



Quick Guide for Producing Accessible Documents in Print and Online **(DRAFT)**

General Guidelines

Fonts and Text

- Use basic, simple and **easy to read fonts** like Arial or Verdana.
- Use a **limited number of types** of font on a page.
- **Document text size** should be 14 point whenever possible.
- **Large print material** should be 18 point.
- Use both **upper and lower case** fonts in text; all caps make text harder to read.
- Use **bold** to highlight a section of text.

Color Contrast and Paper

- Use **high-contrast colors** (e.g. dark words on a white background. Yellow on black is also good contrast). No pastel or neon. Use bright red sparingly.
- **Test for color contrast and color readability** by printing your work in black and white.
- Use **off-white non-glossy matte paper** for printed material.
- Print **two-sided documents** on heavier paper so that content doesn't bleed through to the other side.

Page and Text Layout

- **Line spacing** should be 1.5 or 2.0 (double-spaced) when possible.
- **Page margins** should be at least 0.5 (half an inch) around the page.
- **Column spacing** should be at least 0.5 (half an inch) between columns.
- **Left-aligned text** is easiest to read. Avoid centered or justified text.
- **Avoid hyphenations** to break up words at the end of lines, if possible.

- **Hyperlinks**, underlined text or URLs should clearly signal to the reader its destination (such as [National Arts and Disability Center](#)). Relatively short understandable URLs may be used as hyperlinks (tarjancenter.org/cecy/communityconversations).
- **Links should look like links** and nothing else should look like them.

Images

- **Reflect diversity and inclusion** when possible; include people with disabilities and of varying ethnicities, cultural groups, and ages.
- **Avoid patterns or images behind text.** They are hard to read.
- Use 12-point captions to provide complementary information about your images.
- **Include Alternative Text** (aka “**alt-text**”). Alt-text is clear and concise, and conveys essential information for those who cannot see images. Context is key; stating “why” an image is being shown can be as important as “what” is being shown.
- If an **image is a link**, its alt-text should convey content of the image and the function of the link.
- **Decorative non-informational images** can have an empty alt-text box.

Readability

- **Use plain language**, the simplest and most straightforward way of expressing your ideas.
- Consider your audience when writing material. If writing for the general public, aim for a 5th grade **reading level**.
- **Define acronyms** and **jargon** on first use.
- **Short sentences** are clearer and have more impact.
- Use the **active voice**: Dr. Fowler wrote the paper. (Passive: The paper was written by Dr. Fowler).
- **White space** on the page improves legibility and can help communicate page structure.

Working with Computer Applications

[Microsoft Office's Accessibility Checker \(for Word, Excel, and PowerPoint\).](#)

Source Material Matters

- **Stay as close to your source material as possible.** When you cut and paste from one document to another the source coding of text is altered.
- When you import text into a document, **clear its formatting** leaving only plain text, and then re-establish its formatting.
- Run an **accessibility test** to ensure your text is read as text.

Word Documents

- Use Word's built-in **formatting styles** and **outline levels** to create a uniform look and organization throughout the document.
- Include **hyperlinks** and **alt-text** for all links and images, accordingly.
- Do not use **tables** for layout purposes. Use them only to show data relationships (e.g., charts).
- Whenever possible, format images so that they are **In Line with Text**.

Excel Charts

- Images, charts, and graphics need to have **alt-text** that present content (what) and function (why). Consider what a sighted person would interpret by seeing the chart.
- Tables should have clear **headings** to provide context and to assist screen reader users with table navigation.
- **Avoid blank cells, rows, and columns.** When you include them, include fillers ("NA" or "intentionally blank") using a font that's the same color as your background for screen reader users.
- Keep **table cells** simple and consistent. Avoid merging or splitting cells.
- Give your **sheet tabs** unique names.
- Include **alternate formats** for multimedia included in your worksheet.

PowerPoints and Presentations

- Whenever possible, maintain default **font sizes**: Headings at 44 point and text at 32 point.

- Whenever possible, have no more than 6 **text lines** on each slide.
- Use **high contrast colors**.
- During presentations, orally describe the content of your **graphic slides**.
- Include **alt-text** for all informational graphics before distributing/posting electronic versions.
- **Videos** should include captions.

Desktop Publishing Programs

- **Adobe's InDesign** retains document structure and tagging when exported to PDF; Microsoft Publisher does not.

Saving Documents and PDFs

- When converting a Microsoft Office document to a PDF, use the "Save As" feature under the "File" tag. **Do not save your document as a PDF from the print menu**; doing so eliminates the accessibility built into the document.

Web-Based Material

Email

- **Listserv or group emails** should be sent using a standard font (e.g., Arial) in at least 12 point.
- **Images** should have alt-text and links should have hyperlink text.

Online Forms

- Online registration pages and web-based surveys are examples of online forms that need to be **accessible via adaptive technologies**.

Websites

- Your website needs to be **508 compliant**.

Advertising and Marketing Events

- Your event materials should reflect an event that is welcoming and accessible to all.