



Producing accessible
materials for print and
online

Text

nominettrust

Standard of Accessibility

AbilityNet is a registered national pan disability charity helping people adapt and adjust their information and communication technology.

Written material both on screen and on the printed page needs to be accessible in order for individuals to be able to easily extract information from the text.

Word processing and desktop publishing packages allow us to create eye catching content which can be often inaccessible to many readers due to over design, over use of colours and typefaces. But content can both look great and be accessible, by creating documents with a clear structure and layout and using a clear typeface, we can produce document that will not just be eye catching but much more readable.

Websites are also an important consideration in terms of providing accessible content, many of the points in this guide are also relevant to producing content for the web.

This guide aims to highlight some of the issues that can prevent text from being accessible and ways to improve the accessibility of your documents.

Fonts

The type face you use can have an impact on the readability of your document; some fonts can be used purely for design purposes and to create impact. Carefully considering the use of type face for your document or online content will greatly impact on how readable your document will be.

The two main types of typeface are Serif and Sans Serif, the difference between the two is that the Serif font ends in a curl or stroke at the end of each character, an example of a Serif font would be Times New Roman.

An example of a Sans Serif font would be Arial. Sans Serif fonts are considered to be easier to read particularly on screen, although certain characters such as 'a' may not be as easy to recognise as 'ɑ'.

Sans Serif fonts like Arial, Verdana and Helvetica are often used in web site design, this is because they are some of the most common fonts in use on your computer and they work well on screen.

Sans Serif

Serif

Serif fonts are said to work better in print, but for accessibility it is often recommended that Sans Serif fonts are used as the characters are easier to distinguish for those with reading difficulties or a visual impairment.

Restrict your use of fonts in a document, too many different type faces on a page can make the text hard to distinguish and can make the page look messy, instead keep the minimum font use to two or less, perhaps using a different font for the headings to create an impact and another style for the body text.

Legibility

Legibility or how well you can distinguish type on the page can be influenced by many factors, though having some similarities with readability; legibility is mainly concerned with the use of the typeface or font used on the page. The legibility of a document can impact on how long the document takes to read.

Colour contrast between the font colour and the background both on the web and in print can impact those with a visual impairment, if there is not sufficient contrast the text is harder to distinguish.

Some colour contrasts can be beneficial particularly to those who are dyslexic or have learning difficulties, although colour combinations are as much down to personal preference, often black text on a yellow background can be often beneficial, so consider printing onto different colour paper.



Setting the text at good default font size of around 12pts will help whether it is on screen or in print.

On the web it is important that the font size can be increased in size on the page by making changes to the text size in the browser. This will affect content within text boxes, so in order to avoid text overflow, it is important that the text boxes increase in size along with the text.

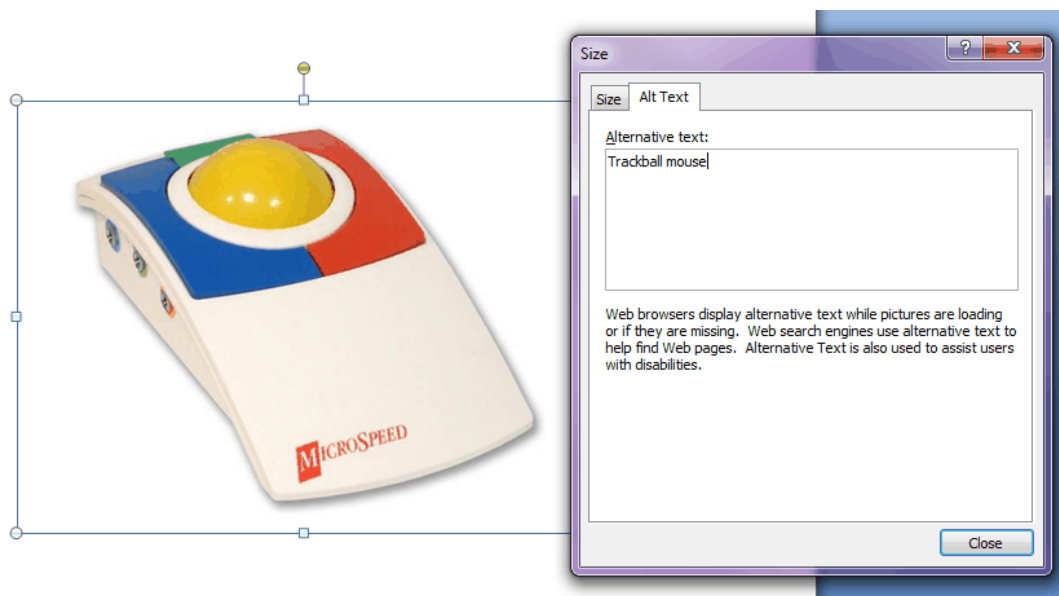
Accessibility

Accessibility should be considered for documents that are going to be made available electronically such as websites and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files. The accessibility of electronic content has become increasingly important with so much information being made available online.

How accessible the PDF file will be, is dependent on how accessible the document it was created from was. The easiest way to produce an accessible PDF file from Word is to create a structured document by applying styles to the text such as heading 1, titles etc. Headings should follow a logical order such as Heading 1 then Heading 2.

Hyperlinks can also be assigned a meaningful description, instead of including the website address as the hyperlink. Avoid using '**Click Here**' instead use for example the name of the document or subject of the page the hyperlink is linked too.

You can assign alternative text to images in Word, which will allow them to be accessible to screen reader users by giving a description of what the image is displaying.

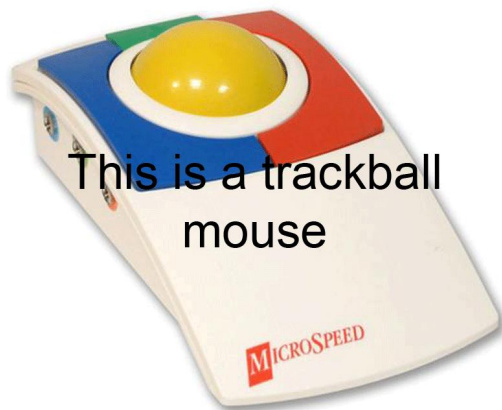


Images

Using images in a document can often help support what is being said in the text and therefore the use of images can often help readers with dyslexia and learning difficulties to follow what is happening in the text.

The placement of images on the page should be carefully considered. Images placed in a random way can interrupt the flow of the text and make it hard to follow. Consider placing images at the end of paragraphs and allow for space between the text and the image.

Avoid having text run over images for example where an image has been set as background as this can make the text hard to read.



If your document is going to be made available electronically for example as a PDF file or if you are adding images to a website, you should consider adding alternative text to your images. This will help provided a description of the image for screen reader users.

Images conveying information or in colour should also be described. If using an image of a map or a graph provide a summary of the information of what the image is showing you.

For images that are going to be used for print or in documents that are to be photocopied, use images where possible that have a good colour contrast and are clearly defined.



Readability

While legibility is influenced by typeface and how easy it is to recognise individual characters, readability focuses on words and blocks of text in print and online and how easy they are to read. Text using a decorative typeface that is noticeable may not necessarily be readable.

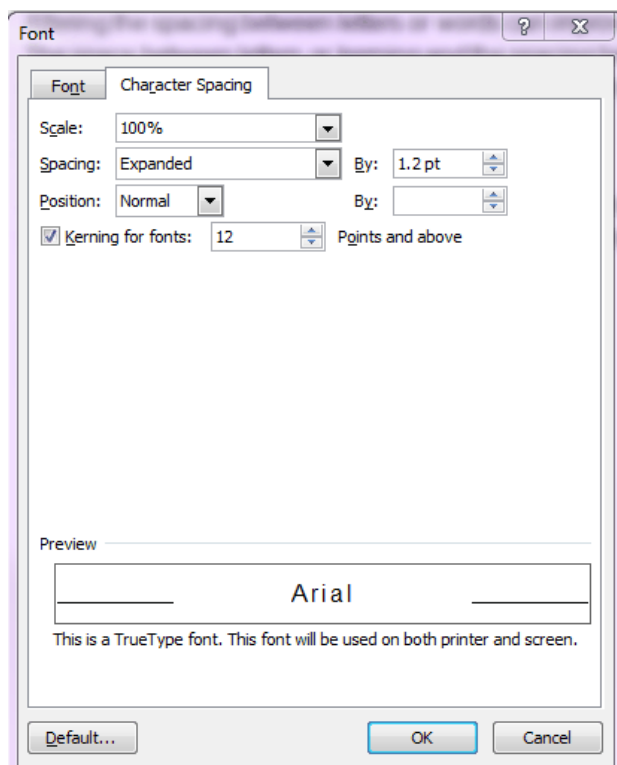
Blocks of text in CAPITALS or italics should be restricted to headings or very short sentences, large blocks of text in CAPS can impact on the legibility of a document as it can make the letters hard to distinguish as all of the letters are of the same height. Underlined text and text in *Italics* can also impact on readability as it can often make it hard to recognise the text.

**Avoid using LARGE
BLOCKS OF CAPITAL
LETTERS.**

Hyphenation refers to word breaks that occur at the end on lines and the word is carried onto the next line. This can have an effect on the readability of text as it interrupts the flow of the text especially for readers with dyslexia or learning difficulties. Hyphenation can be turned off in most word processors or Desktop publishing software and should be avoid where possible.

Avoid words being split between two lines, know as hyphenation.

Altering the spacing between letters or words can improve the readability of the text. The space between letters or kerning and the spacing between words or tracking can also be altered to improve the readability of the body text.



In documents the text should be justified to the left rather than using full justification to make text easier to read. When using text wrap around images the text should be to the left of the image where possible.

Although not a direct consideration in terms of readability, what can have a big influence on the accessibility of a document is the quality of photocopied resources. The paper type too can have an influence glossy or thin paper that allows type from the reverse side of following pages can impact on the readability of the text.

Website Accessibility

Although not a comprehensive list, building in some of the following points into your website will help towards making your site more accessible.

- Include a proper heading structure, a heading structure such as 'h1, h2' etc will allow screen reader users to easily navigate around the web page.

`<h1>` **Adapting Technology - Changing Lives** `</h1>`

AbilityNet is a national charity helping disabled adults and children use computers and the internet by adapting and adjusting their technology. Our special expertise is ensuring that whatever your age, health condition, disability or situation you find exactly the right way to adapt or adjust your ICT to make it easier to use.

[View our Annual Report](#)

`<h2>` **BT Community Connections** `</h2>`

If you are a community or charitable organisation that is looking to extend your work through use of the internet and ICT but don't have the means, apply for an award today!

[Find out more about BT Community Connections](#)



- Text should be of a good default size and resizable, when text is resizable ensure it does not overlap onto surrounding content.
- Important images should have alternative text `` while cosmetic images should be assigned an empty alt attribute `alt=""`. Avoid using images of text as these cannot be resized.

BT Community Connections

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[Find out more about BT Community Connections](#)



Free Support Packages for AAC/AT Services

Free AbilityNet support packages for AAC / AT services supporting children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

We are offering Local Authorities and PCT's in England a number of free funded one year "Local Capacity" Service Level Agreements (SLA) to support their students and staff in their use of assistive technology to overcome communication difficulties.

[Find out more about our Free Support Packages for AAC/AT Services.](#)



Fig 1 Images

"School Children holding the BT Community Connections banner"BT Community Connections

If you are a community or charitable organisation that is looking to extend your work through use of the internet and ICT but don't have the means, apply for an award today!

[Find out more about BT Community Connections](#)

Free Support Packages for AAC/AT Services

"Boy using assistive technology (headset)"

Free AbilityNet support packages for AAC / AT services supporting children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs

We are offering Local Authorities and PCT's in England a number of free funded one year "Local Capacity" Service Level Agreements (SLA) to support their students and staff in their use of assistive technology to overcome communication difficulties. [Find out more about our Free Support Packages for AAC/AT Services.](#)

Fig 2 Image Alt text

- Clear and easy to follow keyboard focus, allowing keyboard only users to follow their progress around the webpage.



- Is there good colour contrast between text and background colour combinations?
- Is there a site map and accessibility page?

[Home](#) > [Site Map](#)

AbilityNet Site Map

→ [Home](#)

→ [About Us](#)

→ [Funding](#)

→ [Volunteering](#)

→ [Working for AbilityNet](#)

→ [Our vision](#)

→ [Our history](#)

→ [Our mission](#)

→ [Find your local centre](#)

→ [At Home](#)

→ [Assistive technology](#)

→ [Physical difficulties](#)

→ [Hardware](#)

→ [Software](#)

Useful links for further information on document accessibility:

[Access Materials Website](#)

[Document Accessibility](#)

[Widgit Symbols](#)

[RNIB Accessible Information](#)

[Typefaces for Dyslexia](#)

[Mencap Make it clear](#)

[Accessibility Standards](#)

Adobe PDF Accessibility

[Acrobat 9 Accessibility](#)

[Acrobat accessibility training resources](#)

Preparing accessible lecture materials

[The Naked Lecturer](#)

Web browser Accessibility

[Internet Explorer 8](#)

[Internet Explorer 7](#)

[Firefox Accessibility](#)

Website Accessibility

[Overview of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)

[Colour contrast analyser by Juicy Studio](#)

[Download the Vischeck colour blindness plug-in](#)

The RNIB's clear print guidelines form part of this document [RNIB See it Right](#).

The guidance on using Symbols in learning and education is provided by [Widgit](#).