

**International Food Information Council (IFIC) Foundation**  
***MyPyramid* Breakfast and Health Communications Program**  
**Message Development Checklist**

*This checklist was adapted from "Message Making 101: Creating Consumer-Friendly Messages," IFIC Foundation Tools for Effective Communications found on the Foundation Web site at <http://www.ific.org/tools/messages.cfm>.*

Successful nutrition messages are essentially CONSUMER-ORIENTED.

This is grounded in understanding what consumers know, believe, value, and do relating to food, diet, and nutrition. In other words, get your audience's pulse by LISTENING, LISTENING, and LEARNING from the consumers themselves. This is the best way to achieve authentic, consumer-oriented messages.

Use the questions below to evaluate whether you've covered all your bases under each step of the Message Development Model.

**STEP 1: Define the Issue**

- What is the central idea (or issue) you want to communicate?
- To whom do you want to communicate the issue? What are the characteristics of your target audience in terms of the following:
  - o Age
  - o Gender
  - o Family structure
  - o Ethnicity
  - o Education level
  - o Income level
  - o Hobbies and interests
  - o Preferred recreational activities
  - o Concerns and biases
  - o Life goals
- Is your target audience aware of the issue? Why or why not?
- What do they think, feel, and believe about the issue?
- Are their perceptions and attitudes toward the issue positive, negative, or neutral? Why?
- How does your target audience respond to the issue? Are they doing anything about it? Why or why not?

## **STEP 2: Develop Initial Message Concepts**

- What is/are the specific action(s) or behavioral change(s) that you want your target audience to adopt?
- What are the potential incentives that may motivate your target audience to adopting the behavior change (s)?
- What are the potential barriers that may inhibit your target audience from adopting the behavior change(s)?
- Does the language carry a positive tone? Is it “empowering” for the consumer to make changes?
- Are there any actionable steps provided to begin making changes?

## **STEP 3: Assess Message Concepts**

- Is the message **meaningful** to the target audience?
- Is the message **motivating** to the target audience?
- Is the message **consistent** with the target audience’s wants/needs and life values?
- **Self-efficacy**: Does the message entail a behavior change that’s within the audience’s repertoire of skills? Or do additional skills need to be learned?

## **STEP 4: Fine Tune Messages**

- How receptive were the consumers to the message? (Positive, negative or neutral reaction—to what degree?)
- Did the consumers interpret the message in the way you intended them to? Why or why not? What are the connotations they derived from the message?
- Which part of the message was clear or unclear? Will minor word changes improve the meaning or should it be completely rewritten?

## **STEP 5: Validate Messages**

- Same questions as STEP 4, but this time applied to a larger number of individuals.

**For more information about consumers’ breakfast consumption behaviors as well as their attitudes and perceptions of the morning meal that may help you develop effective messages, please visit:**

<http://www.ific.org/publications/other/breakfast.cfm>.