

BDA Dyslexia Style Guide

This Guide is in three parts:

1. Dyslexia Friendly Text
2. Accessible Formats
3. Website design

1. Dyslexia Friendly Text.

The aim is to ensure that written material takes into account the visual stress experienced by some dyslexic people, and to facilitate ease of reading.

Adopting best practice for dyslexic readers has the advantage of making documents easier on the eye for everyone.

Media.

- Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.
- Use matt paper rather than glossy. Avoid digital print processing which tends to leave paper shiny.
- Avoid white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids. White can appear too dazzling. Use cream or a soft pastel colour. Some dyslexic people will have their own colour preference.

Font.

- Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans. Alternatives include Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic, Trebuchet.
- Font size should be 12-14 point. Some dyslexic readers may request a larger font.
- Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.
- Avoid green and red/pink as these are difficult for colour-blind individuals.

For more detailed information and discussion on fonts, see the [BDA New Technologies Committee website](#):

Headings and Emphasis.

- Avoid underlining and italics: these tend to make the text appear to run together. Use bold instead.
- AVOID TEXT IN BLOCK CAPITALS: this is much harder to read.
- For headings, use larger font size in bold, lower case.
- Boxes and borders can be used for effective emphasis.

Layout.

- Use left-justified with ragged right edge.
- Avoid narrow columns (as used in newspapers).
- Lines should not be too long: 60 to 70 characters.
- Avoid cramping material and using long, dense paragraphs: space it out.
- Line spacing of 1.5 is preferable.
- Avoid starting a sentence at the end of a line.
- Use bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose.

Writing Style.

- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.
- Give instructions clearly. Avoid long sentences of explanation.
- Use active rather than passive voice.
- Avoid double negatives.
- Be concise.

Increasing accessibility.

- Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures.
- Pictograms and graphics help to locate information.
- Lists of 'do's and 'don'ts' are more useful than continuous text to highlight aspects of good practice.
- Avoid abbreviations if possible or provide a glossary of abbreviations and jargon.

- For long documents include a contents page at the beginning and an index at end.

Checking Readability.

To set your spell checker in Word 2003 to automatically check readability, go to Tools, Options, Spelling, and Grammar, then tick the Readability request. Word will then show your readability score every time you spell check.

In Word 2007 and later versions, click the Microsoft Office Button, and then click Word Options. Click Proofing. Make sure Check grammar with spelling is selected. Under When correcting grammar in Word, select the Show readability statistics check box.

Check long documents in sections, so that you know which parts are too hard.

- Flesch Reading Ease score: Rates text on a 100-point scale; the higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 70 to 80.
- Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score: Rates text on a U.S. grade-school level. For example, a score of 5.0 means that a fifth grader, i.e. a Year 6, average 10 year old, can understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 5.0, by using short sentences, not by dumbing down vocabulary.

2. Accessible Formats

It is important that documents and publications are prepared to be accessible in alternative formats for people with visual impairments or reading difficulties. These should include availability in electronic format which can be read by screen reading software.

Printed documents are created in computers, so it should be possible to issue the electronic files. Some documents will only be available electronically.

- Word files are the easiest for individual viewing preferences and for listening.
- Portable Document Format (PDF) files keep the presentation better than Word files, but are not as easy to use.
- We suggest offering both the source Word files and derived PDF files where possible.
- Publicise availability of accessible formats.

Preparing a document for text-reading software:

- Listening to a document using a text reader will take longer than visual reading.
- Put full stops after headings to make the voice drop and pause; a pale tint similar to the background colour will make the dots less visually distracting.
- Put semi-colons, commas, or full stops after bullet points to make a pause.
- Use Styles in Word to organise headings and formatting.
- Avoid automatic numbering as some text readers will not read these. Use manual.
- Contents Page listings should be hyperlinked to the relevant section to aid navigation. Number menu items.
- Use internal and external hyperlinks for ease of navigation.
- Avoid text in capital letters in mid-line, as they may be read as single letters.
- Include as few signs and symbols as are absolutely necessary, e.g. asterisks or dashes (both short and long), as these will be spoken.
- Long dashes should be avoided: use colons to make the voice pause.
- Use straight quotation marks. Curly or slanting ones may be read out as 'back quote' by some screen readers.
- Avoid Roman Numerals and No. for number.
- Consider whether abbreviations and acronyms need full stops.
- Text readers may have difficulty with tables in Word and may not automatically move on to the next cell without manual use of the Tab key.
- Avoid text in images. Listeners cannot hear it. Repeat in the main text.
- Use hyphens in compound words to aid text reading pronunciation.

- Chunk phone numbers to avoid being read as millions or hundreds of thousands.

3. Website design

Website design must consider all the above factors together with the following points.

Research shows that readers access text at a 25% slower rate on a computer. This should be taken into account when putting information on the web. When a website is completed, check the site and information for accessibility by carrying out these simple checks.

- Navigation should be easy. A site map is helpful.
- Use graphics, images, and pictures to break up text, while bearing in mind that graphics and tables may take a long time to download.
- Very large graphics make pages harder to read.
- Offer alternate download pages in a text reader friendly style.
- Where possible design web pages which can be downloaded and read off-line.
- Moving text creates problems for people with visual difficulties. Text reading software is unable to read moving text.
- Contents links should show which pages have been accessed.
- Most users prefer dark print on a pale background. Colour preferences vary.
- Some websites offer a choice of background colours.
- Encourage the use of hyperlinks at the end of sentences.
- Avoid green and red/pink as these are difficult for colour-blind individuals.
- Make sure that it is possible for users to set their own choice of font style and size, background and print colours.

Further information on Web Design and adaptation:

RNIB Web Access Centre:

http://www.rnib.org.uk/professionals/webaccessibility/Pages/web_accessibility.aspx

BBC: My web, my way. Making the web easier to use:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/accessibility/guides/allguides_index.shtml