

Accessibility Guidelines for Print

1. Layout

a. Overall document

- i. Be sure there are clear Titles, headers, subheads, etc that stand out as breaks separating areas of the text into more easily readable sections. A clear structure is key for readability.
- ii. List hierarchy order of how people view text and images
 1. **Size:** Objects that are bigger demand more attention. Visually guide a reader through a document by laying out the font sizes in a top-down manner, with most important info with a larger size.
 2. **Color:** Color is an interesting tool because it can function as both an organizational tool as well as a personality tool. Bold, contrasting colors on a particular element of a website will demand attention
- iii. White space: Allow distinct margins around images and between columns of text and between sections. Do not try to cram too much on the page, in a way that would visually overwhelm.
- iv. Whenever possible, have single blocks of text, with an average of 39 characters per line. This is preferable to multiple columns.
- v. If making document available as a PDF as well, add hyperlinks. Avoid using "Click Here" as the words that link.
- vi. For hyperlinks, instead of "Click Here": Add a description of what the hyperlink links to. For people using screen reader devices or similar apps, the description of the link will be read to them, so it is important to differentiate between links.

b. Handling Text

- i. Use bullets to make text more readable
- ii. Use size 11 for main body text, size 14 for subheadings between paragraphs, and minimum size 18 for titles and headers, depending on use case.
- iii. Line spacing between bullets: 0.0626 inches between bullet and first word, and 0.125 inches vertical space
- iv. Line spacing at .125 inches vertical spacing for paragraph, 1.25 (Word doc) or 13/16 (InDesign) between lines, especially on forms where underscores and boxes are used to provide space for writing
- v. Double return (30-34 pt) between paragraphs or other bodies of text
- vi. Justify left margin, not justified right margin
- vii. Use block paragraph style (with unjustified right margin), no indents

- viii. Drop caps: Use the enlarged letter only if part of a word at least 3 letters in length, and at a size that is a height of at least 2 lines of body text. Do not replace letter with an image or letter overlapped on top of an image.

2. Style

a. Color:

- i. The best colors to use overall are Black on a White or light background, and Dark Blue on a White or light background, and other high contrast colors.
- ii. Avoid reds and greens next to each other, and blues and yellows next to each other, especially for graphs. These are the colors to use: Red, yellow, green, blue, magenta, violet. In alternating shades of dark and light.
- iii. Test out colors in grayscale, to make sure there is enough contrast between them to show distinct shades. Check contrast via [WebAIM's Color Contrast tool](#).
- iv. Avoid white/light text on colored backgrounds (other than black, navy, and at least 85% grey; and these only use minimally)
- v. The [best colors for headings](#) (in descending order) are:
 - Black — C:0, M:0, Y:0, K:100
 - Federal Blue – C:100, M:60, Y:0, K:6
 - Regulation Yellow — C:0, M:6, Y:100, K:0 (to be used with dark background)
 - Federal Gold — C:0, M:11.5, Y:94, K:6
 - Regulation Green — C:100, M:0, Y:91, K:6
 - Regulation Brown — C:0, M:79, Y:100, K:72
 - Regulation Purple — C:87, M:100, Y:0, K:8.5
- vi. The best color for charts and graphs (the colors listed are all visible to 99.992% of people, even those with color blindness):
 - Black
 - White
 - Regulation Yellow — C:0, M:6, Y:100, K:0
 - Federal Gold — C:0, M:11.5, Y:94, K:6
 - Federal Blue — C:100, M:60, Y:0, K:6
 - Regulation Brown — C:0, M:79, Y:100, K:72
- vii. Document should be printed on light-colored paper:
 - white (non-glare),
 - ivory,
 - cream,
 - pastel yellow, or
 - pink paper

viii. Put text on plain (unpatterned) backgrounds, as they are best for reading black text:

- white,
- off white,
- cream,
- ivory,
- yellow
- pink

b. Fonts:

- i. Sans serif typefaces are easier to distinguish for those with reading difficulties or a visual impairment. (Ex: [APHont](#), a font with slightly wider kerning than Arial or Times New Roman)
- ii. List best fonts: Sans serifs include Arial, Antique Olive, Calibri, Droid Sans, Open Sans, Roboto, Tahoma, Verdana
- iii. Recommended headline fonts are semi-serif fonts, including Times New Roman, Cambria, Georgia, Trebuchet
- iv. For emphasis, use **bold weights**, avoid Italics. (With Italicized fonts, individual letters run together, making words harder to read.)

c. Size of fonts:

- i. Default body font size of around 11pts (Minimum 9pts, if a high x-height; Open Sans is an example of a high x-height.)
- ii. For large-print documents, use a body font of a size 18 and larger. 14-16 pt. is considered “enlarged” print, not large print.
- iii. For subheads amidst body fonts, use a minimum of size 14 font with a bold weight. Recommended size 20 or larger.
- iv. For headers and titles, use a minimum of size 18 font. Recommend size 22-30 and bold weight, to stand out and visually separate the sections.
- v. [For web](#): Be sure the font size can be increased in size on the page by changing the text size in the browser. This will affect content within text boxes, so in order to avoid text overflow, be sure text boxes increase in size along with the text.

d. Consistency:

- i. Limit number of fonts to 3 or less. Change look by having varied weights among those fonts.
- ii. Avoid all caps or all bold for continuous or large amounts of text
- iii. Limit variations and opacities of font colors, especially for header / subhead text.
- iv. Try to keep 100% black (or at most a low of 80%) or similar dark color on a light background for majority of main text.

- v. Text over dark images should be white; text on white / light images should be dark. No middle gradients, to prevent words from blending with the backgrounds.

3. Content

a. Main text

- i. Use [Plain Language](#) as a guideline to write clearly. (Plain Language is recommended to use the most common denominator language and phrasing to best appeal to the greatest audience)
- ii. Define any industry terms, and don't assume people know what acronyms stand for
- iii. Content Warnings: For particularly sensitive topics or ones that could cause strong emotional, physical or mental reactions, provide a content warning before the section starts.

b. Captions and descriptions for photos/other images

- i. Use a bold weight for all captions.
- ii. Use a sans serif or semi-serif font, for contrast
- iii. Include image source whenever possible
- iv. Use this space for adding to a document by illustrating main points

c. Titles and Headers

- i. Make all titles and headers as short as possible
- ii. Use action-oriented verbs and tenses
- iii. Limit the use of superfluous words
- iv. Limit repeating what is in the first sentence following the header or title
- v. Do not spell out numbers

Resources

- <https://www.chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/best-practices-for-accessible-print-document-design/54921>
- <https://www.abilitynet.org.uk/quality/documents/StandardofAccessibility.pdf>
- <http://www.apf.org/research/design-guidelines/>
- <https://www.swarthmore.edu/physical-access-and-learning-support/accessibility-guidelines-print-materials>
- <http://www.cnib.ca/en/services/resources/Clearprint/Documents/CNIB%20Clear%20Print%20Guide.pdf>
- https://www.rgd.ca/database/files/library/RGD_AccessAbility_Handbook.pdf

- <https://www.ssa.gov/accessibility/index.html>