**Style guide for participant information**

Language

* Write in simple everyday language. Use simple words of few syllables.
* Avoid abbreviations and medical terms, or use a glossary if necessary.
* Use a question and answer style if possible.
* Try to make the tone friendly and personal. For example address the reader as “you” rather than “the participant” and “we” rather than “the organisation”.
* Australian guidelines recommend using “participant” rather than “subject”.\*

Sentences

* Sentences should be no more than about 20 words. It is better to use a couple of sentences rather than one longer sentence, especially for new information.

Paragraphs

* Long paragraphs can confuse readers. Use bullet points, tables or timelines where appropriate. Five or six bullet points in a list should be the maximum.

Headings

* Headings are important and, if well used, help readers navigate the text.
* Use bold text or different colours for headings, to help make them stand out.
* Be consistent in using headings. Use consistent font types and sizes (14 point).

Font

* Choose a font which is easy to read. A serif font (e.g. Times New Roman or Cambria) is easier to read than a sans serif font (e.g. Arial or Helvetica).
* Make your font size generally 14 point for headings and 12 point for the main body of the text. For visually impaired readers the font size should be between 16 and 20.
* Avoid widespread use of capitals. The human eye recognises words by the word shape, so choose lower case for large blocks of text.
* Avoid using italic fonts and underlining. They make it harder for the reader to recognise the word shape.

Layout

* Pay attention to spacing. Leave spaces between paragraphs to rest the eye.
* Align the text to the left margin to aid location of the start of each line of text. “Justified” or “centred” text is harder to read since word spacing varies.

Footer

* Include in the footer of all pages: version number, date and page number (e.g. Page 1 of 2). The footer of this document is an example.

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\*See National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/ethics/2007_humans/section1.htm>