

# Evaluating Written Spanish-Language OSH Materials

## Overview

The following criteria are intended to guide the development and evaluation of Spanish-language occupational safety and health (OSH) materials. The criteria can be used at different stages of the material development process and to assess if existing materials meet the needs of Spanish-speaking workers. The user will be able to identify whether materials are effective, what aspects may need improvement, and substitute or complement existing materials with other educational efforts, if necessary.

Criteria were developed in relation to three general educational goals:

1. To convey a concept or issue clearly.
2. To establish how that concept or issue relates to the work-life and reality of the target population.
3. To motivate workers to change an attitude or take action.

Criteria were organized into a checklist and arranged into five categories: Content (messages and scope), Images (illustrations, photos), Readability (language, use of words), Material Organization (layout—paragraphs, order, margins, spacing), and Text Design (font size and color, type of text).

Additionally, we identified efforts to make Spanish-language OSH materials more **Culturally Appropriate**.<sup>\*</sup> appealing and accessible for Spanish-speaking workers, who are mostly immigrants and have great diversity in age, time in the United States and educational levels. However, the best way to make sure your materials are culturally appropriate is to talk to members of the target population before designing your materials. Then, let them review your draft and provide feedback (see Guidelines, page 5).

## Who is the Checklist Intended for?

The checklist is intended for worker advocate agencies and organizations that develop and use Spanish-language OSH materials to raise awareness and educate workers. Examples of those who could use this checklist may include: unions, community-based and nonprofit organizations, university programs and those in academia, governmental agencies (e.g. NIOSH, OSHA), and foreign government offices, in particular Mexican Consulates.

## Rating Instructions

1. Read the material you wish to evaluate.
2. Read through the checklist and guidelines.
3. Complete the checklist by filling out the gray box below and checking the boxes next to the criteria that apply to the material you are reviewing. In general, any criterion that you “cannot assess” or “does not apply” will not count toward the rating of the educational material.

# Criteria Checklist

<p><b>Name of material:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Date of publication:</b> _____ <b>Today's date:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Who developed the material?</b> _____</p> <p><b>Is the material copyrighted?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</p> <p><b>Format (e.g. factsheet, brochure, poster):</b> _____</p> <p><b>Intended Use:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Introduction to Topic (quick read)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> As General Reference (covers topic more in depth; takes longer to read)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> To Complement Training</p> <p><b>Purpose/Topic:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Target Population:</b> _____</p> <p><b>Main Messages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li><li>• _____</li></ul> <p><b>Are you familiar with OSHA regulations that apply to this topic?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p> <p><b>Is this a translation from an English version of the same document?</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know</p>
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## Is the Material Adequate?

The three criteria below are considered necessary for workers to be attracted to pick up the material and to make sure that the content is accurate and useful. If any of the three criteria are not met, the material is deemed **Unsatisfactory** and should be substituted for another material or revised using this checklist.

### **Content**

- The purpose is clearly conveyed in the title or cover page.
- Messages are accurate and consistent with applicable worker safety policies and recommendations (OSHA).
- Suggests practical solutions or actions that workers can take.

**Under our guidelines, educational OSH materials should meet all three criteria to be considered Adequate.**

### **Comments:**

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# Is the Material Good?

Spanish-language OSH materials should aim to be clear and accessible. We recommend the inclusion of images and consideration of the reality of the target population. In addition, how the material is written (readability), its font size and organization will impact the ability of workers to read, understand and how they react to the material.

## Content

- Considers challenges (e.g. legal status, language barriers, low literacy, fear), resources (e.g. family support), and religious or health beliefs that may influence behavior of the target population.\*
- Includes specific examples applicable to the target population, workplace or occupation.\*
- Content tries to elicit an emotional response (e.g. "excessive heat is a serious threat to your health").
- There are a few clearly stated main messages (only what is essential to know and what the time frame for the intended use allows).
- Terms are used consistently.

## Images

- Images reinforce main messages (e.g. demonstrate actions messages suggest; undesirable actions should be crossed out).
- Images demonstrate correct safety practices (e.g. worker on roof wearing harness).
- Images resemble the real world (no incomplete or abstract images), yet show essential details.

## Readability

- Spanish is grammatically correct and words are spelled correctly.\*
- Writing style is appropriate for Spanish speakers (not a literal translation from English).\*
- Sentences are concise and written in the active voice.
- Writing style is conversational and interactive (e.g. poses questions).
- Uncommon or technical words are defined immediately after first mentioned (can be in glossary).

## Material Organization

- Organized into main and subtopics that follow a logical sequence (e.g. define hazard, then its effect on worker health and how to control).
- There is a clear order to where the reader begins and ends the material (it is simple and easy to follow).

## Text Design

- Text font is at least 12 points.

**A Spanish-language OSH material that includes images and meets all or the majority of the criteria in each category is considered Good.**

**Comments:**

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# What Could Make the Material Better?

Spanish-language OSH materials are improved when readers (workers) are better able to understand and connect to the topic and feel empowered to take action.

## Content

- Main messages are reinforced, particularly at the beginning and end.
- Headings and subheadings express a complete message or statement.
- Includes basic information about applicable OSHA regulations or workers' rights.
- Includes how to contact the organization/agency that developed the material.

## Images

- Images of workers represent the target population's demographics and ethnicity and are respectful (not demeaning).\*
- Images incorporate cultural aspects that are relevant, familiar, and appealing to the target population (i.e. certain colors, deference to elders).\*
- Images accurately depict the workplace and the workers (e.g. workers wearing appropriate work clothing).
- Images are placed near the text to which they refer or include captions.

## Readability

- Spanish is colloquial, reflects the way people speak, (i.e. roofero) and avoids technical jargon.\*
- Acronyms are stated first and then spelled out in Spanish, in parentheses.\*
- Units of measurement (weight, distance, temperature) are written in both U.S. and international systems.\*

## Material Organization

- There is consistency between headings or sub-headings and the text that follows.
- Important words, phrases or messages are underlined, in **bold font** or in text boxes (rather than ALL CAPS or *italics*).
- One complete topic is limited to one page or two facing pages.
- Text is generally left justified and read across the page (left to right).
- Content is placed in "chunks," columns or boxes.
- Bullets, columns, boxes or whitespace are used to break up text (information does not appear cluttered).

## Text Design

- Font has serif but is not too fancy (Times New Roman (serif) Arial (no serif)).
- Font is black or a dark color on a light background (or there is contrast between font and background).

**A Spanish-language OSH material that meets a significant number of these criteria has reached higher standards and is thus considered Excellent.**

## **Comments:**

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## Summary

Level	Category	# of Criteria Checked	Maximum # of Criteria	General Comments
<b>Adequate</b>	Content		3	
<b>Good</b>	Content		5	
	Images		3	
	Readability		5	
	Material Organization		2	
	Text Design		1	
<b>Excellent</b>	Content		4	
	Images		4	
	Readability		3	
	Material Organization		6	
	Text Design		2	

If the material you are designing or assessing has deficiencies, based on the checklist, it is important to recognize and address them before disseminating the material to your target population.

## Guidelines

The task of developing guidelines for OSH materials for Spanish-speaking workers is worthy of further research and consideration. These preliminary criteria were derived from literature reviews, interviews with worker advocates and people in the field of material development, but also from the target population (Spanish-speaking workers) who were consulted throughout our research.

In general, communicating and educating people about OSH is challenging in three ways. First, the general population has varied levels of awareness about this topic. Second, how people think and feel about their safety and health at work is mediated by socio-cultural experiences that are complex and fluid. Lastly, power dynamics in the workplace also affect how workers feel, think, and what they know and do about workplace safety and health.

To address the above challenges it is necessary to make the topic accessible. We consider word difficulty and sentence length as underscored by readability formulas, but we move our focus to the reader's interaction with the material as determined by characteristics of the content, images, material organization, and text design. Likewise, it is difficult to translate a population's socio-cultural reality and their exact manner of communicating into a category or specific criteria. **The best way to develop culturally appropriate materials is to involve the target population in the development process.** Their contribution ensures that materials accurately and effectively represent their reality and communicate relevant content.

## **In order to develop and/or assess educational materials, the following steps are needed:**

### **Assess your knowledge of the topic**

For those developing and/or assessing materials, it is important to have researched and be familiar with the target population as well as with the topic, and to acknowledge how the latter may relate to the former. A good understanding of the subject matter allows for greater flexibility in identifying how general concepts or processes apply to a particular context or group.

### **Identify the target population**

The more defined and well known the target population is, the less likely that assumptions and generalizations will go unnoticed. At the same time, materials should draw attention to relevant distinctions only when necessary and emphasize common human experiences. Materials developed “in context” (with participation of the target population) would naturally highlight their values, preferences, barriers, needs, strengths and other important aspects of their social and cultural reality.

### **Consider the relevance of the material to the target population**

Those developing and/or assessing materials should question what they know of the target population and seek their feedback to establish their perspective on the need, scope, priorities, and implications of the topics covered in the materials. Being selective is critical; determine what content is relevant for the target population to know.

### **Maintain simplicity and clarity in the language**

Health information is challenging for anyone and should always be presented in the simplest possible way in order to address varying reading levels. Materials should be appealing and not overwhelm readers with unfamiliar terms, or too much content or text. Readers should feel motivated to change an attitude or take action and feel competent.

Materials should ideally be created in the language of the target population to keep concepts and appeal from being lost in translation. If originally created in English, the material must be translated and tested with Spanish-speakers to ensure its accuracy and cultural appropriateness. When translating or developing materials, it is also important to use a trained bilingual specialist who also has good knowledge of the subject. Do not depend on computerized translation programs as they are often inaccurate.

Lastly, it is important to consider that Spanish varies among and within Spanish-speaking countries, resulting in differing idioms among the target population. Furthermore, for many Spanish-speaking workers, their first language is an indigenous language and Spanish may be their second language. Simplicity addresses difficulties Spanish-speaking workers may have with the language and with OSH related content.

### **Use images carefully**

Images play a crucial role in conveying messages. The target population’s reality must be accurately depicted so that the workers can relate to the topic and be more likely to take action. However, it is important to avoid stereotypes. A safe approach is to avoid oversimplifications that highlight a specific characteristic at the expense of the human complexity of any group.

### **Remember the relationship between the reader, the writer and the material**

The messages (content) in the materials must be communicated in a way that acknowledges and engages readers and does not insult or offend them. In this regard, the writer should recognize what may be common knowledge and make sure to include all relevant information.