



SDEF

Scottish Disability
Equality Forum

Guidelines for producing material in Accessible Formats

Scottish Disability Equality Forum
12 Enterprise House
Springkerse Business Park
Stirling FK7 7UF
Tel: 01786-473152 Fax: 01786-450902
Email: accessdevadmin@btconnect.com
www.sdef.org.uk

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This information is available in alternative formats on request

Introduction

Some people, including blind and partially sighted people, have difficulty in understanding information because of learning disabilities, brain injury, dementia, short memory or poor education.

Material should be planned carefully using clear and simple text (known as Plain English) which will help get the message across to all possible readers – see page 6.

Blind and partially sighted read information in different ways. For most visually impaired people, clear print information using a minimum of 12 point text using a font such as Arial is enough, although 14 point text is recommended. Others will require information in different formats to standard print. Other formats are:

- Larger print
- Audio tape
- Braille
- Electronic documents, i.e. CD or email

Remember that one format will not be suitable for everyone. Making information accessible is cheaper and easier than most people think.

The following pages are a guide on how to make your written material and websites accessible to all.

Printed Information

- Minimum text size should be 12 point - 14 preferred.
- Large print documents should be produced in larger font sizes ranging from 16 to **22** point. No single size suits everyone – if possible ask you customer/client which size suits best. Simple large print documents are easy to produce with word processors.
- **Always** use clear font type such as Arial, Universe or New Century Schoolbook.
- Avoid the use of light weight type.
- Contrast between the background and the text is vital. The better the contrast the more legible the text will be. Black text on white background provides the best contrast, although some visually impaired people prefer black text on yellow.
- Capital letters and italicised text are harder to read for people with a visual impairment. Two or three words in capitals is acceptable, but avoid the use of capitals for continuous text, and avoid italics to emphasise.
- If possible make the space between each line of text 1.5 to 2 times the space between words on a line.
- When using numbers, make sure the typeface is clear. Readers with sight problems can often misread 3,5,8,6 and 0.
- Do not condense or stretch lines of text. Align text to the left hand margin and do not use justified text as this makes the text spacing uneven and can make reading more difficult.
- When using columns, make sure that the margin that separates them is clearly defined.
- When using white type, make sure that the background colour is dark enough to provide good contrast.

- Contrast will be affected if you set text over images.
- Make sure that page headings, numbers etc are always in the same place. Contents lists and rules to separate different sections are also useful.
- When designing forms bear in mind that people with a visual impairment can have larger handwriting, so allow for extra space. This will also be beneficial to people with restricted mobility in their hands.
- Always avoid glossy paper because glare makes it difficult to read. Choose paper that weighs over 90gsm, to avoid text showing through from other side.

If in doubt – keep it simple.

Plain English

Clear and simple text (Plain English) will help get your information across easily. It aids everyone but is vital for people with learning disabilities.

The main advantages of using Plain English are:

- It's easier and faster to read
- It's faster to write

Points to bear in mind:

- Keep sentences short
- Use short paragraphs
- Never use long words when a short one will do, e.g. use "tell" instead of "advise", or use "if" instead of "in the event of".
- Avoid the use of technical jargon and if it must be used, fully explain the terms to the reader.
- When using abbreviations, spell them out the first time.
- Use simple punctuation.
- Avoid negatives, i.e. use "Please send your payment so that we can send the goods", instead of "If you don't send your payment we cannot send the goods".

Further information can be obtained from:

Plain English Campaign
PO Box 3
New Mills
High Peak
SK22 4QP

Telephone 01663 744409
Fax 01663 747038
Email info@plainenglish.co.uk

www.plainenglish.co.uk

Audio Tape / CD

Audio on tape or CD has the added benefit that almost everyone is able to use it with the exception of those with poor hearing. It is also suitable for people with low literacy levels and learning difficulties. Audio tapes and CDs can be sent through the post using Royal Mail's "Articles for the Blind" service¹.

Taped information is not suitable for certain types of information – for instance, a directory of services or a catalogue where you would want to move from section to section easily. It is also not suitable for material for meetings, or financial material. In these circumstances large print or Braille is likely to be of more use.

Planning the location of essential material on tape needs much care.

- Make a contents list – this is verbal equivalent of heading in a written document.
- Have a logical approach to the layout – for example, if the centre-fold pages 4 and 5 of your printed leaflet have been used for a plan and timetable, with text from page 3 continuing on page 6, it would be very confusing for your tape listener. You will need to keep all the text together and place the centre-fold information where it can be easily found, i.e. at the start of the second side of the tape.
- Try not to split information between two sides of a tape.
- Always tell your listener when each section is finished, with either a distinctive sound or a couple of bars of music.
- Make sure the reader's voice is clear and make sure that the words are not ambiguous or misleading.
- Announce end of recording on each side.
- Label the tape(s) in print, and preferably tactilely (does not need to be Braille- any different texture can be used).

There are various organisations that can produce material on audio tape or CD. Some organisations charge by the half hour and others by word.

¹ **Articles for the Blind is a free, first class postal service for items designed for blind people from Royal Mail. Anything that qualifies as a product specially designed for blind and visually impaired people can be sent to, or from a blind person for free. Organisations or institutions that have special arrangements with Royal Mail can also use the service. See www.royalmail.com for further details.**

For further information contact:

[RNIB Scotland Transcription Service](#)

Centre for Sensory Impaired People
17 Gullane Street
Partick
Glasgow
G11 6AH

Tel: 0141 357 3525

Fax: 0141 357 4025

Email: glasgowtrans@rnib.org.uk

Playback Recording Service
Centre for Sensory Impaired
17 Gullane Street
Glasgow
G11 6AH
Scotland

Tel/Fax: 0141 334 2983

Talking Newspaper Association United Kingdom
National Recording Centre,
Heathfield,
East Sussex,
TN21 8DB .

Tel 01435 866102.

Fax 01435 865422.

email: info@tnauk.org.uk.

Braille

It is estimated that there are only 20,000 Braille readers in the UK (1% of visually impaired people). Braille is a writing system of raised dots which enables people to read by touch.

Grade 1 Braille is letter by letter translation and is generally only used for labelling and signs.

Grade 2 Braille has dot combinations to represent common letter groups such as “the” and “for”. Widely used in books, magazines and leaflets. It is quicker to read than Grade 1 Braille and takes up less space.

Producing documents in Braille can be costly but is useful for:

- Information which has to be read silently or used in meetings
- Information which has to be learnt or memorised
- Product or service information, committee minutes, agendas, reports and telephone lists

Braille is not recommended if your material is complicated and will quickly go out of date due to cost implications.

Further information can be obtained from:

The United Kingdom Association of Braille Producers (UKABP)
RNIB
PO Box 173
Peterborough
PE2 6WS

Producing Accessible Information for Deaf Blind People

There are an estimated 23,000 people in the UK who are deafblind. Deafblindness is a very individual disability – no two people’s communication needs are exactly the same. Some deafblind people use one method to communicate with others, but use a different method to receive information.

Formats used by blind and partially sighted people may not be suitable for some deafblind people. Material on audio tape would not be suitable for a deafblind person who cannot hear speech. A deafblind person who uses British Sign Language, say, from birth, may not have good literacy skills. If their sight deteriorates in later life, Plain English large print information may be the only answer.

Technology can assist but depends on the type and degree of visual and / or hearing impairment.

Computers can be used to communicate in a variety of ways:

- Text on disc can be printed off in large print
- Text on disc can be output in Braille
- Text on disc can be read out by a voice synthesiser

Other technology:

- Amplifiers on telephones
- Textphones or Typetalk
- Loop and infrared systems

Further information is available from:

Sense, The National Deafblind and Rubella Association
11-13 Clifton Terrace
London
N4 3SR

Telephone 0207 272 7774
Fax 0207 272 6012
Textphone 0207 272 9648

Deafblind UK
100 Bridge Street
Peterborough
PE1 1DY

Telephone 0800 132320
Fax 01733 385356
Texphone 01733 358860

Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People
(CACDP)
Durham University Science Park
Block 4
Stockton Road
Durham
DH1 3UZ

Telephone 0191 383 1155
Fax 0191 383 7914
Textphone 0191 383 7915
Email durham@cacdp.org.uk

Signage

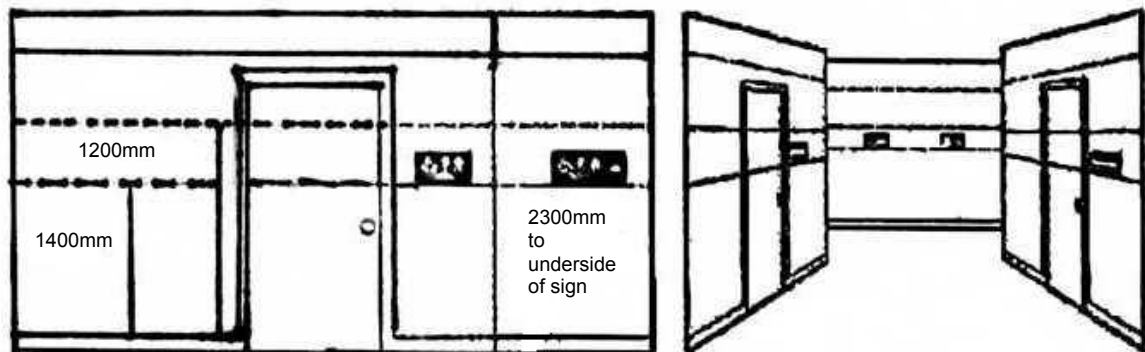
A well designed legible sign system will benefit everyone.

Signs can be divided into four groups according to their function:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Information | signs which convey information such as floor plans and directories, should be simple with clear symbols to locate different areas. They should also include instructions to help locate lifts, stairs and other points of interest. |
| Direction | there should be signs for toilets, exits and fire exits in every part of the building. Corridors should have signs at each point of entry. |
| Identification | Suspended signs are not recommended. If possible, door signs should be on the wall next to the door, in case a door is left open or is opened when the sign is being read. Signs should use Braille, tactile embossed text, symbols and arrows. |
| Safety | Includes warning and prohibition signs. |
- There should be an integrated, consistent and logical approach to signage in the approaches to and within a building. The position and layout of the signs along with the materials used should give confidence to all users and, in particular, those with impaired vision.
 - Signs should have a matt finish and be well lit.
 - Text signs should be a mixture of upper and lower case and where possible backed up by universally recognised symbols.
 - Use embossed letters and symbols at an appropriate height. Braille may be used alongside text – **but not on the vertical plane.**
 - Signs are easier to read with white lettering on a dark background.
 - Characters should be between 15mm and 50mm high.

Where to place your signs.

The diagram below indicates general height positions for signs.



Further information on accessible signage can be obtained from:

Joint Mobility Unit

Telephone 0207 391 2002

Joint Mobility Unit Sign Design Guide

£20 available from RNIB

Telephone 0845 702 3153

Handwriting

There may be occasions when you have to send handwritten notes. Handwriting should be as clear as possible.

To make handwriting more legible, chose a dark medium tip felt pen and write neatly using thick strokes.

Always make sure that there is good contrast between handwriting and the paper being used. It is best to use white or light coloured paper and a dark ink pen.

The RNIB sell approved felt tips.
Contact RNIB Customers Services in 0845 702 3153

Websites

Accessible websites work better for everyone using the web, not just those with sight impairments.

When designing a website, you should consider that visitors;

- May have a visual, hearing or mobility impairment
- May have difficulty reading or understanding text
- May not be able to use a mouse or keyboard
- May have a text only screen, a small screen, or a slow internet connection.

Always try to contain all of your webpage on screen.

“Text only” pages are not necessary provided your website is fully accessible.

Images can be used. Alternative (Alt) attributes can be used to provide a description and content of an image. The description will be read out to users using a screen reader.

You do not need to use large fonts. Text can be resized in individual’s computer.

Avoid using green and red text to convey information.

Language should be clear and simple (Plain English).

Provide equivalent alternatives to aural and visual content.

Do not rely on colour alone – ensure that text and graphics are understandable when viewed in black and white or greyscale.

Most screen readers are unable to read PDF (Portable Document Format) files. Always offer an alternative e.g. Word document.

Visually impaired users can access the web in several ways. The three main ones are:

1. **Speech / Braille output.**

Screen readers output, aurally, what you would otherwise see. Unlike the eye, which scans a page to pick out information, a screen reader will read the page from top to bottom, left to right. The screen reader will identify each element as it reads it – e.g. a link to “About Us” will be read as “Link to About Us”, if it is a button for “Go”, it will read “button go”, therefore “click here” should be avoided as the reader will interpret as “link to click here”.

Good use of alternative text, clear link text and correctly coded headings are crucial to navigation.

2. **Screen Magnification**

Screen magnification simply magnifies the screen. The degree of magnification is set by the user. Most people who use screen magnifiers can also change the contrast and colour settings.

There are a number of things to consider for people who use screen magnifiers:

- Images do not scale well, and will become blurred and pixelated when enlarged.
- Do not leave large areas of blank spaces – user may think that it is the end of the content.
- Layout must be clear and consistent.

3. **Text based browsers**

Text based browsers are just that – they simply display the contents of web pages as text. They do not support images but they are extremely fast when browsing the web. Alternative text is seen in place of images so it is essential that all images are described as fully as possible.

Text only browsers read pages the same way as screen readers so content must be in a logical order.

The RNIB have an Accessible Website Consultancy – for a fee (from £700 upwards) your website can be assessed for accessibility and if successful, will be awarded an RNIB See it Right Award, valid for one year. They also provide training on website accessibility.

The above guidelines are not comprehensive and professional help should be sought wherever possible.

The Web Access Centre section of the RNIB website has more useful information, along with links to other factsheets and organisations that can assist with the building of an accessible website.

Further information can be obtained from The World Wide Web Consortium - www.w3c.org