

Guidelines on designing printed information that is accessible to people with sight problems

Clear print is a design approach which considers the needs of people with sight problems.

Simply, a clear print document will find a wider audience. The solutions are straightforward and inexpensive, focusing on some basic design elements; for example: font, type size, contrast, and page navigation.

Clear print guidelines are based on the many years of experience of the United Kingdom's Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB), advice from experts in the field, and evidence including recent research into fonts and type size.

Type size

The size of the type (known as point size) is a fundamental factor in legibility. RNIB recommends a type size between 12 and 14 point (equivalent to a minimum x-height of 2mm or more ideally 2.3mm). The larger the minimum type size, the more people you will reach.

Contrast

The better the contrast between the background and the text, the more legible the text will be. Note that the contrast will be affected by the size and weight of the type. Black text on a white background provides best contrast.

Typeface

Avoid highly stylized typefaces, such as those with ornamental, decorative or handwriting styles.

Type styles

Blocks of capital letters, underlined or italicized text are all harder to read. A word or two in capitals is fine but avoid the use of capitals for continuous text. Underlining text or setting it in italics should always be avoided and an alternative method of emphasis used.

Leading

The space between one line of type and the next (known as leading) is important. As a general rule, the space should be 1.5 to 2 times the space between words on a line.

Type weight

People with sight problems often prefer bold or semi-bold weights to normal ones. Avoid light type weights.

Numbers

If you print documents with numbers in them, choose a typeface in which the numbers are clear. Readers with sight problems can easily misread 3, 5, 8 and 0.

Word spacing and alignment

Keep to the same amount of space between each word. Do not condense or stretch lines of type. We recommend aligning text to the left margin as it is easy to find the start of

the next line and keeps the spaces even between words. We advise that you avoid justified text as the uneven word spacing can make reading more difficult.

Columns

Make sure the margin between columns clearly separates them. If space is limited, use a vertical rule.

Reversing type

If using white type, make sure the background color is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast.

Setting text

Avoid fitting text around images if this means that lines of text start in a different place, and are therefore difficult to find. Set text horizontally as text set vertically is extremely difficult for a partially sighted reader to follow. Avoid setting text over images or textures as this will affect the contrast.

Forms

Partially sighted people tend to have handwriting that is larger than average, so allow extra space on forms. This will also benefit people with conditions that affect the use of their hands, such as arthritis.

Navigational aids

It is helpful if recurring features, such as headings and page numbers, are always in the same place. A contents list and rules to separate different sections are also useful. Leave a space between paragraphs as dividing the text up gives the eye a break and makes reading easier.

Printing

Avoid glossy paper because glare makes it difficult to read. Choose uncoated paper that weighs over 90gsm. As a general rule, if the text is showing through from the reverse side, then the paper is too thin.

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