

Accessibility Guidelines for Print and Electronic Documents

Content

For content, the golden rule is to always keep it simple and straightforward. Content is about **readability**: what makes some texts easier to read than others.

- Use short, simple and familiar words.
- Keep your sentences short.
- Use active voice, present tense, and positive terms.
- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms or technical terms if possible; always explain them if they are essential.
- Reduce text to a minimum, and be as literal as possible.
- Do everything possible to clarify and simplify the text, and where appropriate include illustrations.
- Use simple graphic elements such as bulleted lists.

Appearance and Style

For appearance, the key factor is **legibility**, which concerns typeface and layout.

- Use simple and clean typefaces (i.e. sans serif).

Serif	Arial
vs.	Arial Black
Sans Serif	Calibri
	Corbel
	Tahoma
	Verdana

- Use a maximum of two fonts in the same document or on the same webpage.
- Use 12 point or larger for your text size.
- If you must emphasize a word or passage, use a **bold** or **heavy font**. Do not use *italics* or UPPER CASE LETTERS.
- Use wide margins and plenty of white space.

- If you must use a lot of text, separate text into columns to make it easier to read. It requires less eye movement and less peripheral vision.
- Avoid hyphenation.
- Contrast - Use high contrast colors for text and background. Good examples are black or dark blue text on a white or yellow background.



Good

Some Vibrating Color Combinations

red/green	red on green	green on red
blue/orange	blue on orange	orange on blue
green/magenta	green on magenta	magenta on green
yellow/cyan	yellow on cyan	cyan on yellow
blue/magenta	magenta on blue	blue on magenta
orange/yellow	yellow on orange	orange on yellow (not so bad)
blue/green	green on blue	blue on green

Not Good

Specially for the Web

All of the above suggestions apply equally to print and online text. Below are some additional accessibility suggestions specifically for the web. Remember this: people with disabilities may be using different kinds of technologies/software as aids, including:

- Braille Displays (provides access to information on a computer screen)
- Dragon Naturally Speaking (speech recognition software)
- JAWS Screen Reading Software
- Speech to text to video sign language devices
- Trackball Mouse (needed for use with typing sticks)
- Other mouse and keyboard alternatives to accommodate users with limited dexterity

To help them, you need to think about:

- **Consistency** - Each new page of your site should be consistent with previous pages, in terms of style, location and function. Links and buttons on a site need to follow the same style, and need to behave as a user would expect.
- **Navigation** - Navigation should not change across a site, and should feature intuitive menu options.
- **Font sizes** - 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. It is important that the text boxes increase in size along with the text.

This is a publication of Georgia Tech's Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP). This research and development is supported by the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS) Project Management Office (PMO) under contract # HSFE5-13-R-0031. The opinions contained herein are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, IPAWS PMO.

- **Structure** - It is important that content is well organized and structured. Headings should be clear and offer a meaning to the content. Always use nested heading tags hierarchically (e.g., H1 tags above H2, above H3, etc.).
- **Lists** should be short and concise.
- **White space and separation** - You need good separation between headings, columns of content, paragraphs, quotes, etc., and clear differentiation between content types.
- **Unexpected sound and movement and popups** - Avoid sounds and movements and pop-ups that play without the user specifically interacting with the source. Streaming audio and video is very common today. Whenever possible, avoid auto-playing media. It can be confusing for users to pinpoint the source of the noise.
- **Mix content types** - Different users may find different forms of content easier to consume. Whenever possible, provide your content in multiple formats (images, video and text). Don't forget to caption videos and transcribe audio content and provide alt text (see below). Whenever possible, provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation of content.
- **Ensure that all images, tables and other complex elements are properly tagged** - HTML provides tags for including metadata about objects on the page. Images that convey important information (e.g., they are not simply a background element) should have a description provided in the "alt text" tag so that blind and low vision users can access that content. Tables, charts and other elements should be labeled and use proper titles for data columns. This will ensure that a screen reader can read the information in a logical order.

Resources

- [Authoring Tool Accessibility Guidelines \(ATAG\) 2.0](#)
- [Clear Print guidelines - CNIB](#)
- [Design considerations that present common problems for individuals with cognitive disabilities.](#)
- <http://www.readability-score.com/>
- [Producing accessible materials for print and online - AbilityNet](#)
- [The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level - Readability Formulas](#)
- ["The Principles of Readability" by William H. DuBay \(2004\)](#)
- [WAI-ARIA, the Accessible Rich Internet Applications Suite](#)
- [Web accessibility for cognitive disabilities and learning difficulties](#)
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)
- [WebAIM, Web Accessibility in Mind](#)
- [Writing Clearly and Simply](#)

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