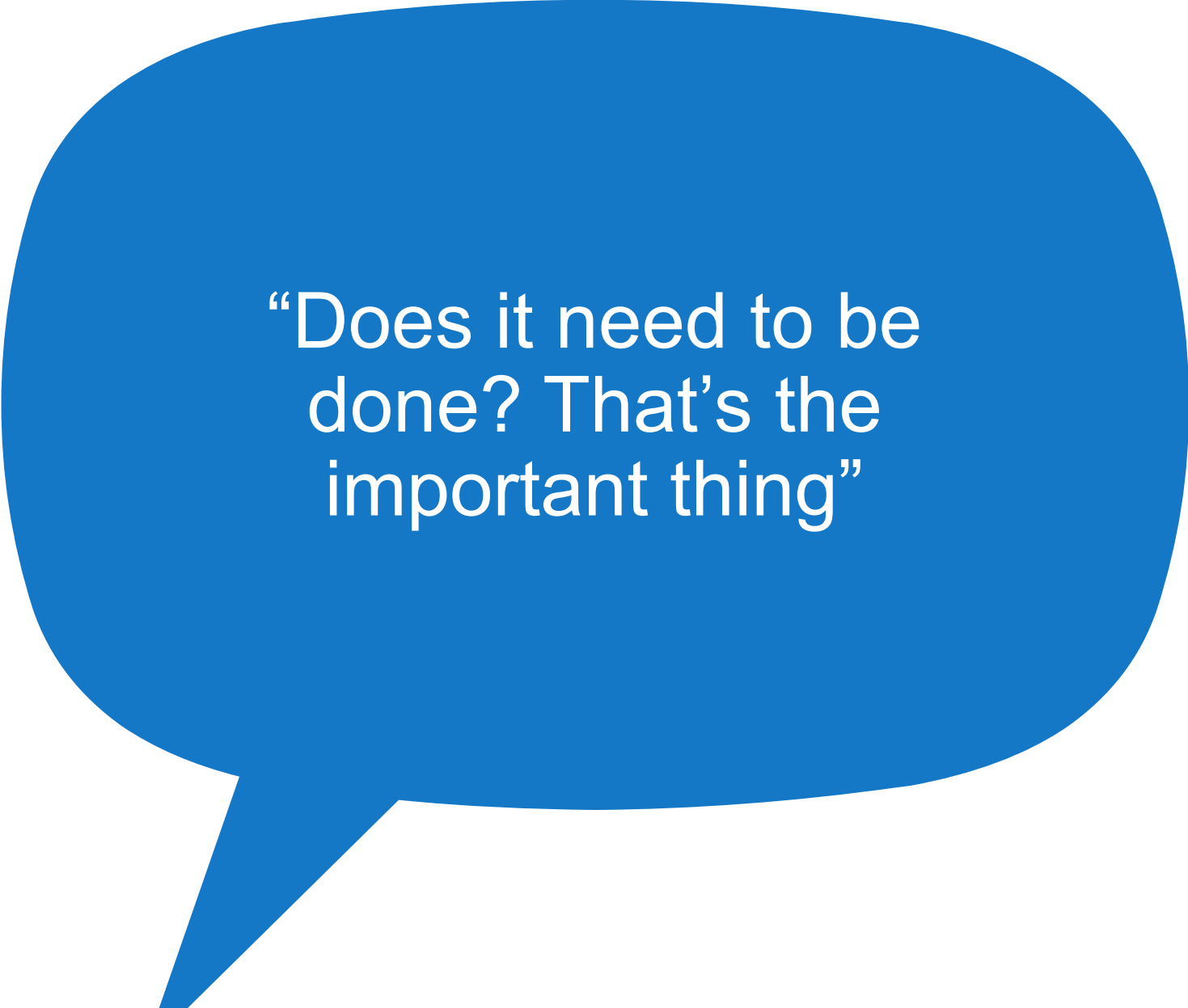
What do they need to know?



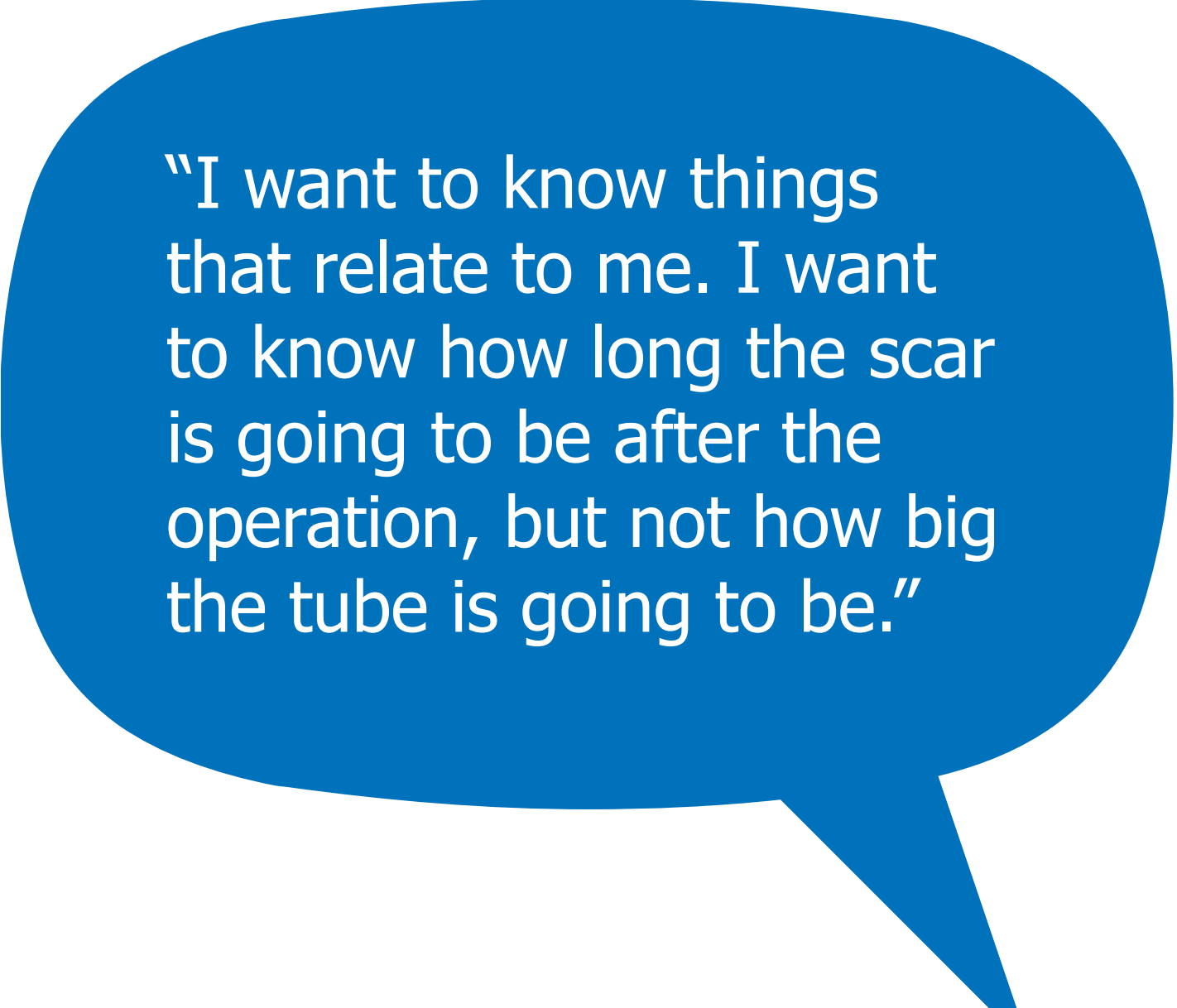
What don't they need to know?



What do they want to know?...
Ask them!



“Does it need to be done? That’s the important thing”



“I want to know things that relate to me. I want to know how long the scar is going to be after the operation, but not how big the tube is going to be.”

Talk to BETTY (from Boldon)

B - break it down

E - everyday words

T - talk to a friend

T - take stuff out

Y - you, we, I



Break it down...



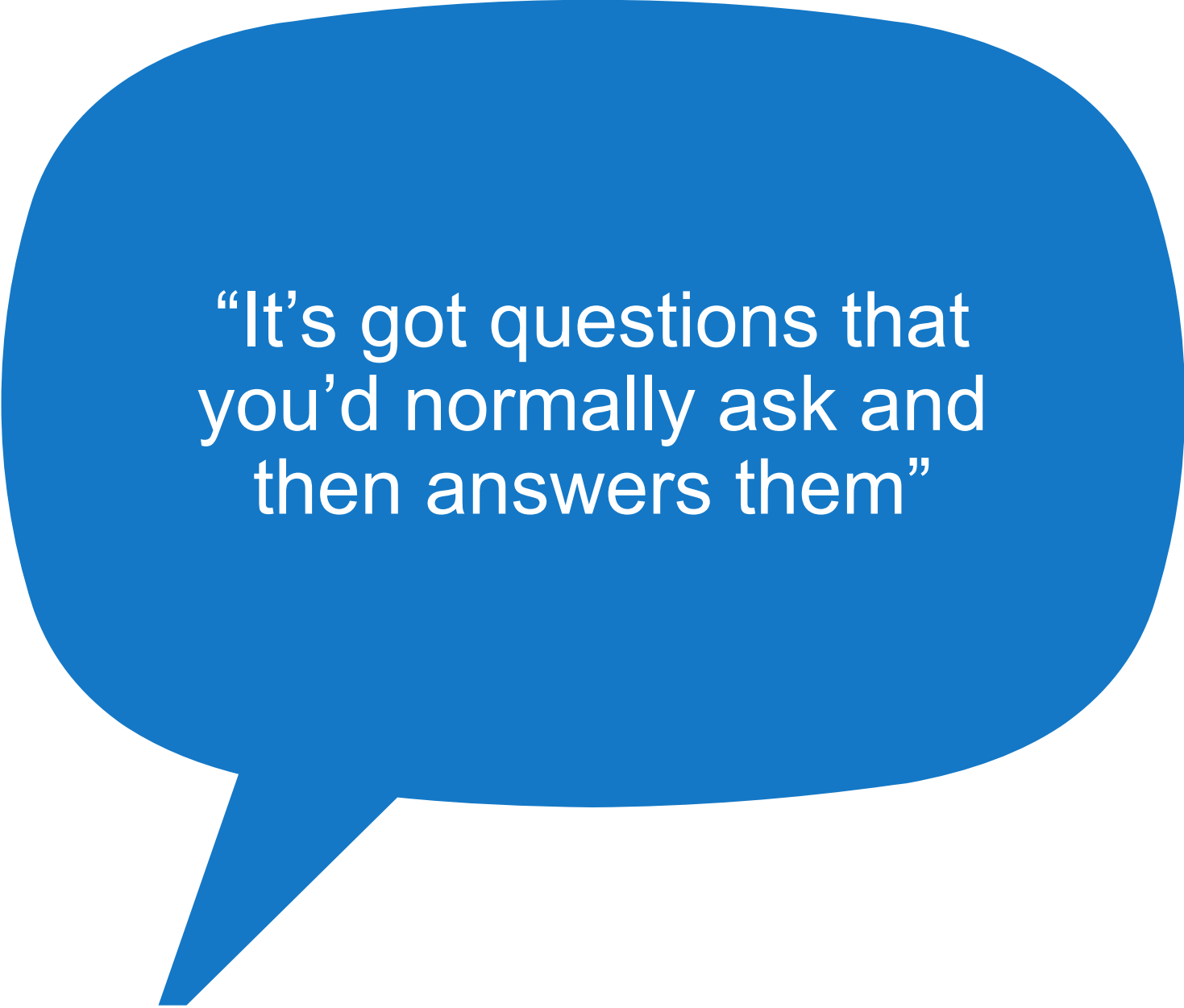
One idea per sentence

One idea per paragraph

Add headings if they help



“It’s broken down more”

A large blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom left. The text inside is white and centered.

“It’s got questions that
you’d normally ask and
then answers them”

Short sentences

8.0

When the kidneys are not working normally, this waste and extra fluid is not removed and can build up in your blood.



When the kidneys are not working normally, this waste and extra fluid is not removed. It can build up in your blood.

3.7

6.9

This can make you feel unwell and give you symptoms such as feeling sick, being sick and not feeling hungry.



This can make you feel unwell. It can give you symptoms such as:

- feeling sick
- being sick
- not feeling hungry

0.5

Short sentences	Grade
<p>Hand washing technique</p> <p>For an effective hand wash, wet your hands on both sides, apply enough soap to cover hands, rub the palms of your hands together and then the backs of your hands making a good lather. Ensure you open your fingers so you can wash in between, rub the tips of your fingers and also wash your thumbs and wrists. Rinse well and then dry thoroughly.</p>	7.7

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Short paragraphs and headings

One of the main jobs of the kidneys is to remove waste products and extra fluid from your body. When the kidneys are not working normally, these waste products and extra fluid are not removed. They can build up in your blood. This can make you feel unwell. It can give you symptoms such as nausea and vomiting, loss of appetite, itching, ankle swelling, shortness of breath and tiredness.

Reading grade = 6.2



Short paragraphs and headings

What does low clearance mean?

One of the main jobs of the kidneys is to remove waste products and extra fluid from your body. When the kidneys are not working normally, these waste products and extra fluid are not removed. They can build up in your blood.

What are the symptoms?

This can make you feel unwell.

It can give you symptoms such:

- Feeling sick or being sick
- Not feeling hungry
- itching
- ankle swelling
- shortness of breath and tiredness.

Reading grade = 3.0



Everyday words...

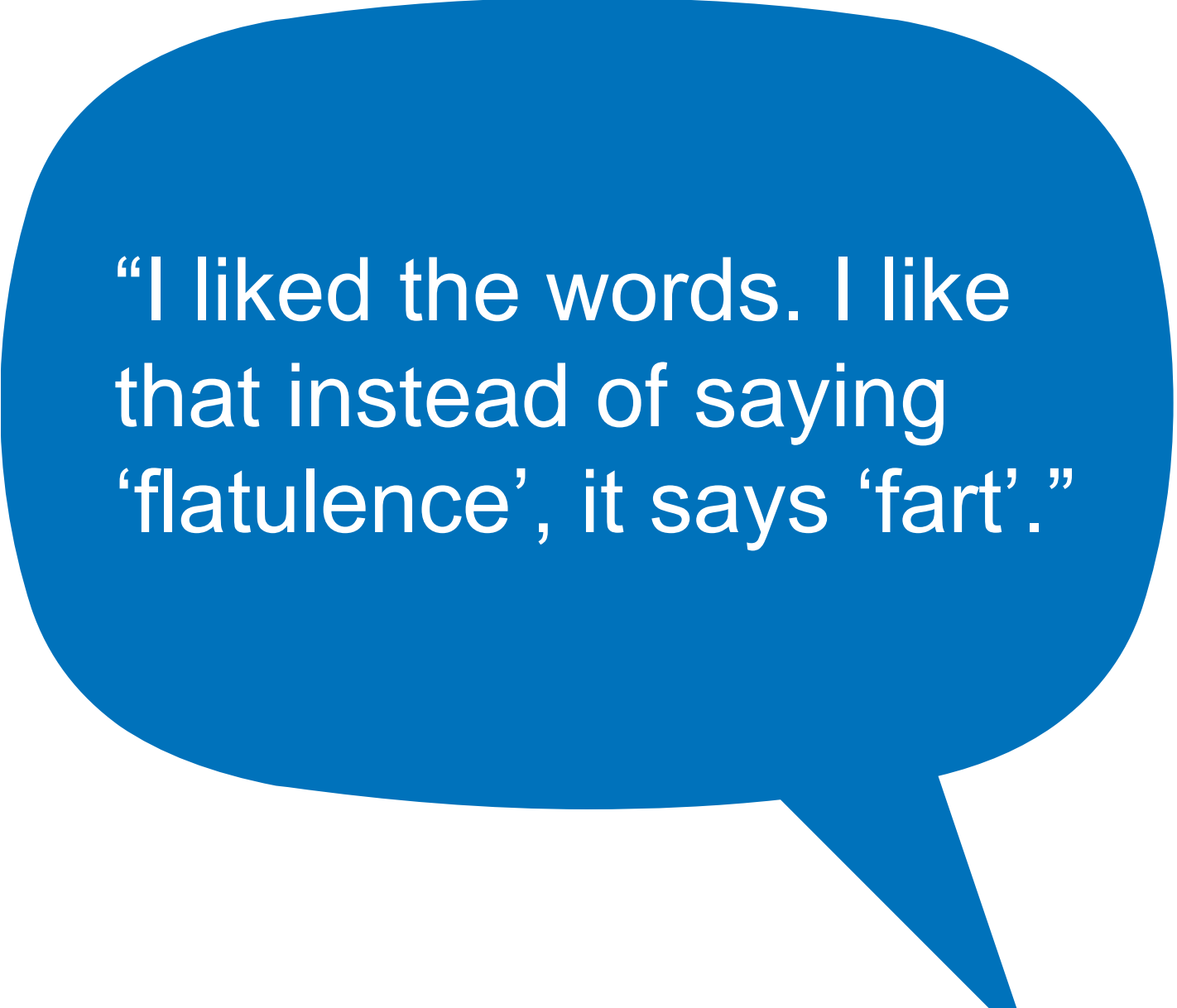
Normally shorter – less than 3 beats

Use as few medical words and as little jargon as you can

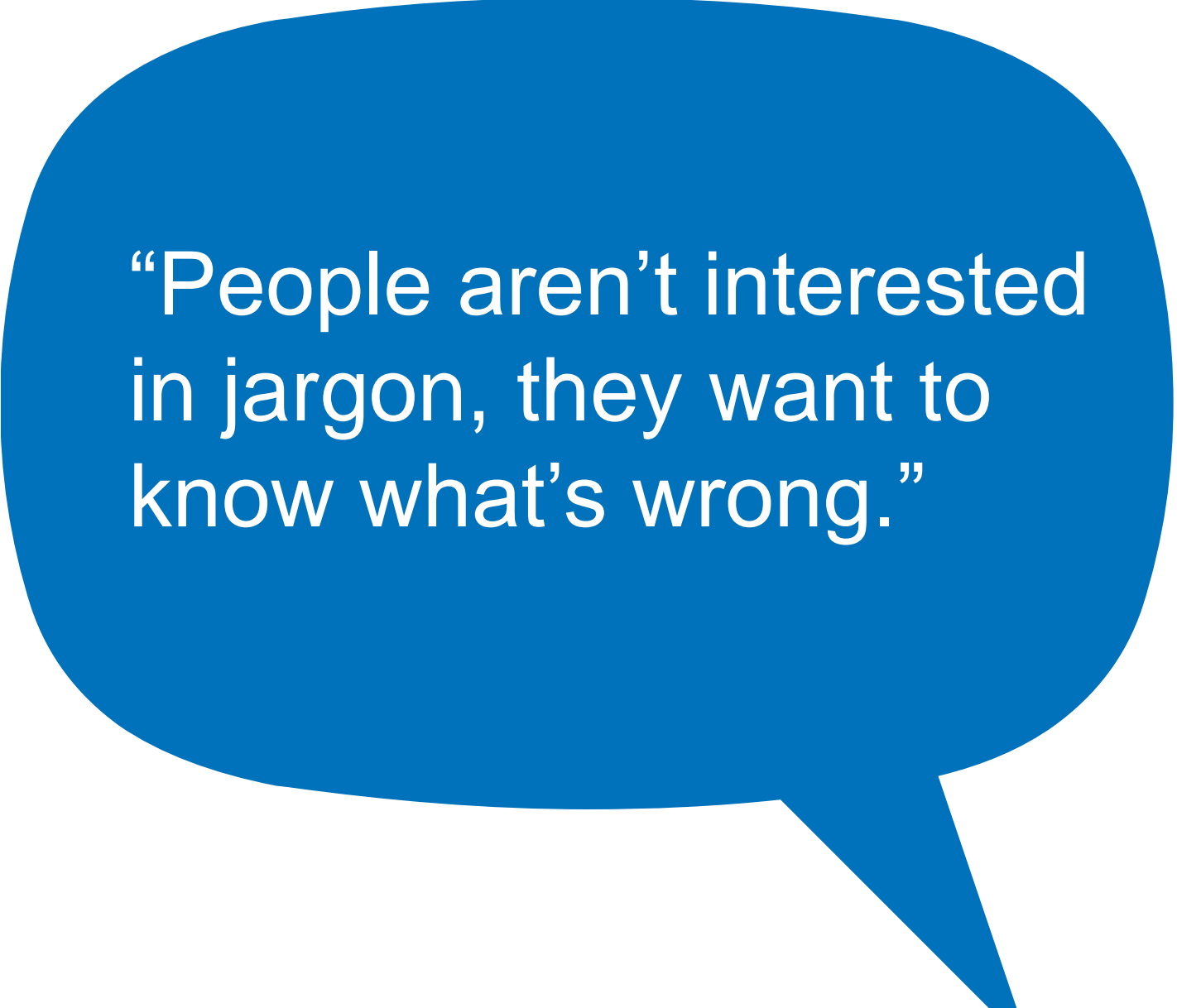
Sometimes it'll be a phrase rather than a word

If you have to use jargon, put the simple word first followed by the hard word in brackets

If you are using an acronym, put the word first and then the acronym in brackets

A blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing downwards and to the right. The text inside is white and reads: "I liked the words. I like that instead of saying 'flatulence', it says 'fart'."

“I liked the words. I like that instead of saying ‘flatulence’, it says ‘fart’.”



“People aren’t interested in jargon, they want to know what’s wrong.”

Everyday words...



Prior to



Enable



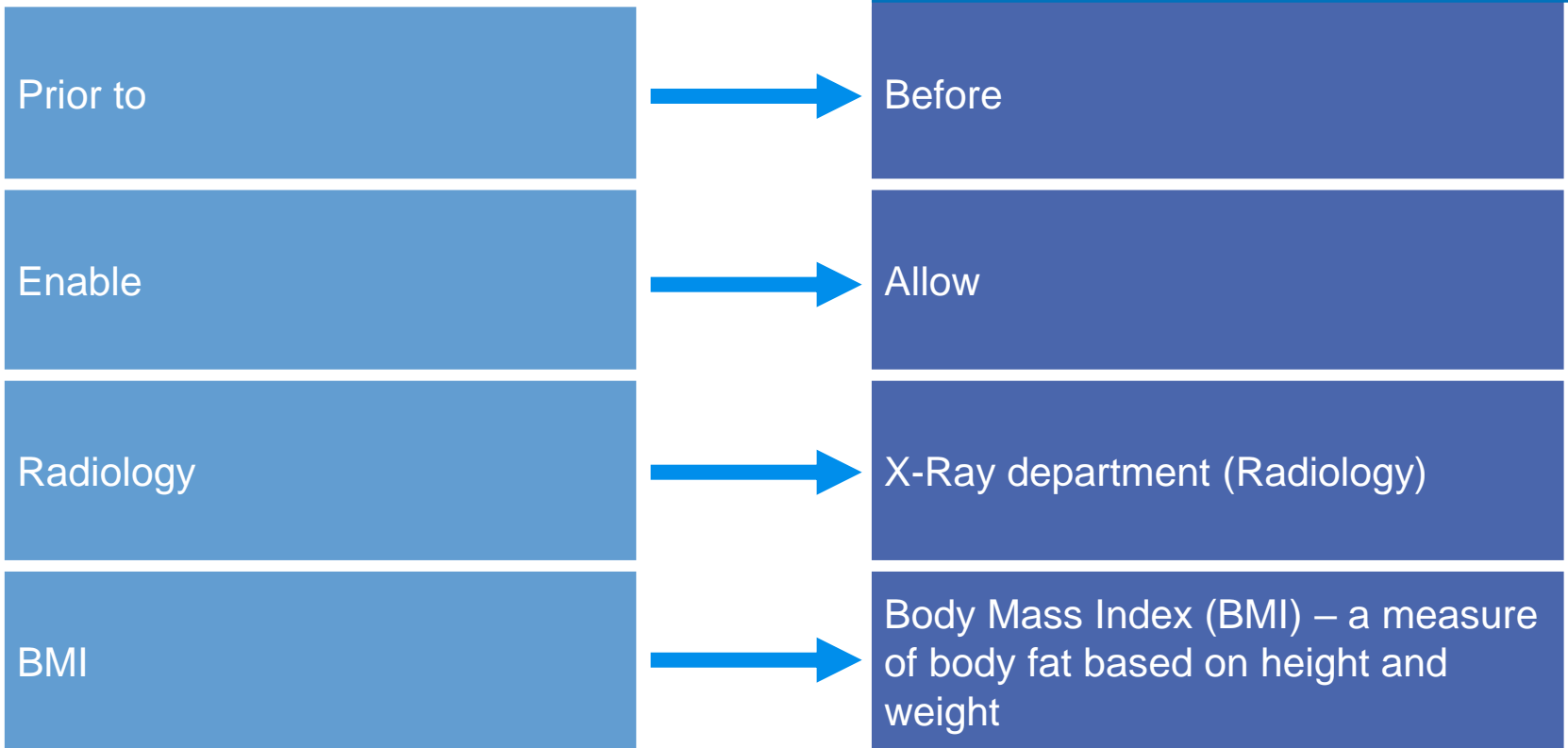
Radiology



BMI



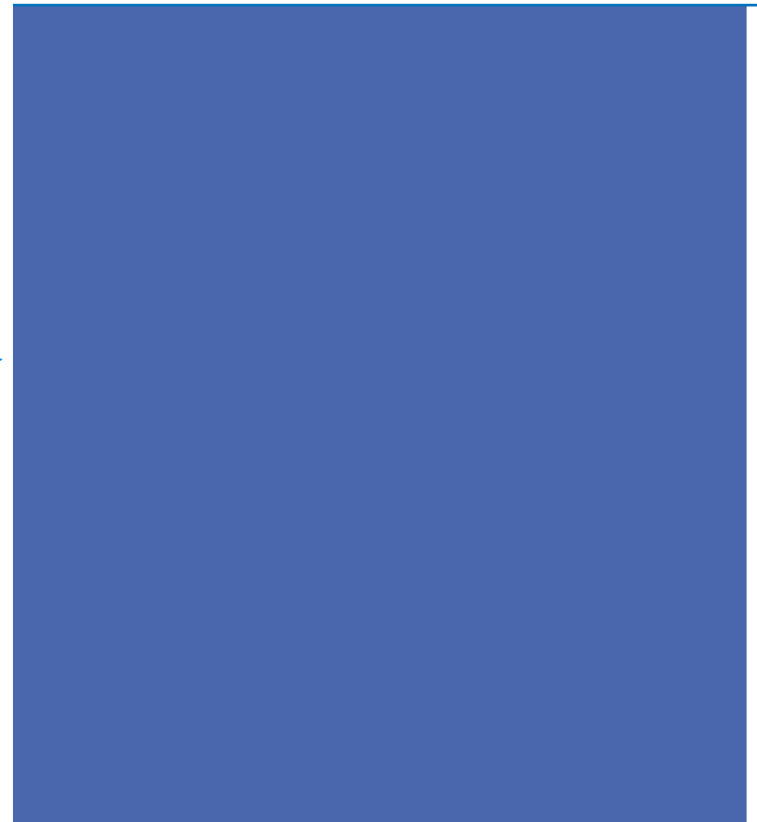
Everyday words...



How to spot and change hard words...



12.5 Participation in research varies depending on the study you choose to volunteer for. Some clinical trials involve drugs or treatments. Alternatively, they may look at the care you receive and could also involve interviews, questionnaires, researchers studying how your care team communicates with you, taking a blood or tissue sample, participating as a healthy volunteer.



How to spot and change hard words...



Participation in research **varies** depending on the study you choose to volunteer for. Some clinical trials involve drugs or treatments.

Alternatively, they may look at the care you receive and could also involve interviews, questionnaires, **researchers studying** how your care team communicates with you, taking a blood or tissue sample, **participating** as a healthy volunteer.



Taking part in research is different depending on the study you choose to volunteer for. Some clinical trials involve drugs or treatments. Or they may look at the care you receive and could also include interviews, questionnaires, people asking how your care team communicates with you, taking a blood or tissue sample, taking part as a healthy volunteer.

12.5

10.4

How to spot and change hard words...



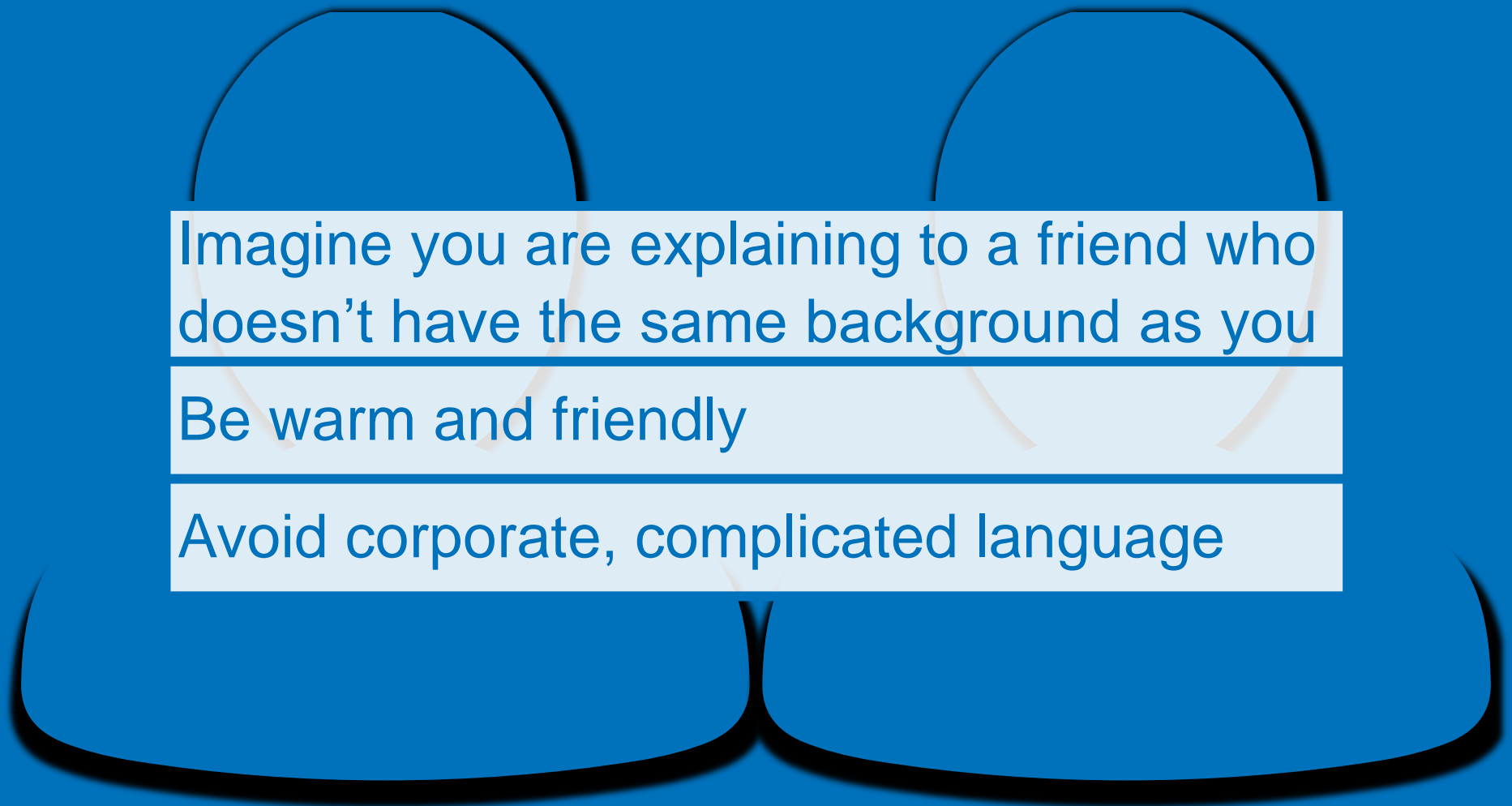
10.4 Taking part in research is different depending on the study you choose to volunteer for. Some clinical trials involve drugs or treatments. Or they may look at the care you receive and could also include interviews, questionnaires, people asking how your care team communicates with you, taking a blood or tissue sample, taking part as a healthy volunteer.



5.8 Taking part in research is different. It depends on the study you choose to volunteer for. Some clinical trials involve drugs or treatments. Or they may look at the care you receive and could also include:

- interviews
- questionnaires
- people asking how your care team communicates with you
- taking a blood or tissue sample
- taking part as a healthy volunteer

Talk to a friend...



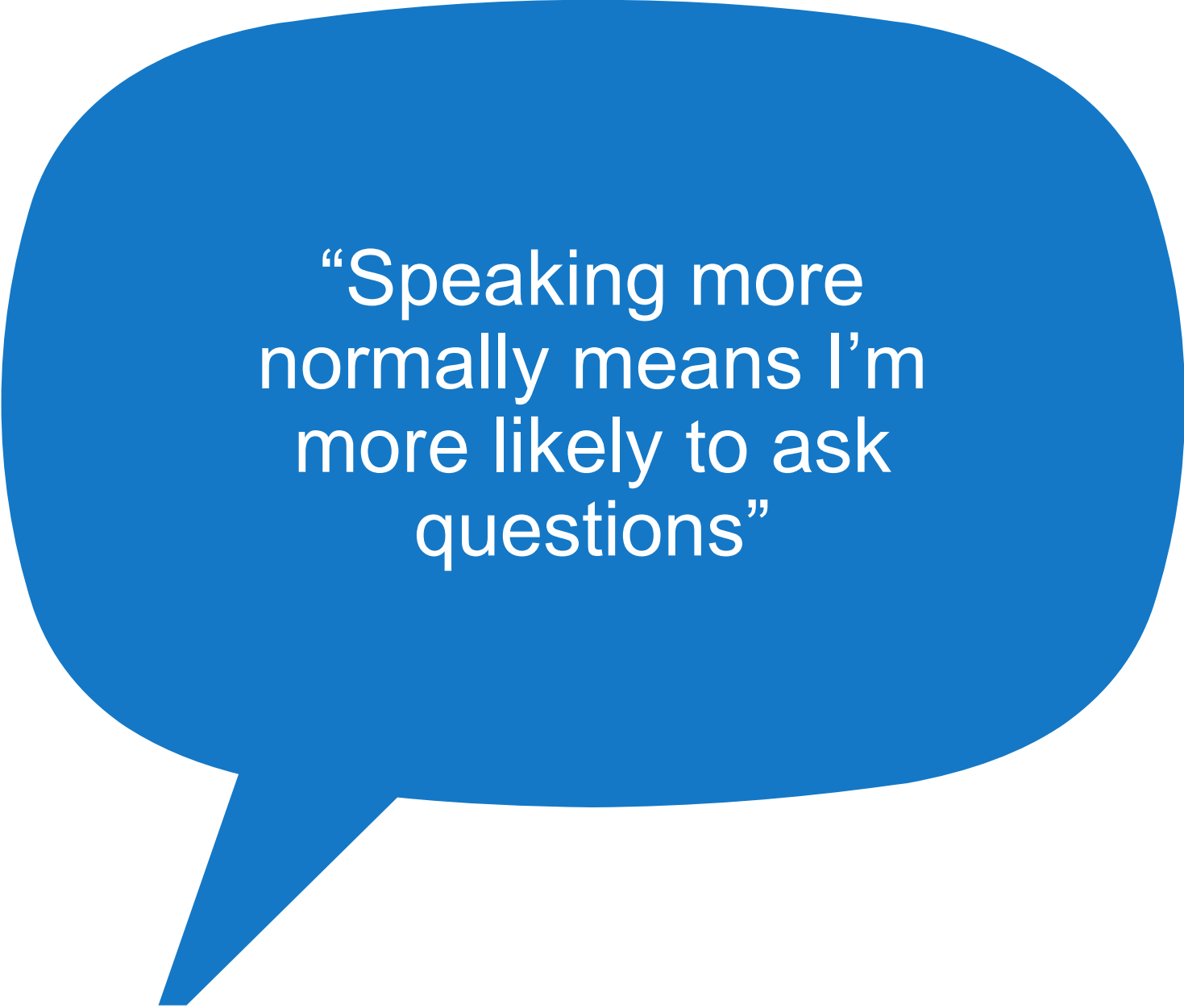
Imagine you are explaining to a friend who doesn't have the same background as you

Be warm and friendly

Avoid corporate, complicated language



“More human”



“Speaking more normally means I’m more likely to ask questions”

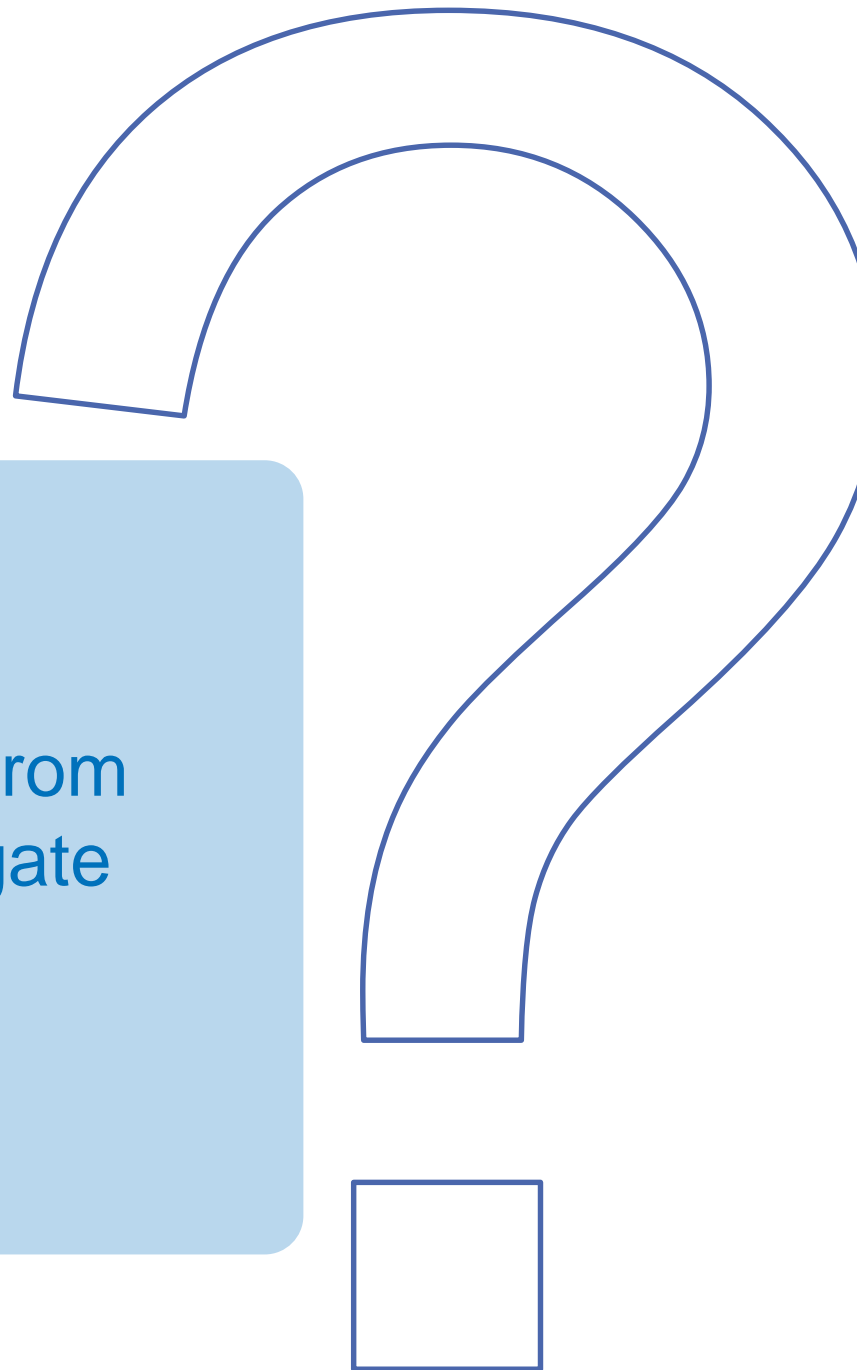
Would you say that to a friend?

We carry out a comprehensive bladder and bowel assessment to develop an individual treatment programme agreed with you and your child in order for them to reach their full potential of continence.



Would you say that to a friend?

It is vitally important we learn from such incidents in order to mitigate recurrence.



Take stuff out...

Word, sentences and paragraphs

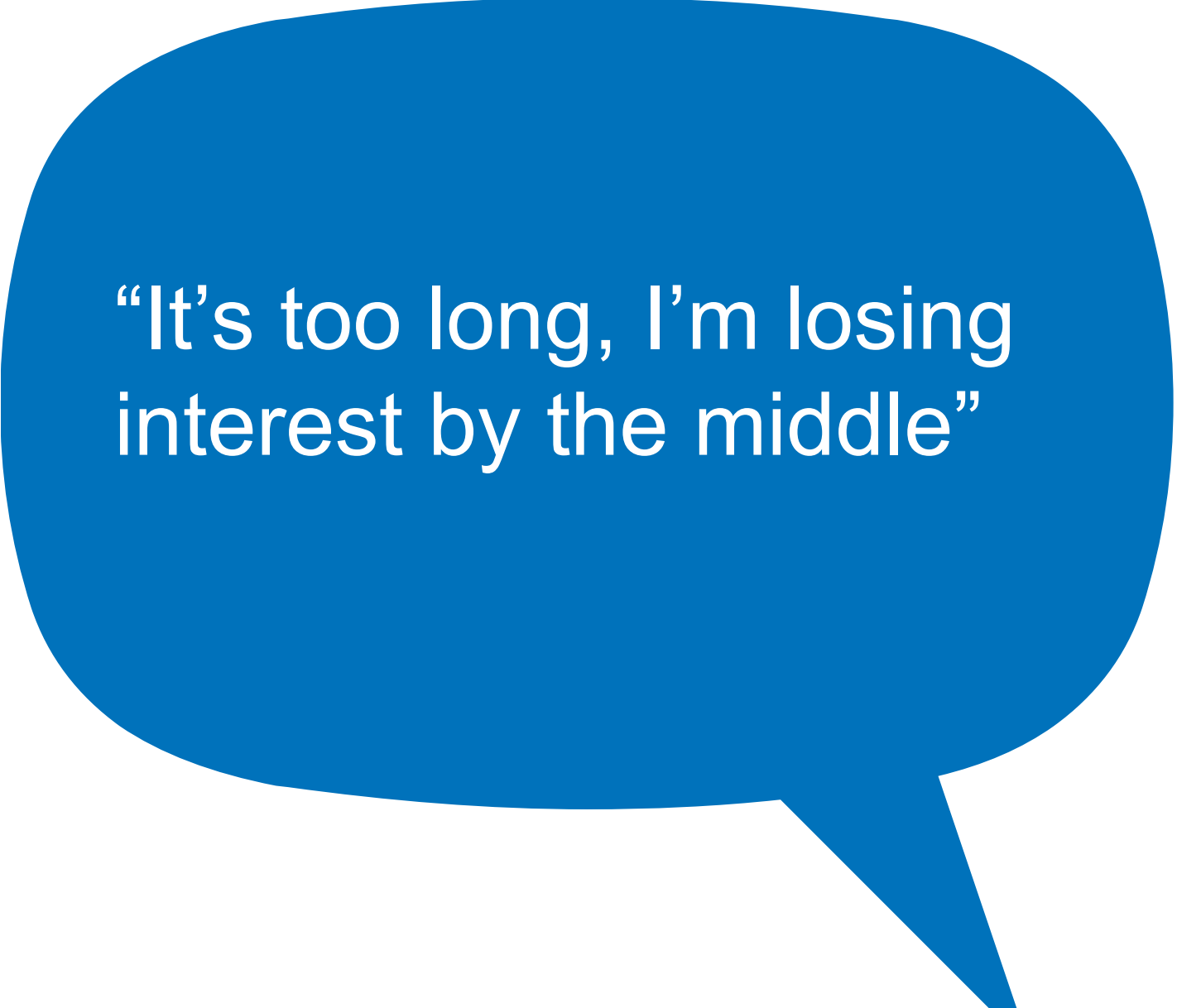
If it's a nice to know, it should probably go

Only include what's needed

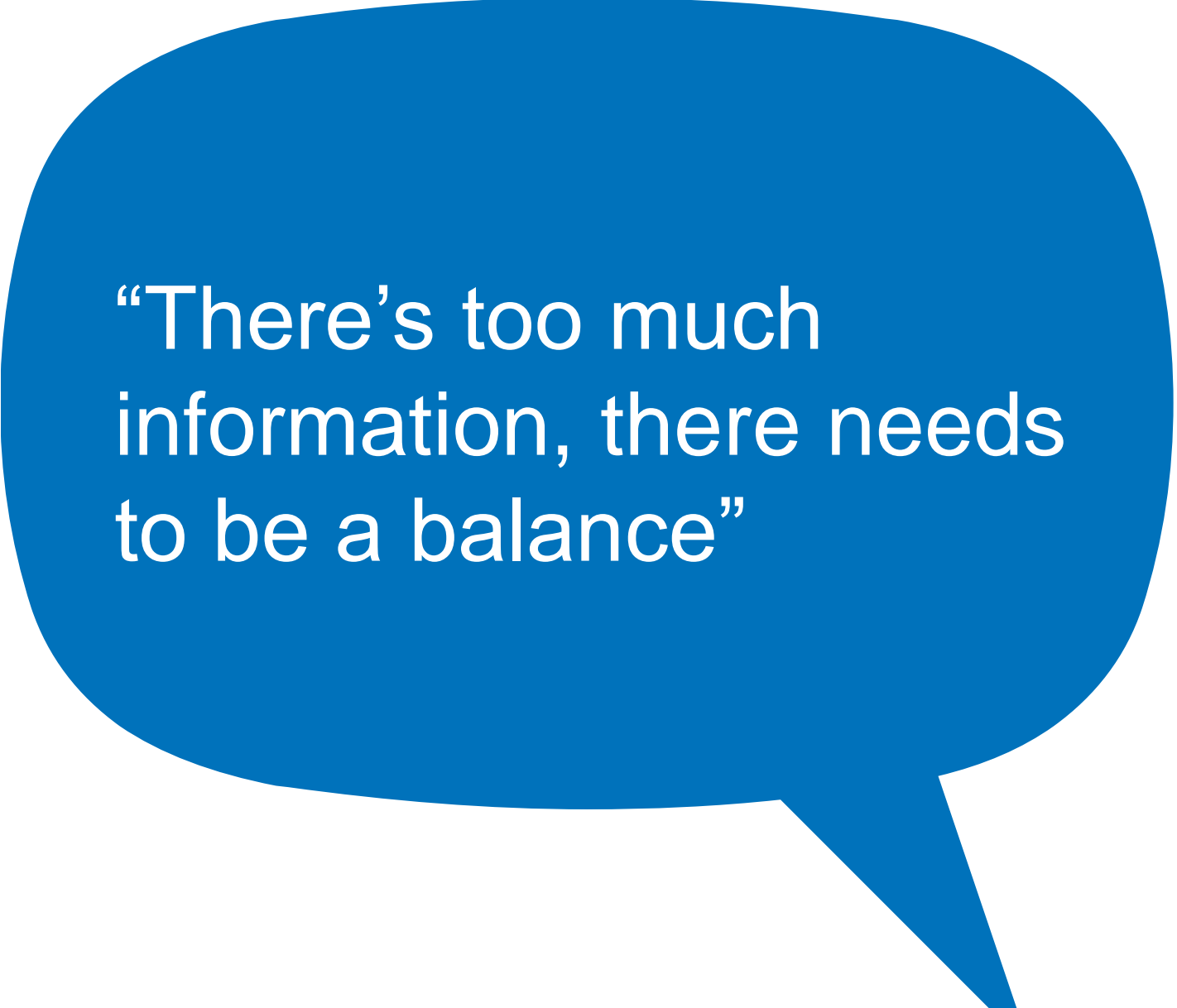




“I don't read all the
leaflet”

A large, blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble, the text "It's too long, I'm losing interest by the middle" is written in white, sans-serif font. The bubble is set against a white background with a solid blue horizontal bar at the very bottom of the image.

“It’s too long, I’m losing
interest by the middle”

A large blue speech bubble with a white border and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble, the text "There's too much information, there needs to be a balance" is written in white, sans-serif font. The bubble is set against a white background with a solid blue horizontal bar at the very bottom of the page.

“There’s too much
information, there needs
to be a balance”

You, we I...

Talk directly to the person

Use I, we and you

Avoid using the third person

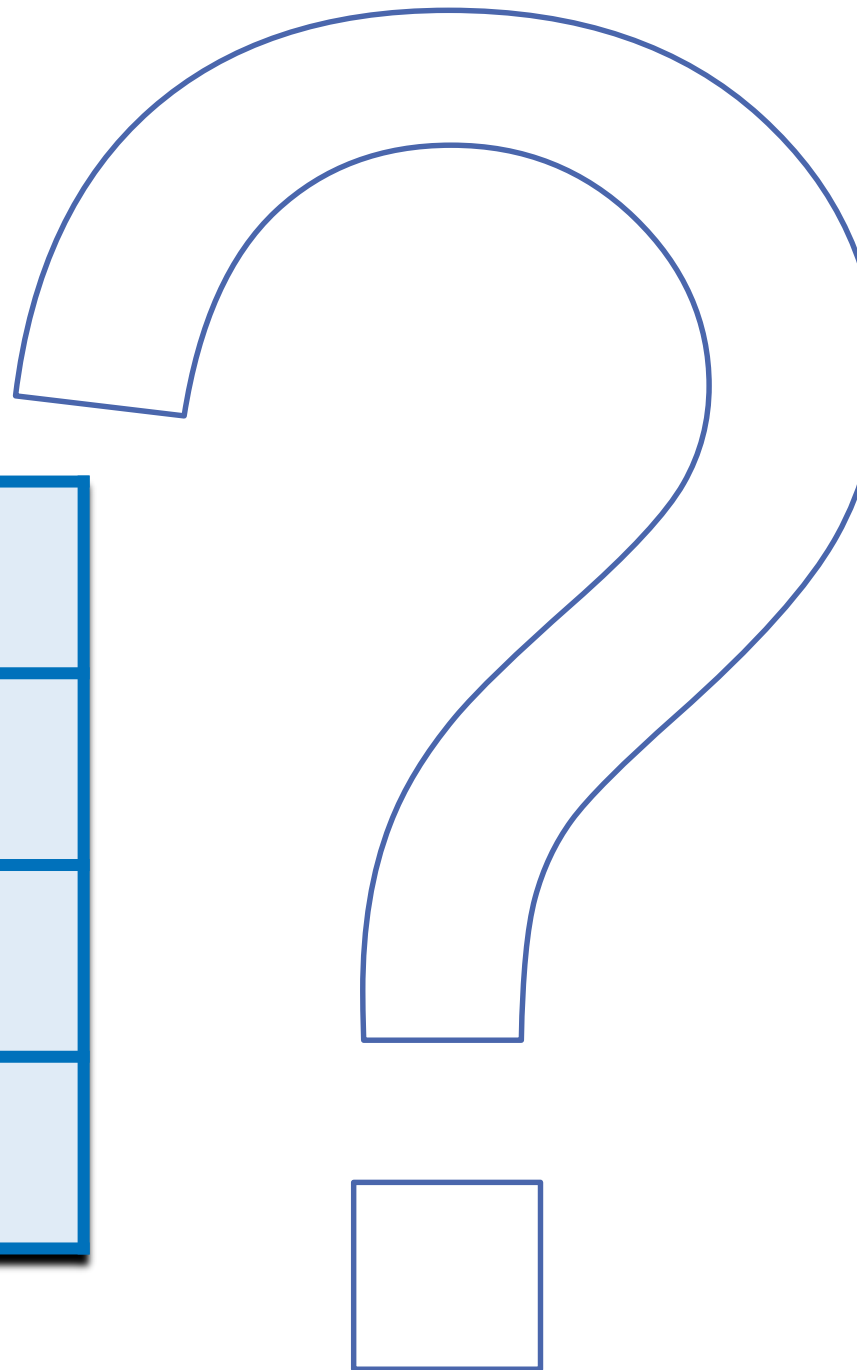
How can we do this?

Look for sentences that use the words “doctor”, “nurse”, “staff”

See if you can change these words to “we” or “they”

Look for sentences that say “patient” or “visitor”

See if you can change these words to “you”



Example...



Patients may be offered hand wipes as an alternative to hand washing in some areas.



We may offer **you** hand wipes as an alternative to hand washing in some areas.

How would you change this?



A **ward nurse** will take your child to theatre.



We will take your child to theatre.

Talk to BETTY (from Boldon)

B - break it down

E - everyday words

T - talk to a friend

T - take stuff out

Y - you, we, I



**Now look at the leaflet
and spot the changes...**



What is this leaflet about?

Hand washing is the most important thing you can do to protect yourself and other patients. It also helps to reduce the spread of infection. This leaflet will tell you how best to keep your hands clean.

Most infections are avoidable through good hand hygiene, at the right time and in the right way. Germs naturally live on your skin and normally cause few problems. But, when you bring them in hospital they may be more serious. You often pass these germs by physical contact so it is important that everyone washes their hands properly.

It's ok to ask! You can ask us if we have cleaned our hands before we have any contact with you. We don't mind being reminded. It's important that you are reassured, too.

When should I clean my hands?

We try to do our best to protect you from infection but we need your help. Remember to wash your hands at these times:

- If your hands are dirty.
- Before eating.
- Before touching food.
- After using the toilet, commode, bed pan or urinal.
- After changing nappies.
- If you are being sick.
- If you have diarrhoea (where your poo is more watery or you are pooing more often).
- After coughing or sneezing.

We will help you if you need it. For example, if you have any drips or dressings that make washing your hands difficult. Again, it's ok to ask.

Everyone must wash their hands with soap and water before entering and when leaving a ward or clinical area if someone has diarrhoea and vomiting. You can ask for more advice from the Nurse in charge of the ward or department.

When is hand washing enough?

This is enough for social contact and most clinical care activities. You can wash your hands to keep yourself clean. You should always do this when your hands are dirty.

When should I use alcohol hand sanitiser?

This is a quick and easy alternative to hand washing. Use hand sanitiser when your hands look clean. If your hands are covered with dirt, you need to wash your hands with soap and water. Alcohol sanitiser will not work.

Can I use hand wipes?

We may offer you hand wipes as an alternative to hand washing in some areas. Please make sure you get rid of hand wipes in waste bins. Do not flush them away in toilets as this can lead to blockages.

How should I wash my hands?

You must wet your hands on both sides and put enough soap on to cover your hands. Rub the palms of your hands together and then the backs of your hands making a good lather. Make sure you open your fingers so you can wash in between. Rub the tips of your fingers and also wash your thumbs and wrists. Rinse them well and then dry thoroughly. These steps should take at least 20 seconds. See the diagram below.



Readability

Readability, reading grade, reading age ...

How easy it is to read your writing

Short sentences + short words
= lower readability



Flesch-Kincaid reading grade

The lower the score,
the easier it is to read

Score from 0 to 12+

**Aim for a reading
grade of 6 or lower**

Flesch-Kincaid Reading Grade	Age (years)	Readability
5 th Grade	10 – 11	Very easy
6 th Grade	11 – 12	Easy
7 th Grade	12 – 13	Fairly easy
8 – 9 th Grade	13 – 15	Standard
10 – 12 th Grade	15 – 18	Fairly difficult
College Grade	18 – 21	Difficult
Above College	21 +	Very confusing



You Tube Playlist

Our You Tube Playlist includes:

Setting up readability statistics in Word, planning, purpose, using pictures, using headings, short sentences, simple words, readability, passive to active voice, design and format, tone of voice and alt text.

NHS readability tool

https://newcastlelse.github.io/nhs_readability_react/

The screenshot shows the NHS Medical Document Readability Tool interface. It features a dark header with the title 'NHS MEDICAL DOCUMENT READABILITY TOOL' on the left and 'MORE INFORMATION' on the right. Below the header is a large text input area with a 'CLEAR TEXT' button in the top-left corner. To the right of the input area is a sidebar with two sections: 'Readability' and 'Analysis Options'. The 'Readability' section includes three items: 'Estimated UK Reading Age' (0), 'Average reading time' (0), and a toggle for 'Include medical terms in reading age scores'. The 'Analysis Options' section includes three items: 'Show complex sentences' (toggle on), 'Show passive sentences' (toggle on), and 'Highlight complex words' (toggle on). Each item in the sidebar has a blue question mark icon to its left.

NHS MEDICAL DOCUMENT READABILITY TOOL

MORE INFORMATION

CLEAR TEXT

Readability

- Estimated UK Reading Age 0
- Average reading time 0
- Include medical terms in reading age scores

Analysis Options

- Show complex sentences
- Show passive sentences
- Highlight complex words

Thank you

**NENC Regional Health
Literacy Team**

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