

SAM

Suitability Assessment of Materials

for evaluation of health-related information for adults

Content

Purpose

SAM, the Suitability Assessment of Materials instrument offers a systematic method to objectively assess the suitability of health information materials for a particular audience in a short time.

How it works

SAM guides you to rate materials on factors that affect readability (the relative difficulty of decoding the words) and comprehension (the relative difficulty of understanding the meaning).

SAM rates materials in these six areas

- Content
- Literacy Demand
- Graphics
- Layout and Type
- Learning Stimulation & Motivation
- Cultural Appropriateness

Easy Scoring

For each factor, rate the materials *Superior*, *Adequate*, or *Not Suitable* based on objective criteria included in the instrument. You can calculate a score for each area and overall. For a panel of reviewers, you might average the ratings. Score the materials by assigning points as follows.

Superior – 2 points

Adequate – 1 point

Not Suitable – 0 points

Use SAM to:

- Measure how well materials “fit” your clients
- Compare different materials and select those most suitable for your clients
- Tailor existing materials for a particular populations

- Guide development and testing of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials
- Set Standards

Clients have the last word

SAM is an at-your-desk review. It can help you save time and money to improve program effectiveness by selecting or producing materials that your clients are likely to pick up, read, understand and act on. SAM cannot substitute for formative research and testing through which clients verify that the information is attractive, useful and persuasive to them.

About the Instrument

SAM was developed in 1993 by Leonard and Cecilia Doak and Jane Root, leading experts in health education for adults, under the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine project, “Nutrition for Education in Urban African Americans” funded by the National Institutes of Health. Validation was conducted with 172 health care providers from several cultures as well as students and faculty of the University of North Carolina School of Public Health and Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. For more detail see Doak, C Doak, L, and Root J. *Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills* 2nd Edition, Philadelphia: Lipincott 1996.

Instructions for Evaluation *Beginnings Guides* with SAM

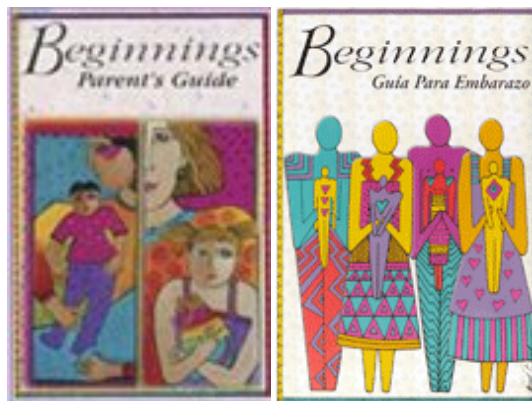
1. Read through the SAM instrument on the following pages to get a sense of the evaluation criteria.
2. Read all the way through the titles you are considering for your program. You will find the *Beginnings Pregnancy* and *Parent's Guides* are easy to read. As you read the *Beginnings* materials, keep in mind that the materials are distributed one booklet at a time-through the course of their pregnancy and/or the child's first three years. Typically there will be several weeks time between booklets. You may choose to apply SAM to the entire series of choose one booklet.
3. Use the SAM form provided here to rate the materials. For each factor, check the box that best describes your rating. Choose *Superior, Adequate, or Not Suitable*. Write comments in the space provided, in the margins, on the back. Comments can be very useful to the decision makers for your material requisitions requests.

Questions & Assistance

Please call me with questions about your review of the *Beginnings Guides* or use of the SAM instrument.

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Please share your results with us. Your feedback will help us continue to improve the Guides. Email to sandras@beginningsguides.com

Content

Purpose: It is important that readers readily understand the purpose of the materials. If they don't clearly perceive the purpose, they may miss main points.

Check One: Superior Purpose is explicitly stated in the title, cover illustration or introduction.
 Adequate Purpose is not explicit. It is implied or multiple purposes are stated.
 Not Suitable No purpose is stated in the title, illustration or introduction.

Comment:

Content Topics: Adult learners usually want to solve their immediate health problem rather than learn medical facts. The content of most interest and use to readers is behavior information that helps solve problems.

Check One: Superior Thrust of the material is application of knowledge aimed at desirable reader behavior.
 Adequate At least 40% of content topics focus on desirable behaviors or actions.
 Not Suitable Nearly all topics focus on non-behavioral facts.

Comment:

Summary & Review: A review offers readers a chance to see the key points in other words, examples or visuals and increases comprehension.

Check One: Superior Summaries are included and retell key
 Adequate messages in different words or examples.
 Not Suitable Some key topics are reviewed.
 No summary or review is included.

Comment:

Literacy Demand

Reading Grade Level: Text reading level is a critical factor in comprehension. Readability formulas provide a reasonably accurate measure of reading difficulty. *Beginnings* reading level is 4th grade throughout measured by the Flesch-Kincaid formula. It measures 88.1 on the Flesch Reading scale.

Check One: Superior 5th grade or level or lower
 Adequate 6th to 8th grade
 Not Suitable 9th grade or above

Comment

Writing Style: Conversational style and active voice are easy to understand. Passive voice, embedded information and long or multiple phrases slow reading and reduce comprehension. Example: *Take your vitamin every day* is easier to understand than *Patients are advised to take their vitamins daily.*

Check One: Superior 1) Conversational style and active voice are used
 throughout.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | 2) Simple sentences are used extensively. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate | 1) About half the text uses conversational style, active voice.
2) Less than half of sentences are complex with long phrases. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Suitable | 1) Passive voice throughout.
2) Over half of sentences have long or multiple phrases. |

Comment

Sentence Construction: The context is given before new information. We learn new facts/behaviors more quickly when told the context first. Example: *To relieve pain* (context), *put heat on the sore spot* (new information).

- Check One: Superior Consistently provides context before presenting new information.
- Adequate Provides context first about half the time.
- Not Suitable Context is provided first or not at all.

Comment

Comment:

Learning Stimulation & Motivation

Interaction included in text and/or graphics: When a reader does something to reply to a question or problem, chemical changes take place in the brain that enhance retention in long-term memory. Readers should be asked to solve problems, make choices, demonstrate.

- Check One:
- Superior Problems or questions are presented for reader response.
 - Adequate Question & Answer format is used to discuss problems and solutions (passive interaction).
 - Not Suitable No interactive learning or stimulation is provided.

Comment

Desired behavior patterns are modeled or shown in specific terms: People often learn more readily when specific, familiar instances are used rather than abstract or general concepts.

- Check One:
- Superior Instruction models specific behavior and skills. Example: nutrition information emphasized changing eating patterns, shopping, cooking.

Adequate Information is a mix of technical and common language the reader may not interpret in terms of daily living.
easily
Example: *High sugar, low nutrient*
value foods instead *of No fueled foods*

Not Suitable Information is presented in non-specific or category items such as food groups.

Comment

Motivation: People are motivated to learn when they believe tasks and behaviors are doable.

Check One: Superior Complex topics are subdivided so that readers may experience small successes in understanding or problem solving, leading to self –efficacy (confidence).

Adequate Some topics are subdivided to improve readers' confidence.

Not Suitable No partitioning is provided.

Comment

Cultural Appropriateness

Cultural Match – Logic, Language, Experience (LLE): A valid measure of the cultural appropriateness of material is how well its logic, language, and experience) inherent in the instruction) match the LLE *of the intended audience*. (not the reviewer.) Example: Nutrition instruction is a poor cultural match if it tells readers to eat vegetables that are rarely eaten by people in that culture and not sold in the reader’s neighborhood.

- Check One: Superior Central concepts of the material appear to be culturally similar to the LLE of the target culture.
- Adequate Significant match in LLE for 50% of central concepts.
- Not Suitable Clearly a cultural mismatch in LLE.

Comment

Cultural Image and Examples: To be accepted, an instruction must present cultural images and examples in realistic and positive ways.

- Check One: Superior Images and examples present culture in positive ways.
- Adequate Neutral presentation of cultural images and foods.
- Not Suitable Negative images such as exaggerated or caricatured cultural characteristics, actions, or examples.

Comment

Suitable for your population? Considering the socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds present in your population and your review of the *Beginnings Guides Curriculum*, would you recommend *Beginnings* for your program? Circle the number that shows the strength of your recommendation.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NO										YES
Definitely not									Recommended	
Recommended										without
reservation										

Please share your results with us. Your feedback will help us continue to improve the *Beginnings Guides*.

Email to sandras@beginningsguides.com

