

# Seven Strategies for Effective Education

For clients to make informed decisions and follow treatment plans, information needs to be presented clearly and simply. It should be culturally and linguistically appropriate and reflect the client's beliefs, ethnic background and cultural practices. The amount of information presented should be limited to essential points, and tailored to the needs and knowledge gaps of that individual. Help your clients understand risks and benefits by using clear numbers and comparisons, and providing balanced, positive messages. Ask clients to show and tell you what they have learned. This is called using “teach-backs.” And finally, a client encounter should include a counseling and education approach that is interactive and engaging.

## Provide information that is clear and easy to understand

- ▶ Whether you're with a client, in a group, or writing materials, keep it simple! Substitute a short word for a long one: “use” instead of “utilize.” If you do use complicated terms, also say it more simply: “use it every time you have sex and always the right way.” Instead of “use birth control consistently and correctly.”



## Use culturally and linguistically appropriate messages

- ▶ Don't make assumptions about your clients' beliefs, religion, or customs, but do ask — respectfully. Ask a question such as, “Is there anything I should know about you — about your culture, beliefs, or religious or other practices that would help me take better care of you?” This makes it clear that you're asking so that you can better serve them, not just because you're nosy.

## Tailor information to the individual client

- ▶ Focus on your client's needs and knowledge gaps. What are the 3 to 5 most important educational messages that this individual client should walk away with knowing? That's as much as most of us will remember, so focus on those important messages. Highlight or circle these key points on any handouts you provide.

## Share balanced information

- ▶ Present advantages and benefits of contraception as well as potential side effects, risks, and warnings in an accurate and unbiased way. Ensure clients know about the range of birth control options available. Using a neutral approach, ask about and explore concerns the client may have and sensitively correct any misinformation. For example, if you are talking about pills you can say “for most women pills are safe with no side effects. Some women do have side effects but often they go away or we can help manage them by changing the prescription.”

## Use clear numbers and comparisons

- ▶ Frame your information with numbers use a consistent format and frame the information positively: For example, when talking about contraceptive effectiveness use “99 out of 100 women who typically use this method will not get pregnant.” Use simple graphs and visuals to help clients understand the information correctly.

## Engage the client in an interactive conversation

- ▶ Actively engage your client by asking questions and giving information that your client needs to know. Use a question and answer style to help clients learn and remember important information. Ask “What questions do you have?” rather than, “Do you have any questions?” Use interactive teaching methods such as writing or circling tailored messages on your educational materials.

## Use teach-backs to confirm understanding

- ▶ Ask clients to tell you, in their own words, what they're going to do: “We've covered a lot today, so I want to be sure that I was clear. Can you tell me what you'll do if you miss taking a pill?” Ask your clients to show you, as well. “I just showed how to put a condom on the model; now you try!” During teach-backs provide encouragement and respectfully correct mistakes.

Source: Providing Quality Family Planning Services: Recommendations of CDC and the U.S. Office of Population Affairs, 2014; Appendix E



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