How to make documents accessible

This factsheet tells you what you can do to make documents more accessible for disabled people.
How to use this factsheet

We are **AbilityNet**.
We are a charity that helps disabled people use technology.

Like computers, tablets, and smartphones.

This is an **Easy Read** factsheet.
You may still need help to read it.
You can ask someone you know for help.

For more information you can phone or email us.

**Phone** 0800 048 7642

**Email** [enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk)
What this factsheet is about

This factsheet tells you how to make your documents accessible.

For example, for people who have a learning difficulty.

Or people who are blind.

More people can read and understand your documents when they are accessible.

We will tell you how to make your online documents more accessible.

And how to make your printed documents more accessible.

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When you make a document accessible you need to think about how it looks.

But you must also make sure a screen reader can read it.

We will tell you how to do this.

A screen reader is a type of computer software. It reads out loud what is on the screen of a computer, tablet or smartphone.

This means people who are blind or cannot read can listen to your document.
How to use headings

A heading is the text at the top of the page or section of a document.

The heading on this page is **How to use headings**.

A heading tells the reader what the writing is about. Headings help us organise our writing.

They also help the reader to understand the document.

You can make a heading stand out by making it **bold**.

You can also make a heading stand out with a bigger font size.
But **screen readers** will not understand that a different font size means it is a heading.

It is important to always use a heading from the **Styles tool** of Microsoft Word.

A screen reader will understand all headings made using the Microsoft Word Styles tool.

Try to use the same heading style for the main sections of your document.

You can do training on using the Styles tool on the [Microsoft website](https://www.microsoft.com).
How to write in plain English

Language that is easy to understand is called Plain Language. Or Plain English.

To make your language easier to read

- use short and easy to read sentences
- do not use hard words. Use words that most people know
- do not use jargon

Jargon are words that professional people use to communicate with each other.
• but other people can find jargon hard to understand.

• if you do use hard words or jargon you must explain what they mean in simple, clear words.

• use bullet points to make lists.
Choosing fonts and sizes

Choosing a font

A font is the style and shape of letters.

There are lots of fonts to choose from but some fonts are easier to read.

A simple font like Arial, Helvetica or Verdana is easier to read.

If you know the reader you can ask them what font they like best.

Do not use light or thin fonts as they are hard to read.
Choosing a font size

Make your font size 14 or bigger as this will be fine for most people.

Some people might want Large Print documents. Large Print use size 16 Arial font or bigger.

We used size 20 font for this document.

Other important things to know

Do not put whole words in capitals like THIS. It makes text harder to read.

Do not put too much writing on one page. It makes it harder to read.
Make sure there is lots of space around each sentence. You can also make the spaces between lines of text bigger.

If you want a word to stand out, use **bold**.

Do not underline words or use italic fonts. It makes it harder to read.

It is easier to read numbers from one to nine as text. It is easier to read numbers 10 and above as numbers, like 10, 50, 100 or 1000.

Make sure the writing lines up with the left side of the paper.
Do not split long words over two lines. This makes them hard to read.

Black text on a white background is easiest to read.

Black text on a yellow background is also good.

Some people are colourblind. People who are colourblind do not see colour the same way most people see it.

A colourblind person might not understand what you have written if you have used colour text to mean something.
Pictures, lists, tables and links

Pictures

Sometimes having a picture next to the writing can help people understand more. Like in this document.

But sometimes pictures can confuse people.

When you use pictures

• make sure there is enough space between writing and the picture.

• do not put writing over a picture.
Screen readers can only understand pictures if you add **alt text**.

**Alt text** is a tool that lets you write what is in the picture.

When a screen reader sees the picture it will read out the **alt text** you have written.

Some pictures are important. But some just make the document look nice. Like these sunflowers.

If the picture does not help the reader you can tell the screen reader to ignore it.
Lists

Putting a lot of information on a page can make it hard to read.

You can make it easier by breaking it up into smaller parts or sections.

You can number the sections.

Or put them in a list with bullet points using Microsoft Word.

A screen reader will be able to read the different sections and bullet points.
Tables

Tables are good for sharing information. If you make a table in Microsoft Word it must be simple.

You must put a name in the top box of each column.

This makes it easier for screen readers to read the table.

You can add a label to the table to tell the screen reader what the table is about.

You can do this by using the alt text tool.
Links

If your document is online you can include links to websites. Readers can find this helpful.

You can easily make links to websites in your Microsoft Word document.

If your document is printed as well write the web address after the link.

For example, **AbilityNet website** (www.abilitynet.org.uk).
How to check your document

Microsoft Word has an **Accessibility Checker**. It checks if your document is accessible.

Accessibility Checker will tell you if anything in your document is not accessible.

Accessibility Checker tells you why you need to fix something.

And it tells you how to fix these problems.
Where to get more information

Microsoft gives lots of information about how to make accessible documents on the Microsoft website.

If you want to make your document into a PDF, you can find out how to do this on the Adobe website.

A PDF is a type of digital document. PDFs are good for sending information by email or sharing online.

You can get help to write alt text on Benetech’s website.
How AbilityNet can help you

My Computer My Way

The My Computer My Way website tells you how you can make your computer, tablet or smartphone accessible.

Website mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk.

Advice and information

If you have any questions, you can contact us at AbilityNet.

We are here to help you.

Phone
0800 048 7642

Email
enquiries@abilitynet.org.uk.
Support with technology at home

AbilityNet volunteers can help you with your computer, tablet or smartphone.

If you need support at home, you can book an AbilityNet volunteer to visit you.

You do not have to pay AbilityNet for support at home.

For more information, visit www.abilitynet.org.uk/at-home.