



Scottish Accessible Information Forum

# Making Information Accessible

**Guidelines for producing accessible printed and electronic information**

September 2014

## **Making Information Accessible**

It is a requirement of The Equality Act 2010 (Section 20) that information is provided in accessible formats to suit the needs of disabled people. The Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) welcomes this change in legislation. However, it believes that much can be done to reduce the need for different formats, such as braille or large print, if organisations produce their written information in an accessible way.

These guidelines provide practical guidance on making printed and electronic information more accessible. Following them will benefit most people. They will be of particular benefit to disabled people who rely on screen-reading software to access information. They include general principles for all written information and specific guidance on writing and producing:

- ◆ Word documents
- ◆ PDF (Portable Document Format) documents
- ◆ PowerPoint Presentations
- ◆ Emails
- ◆ Websites.

# **Making Written Information Accessible**

## **General Guidelines**

These guidelines for accessibility apply to written information

- ◆ Use clear plain language.
- ◆ Think of your intended audience and use terms they will understand. Explain the meaning of technical terms, unavoidable jargon, acronyms and abbreviations.
- ◆ Use correct punctuation.
- ◆ Use a clear plain font. Non-serif fonts like Arial are preferable.
- ◆ Avoid using a small size of text (see Specific Guidelines).
- ◆ Use left alignment for all text. Justified and centred alignment should be avoided.
- ◆ Break text up using bullet points and space between paragraphs.
- ◆ Avoid blocks of text in italics, underlining or uppercase.
- ◆ Provide alternative text for non-text elements such as graphs and charts that are essential to understanding the text.
- ◆ Provide alternative text for pictures that add to the meaning of the text or enter a "null value" to enable screen-reading software to ignore them.
- ◆ Ensure good contrast between text and background.
- ◆ Keep graphics and pictures separate from the text, i.e. do not put text over pictures.
- ◆ Avoid animated or flashing/blinking text.
- ◆ Provide a text transcript for embedded sound files.
- ◆ Make the text for Hyperlinks specific and meaningful, for example "SAIF's website" rather than "Click here".
- ◆ Provide Meta (extra) Information about your document.

## **Specific Guidelines**

The sections below cover some common types of electronic communication. The guidelines for the first 3 sections are applicable to Microsoft Word, Adobe Acrobat Professional and Microsoft PowerPoint respectively. They may be applicable to other software packages.

The guidelines for the remaining sections can be applied universally.

### **Making Word Documents Accessible**

- ◆ Follow the General Guidelines
- ◆ If using Arial font, use Point 12 as a minimum. Point 14 is preferable.
- ◆ If using any other font, find a Point size equal in size to Arial 12 or 14, for example Verdana Point 11 or 13.
- ◆ Use Styles to create Headings and Sub-headings.
- ◆ Use Styles to create blank space around paragraphs.
- ◆ Use the built-in table tools when creating columns of text.
- ◆ Print on a matt paper to avoid glare caused by some gloss papers.

### **Converting Word Documents into Accessible PDFs (Portable Document Formats)**

- ◆ Use an accessible Word document as your source document.
- ◆ Use Adobe Acrobat Professional 8 (or above) or the built-in facility in Word 2007(or above). Earlier versions and other PDF makers may not produce accessible documents.
- ◆ Ensure 'enable accessibility and reflow with tagged PDF' is checked in the document conversion settings.
- ◆ After conversion, use the Adobe Accessibility Checker to check for possible problems.
- ◆ If available, use a screen reader to check the reading order and to check that all the content is accessible.
- ◆ When posting PDFs on the web, add a link to Adobe Acrobat reader [www.adobe.com/uk/products/reader](http://www.adobe.com/uk/products/reader) and post an alternative version in Word or Plain Text. Ideally also provide the information as an HTML webpage.

For tutorials on the topics above topics:

- ◆ SAIF's online training modules. Register at <http://www.saifscotland.org.uk/training>
- ◆ [www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/training.html](http://www.adobe.com/accessibility/products/acrobat/training.html)

### **Accessible PowerPoint for Presentation and Web**

- ◆ Use the Slide Master to create the basic layout, formatting, repeated elements such as headers and footers, and the background design.
- ◆ Text should be no smaller than 24 point. A non-serif font is preferable.
- ◆ Use inbuilt slide layouts or add content using 'Outline View' on the left hand panel of the Screen. Text not shown in 'Outline View' will not be picked up by screen-reading software. Text in manually added text boxes will not be displayed in 'Outline View'.
- ◆ Choose a background that prints or photocopies well in greyscale. If using a gradated background, check the contrast between text and background across all parts of the slide. Note that backgrounds are lighter when projected.
- ◆ Do not put the "whole story" on the slide. Instead use bullet points and short statements.
- ◆ Only use simple graphs, charts and tables that are big enough to be read.
- ◆ Keep animations and transitions as simple as possible. Avoid flickering or distracting sounds.
- ◆ If posting on the Internet, provide a link to download the PowerPoint Viewer [www.microsoft.com/en-gb/download/details.aspx?id=13](http://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/download/details.aspx?id=13) and If possible, provide an accessible HTML version
- ◆ On request, provide full size copies of the slides, rather than the handout version.

## **Good Practice for Emails**

### **General Guidelines**

- ◆ Always clearly state who the email is from and give your contact details.
- ◆ Include your Company Registration Number or Charity Number, if relevant, and an email Privacy Policy and Disclaimer.
- ◆ Follow the general guidelines
- ◆ Avoid using Text Speak abbreviations. Screen-reading software will not be able to interpret these.

### **Group emails and Newsletters**

- ◆ Use the BCC field to enable screen-reading software to go straight to the text instead of first reading out the addresses of all recipients. This practice also reduces the risk of spreading viruses or malware.
- ◆ Use the Text Email Newsletter (TEN) Standard for sending Plain Text Newsletters – see [www.headstar.com/ten](http://www.headstar.com/ten).
- ◆ Use the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) WCAG 2 for sending HTML Newsletters – see [www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI) (Web Accessibility Initiative).
- ◆ If you use HTML, Include a link to a webpage with the same content as the HTML Newsletter.
- ◆ Do not send Newsletters to people who have not requested them.
- ◆ Always offer your recipients an opportunity to opt out.

### **Making Websites Accessible**

- ◆ Comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 Level AA. Find out more at [www.w3.org/WAI](http://www.w3.org/WAI) (Web Accessibility Initiative).
- ◆ When tendering for a website ensure that accessibility is built-in from the start. Use PAS78, “The guide to good practice in commissioning accessible websites” developed by the Disability Rights Commission and the British Standards Institute. [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com) (Search: Web Accessibility).

- ◆ Create a website design that is flexible so that users can change colours, font and font size to meet their individual requirements.
- ◆ Do regular accessibility checks on your site using the automated tools provided by the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C) [www.W3.org](http://www.W3.org)
- ◆ Involve disabled people in the planning and testing of your site.
- ◆ Get regular and organised feedback from disabled people about the accessibility and usability of your site.

## **About SAIF**

The Scottish Accessible Information Forum (SAIF) works to promote social inclusion by representing the interests of people living with information needs across Scotland and supporting the rights of disabled people and carers in having access to timely and accurate information.

SAIF can help you make your information accessible to all by raising your awareness & understanding of accessible information and providing information and support for you and your organisation.

The forum is funded by the Scottish Government and the contract is managed by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. SAIF has a Project Co-ordinator and an advisory body made up of 12 people who have personal experience of disabilities or who are part of a disability led organisation.

Several guidance documents on topics relevant to accessible information have been produced by SAIF. These can be downloaded from the SAIF website. They are also available, on request, in other formats - printed documents, braille, and large print.



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