



Accessible Media Information Guide



Ministry of Equality, Employment,
Culture and Tourism

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Purpose of this Document

This document serves to highlight what needs to be done to ensure that media is accessible for all.

Persons with disabilities must be able to access information, services and products without any barriers, making their lives easier and more fulfilling. However, disability is wide-ranging and it is difficult to make a design that works for everyone, as accessibility is not about a one-size fits all. Instead, an accessible design is one in which we recognise that we all have different needs and try to cater for as many needs as possible.

The world must now adopt the concept of Universal Design. This is a concept that originated to make environments, products and systems more accessible for persons with disabilities. However, products that were originally developed for persons with disabilities benefit everyone and some are now very popular; for example, the electric tooth brush, Siri and Alexa, etc. Making a design accessible automatically makes it available to more people, which results in a higher number of potential users.

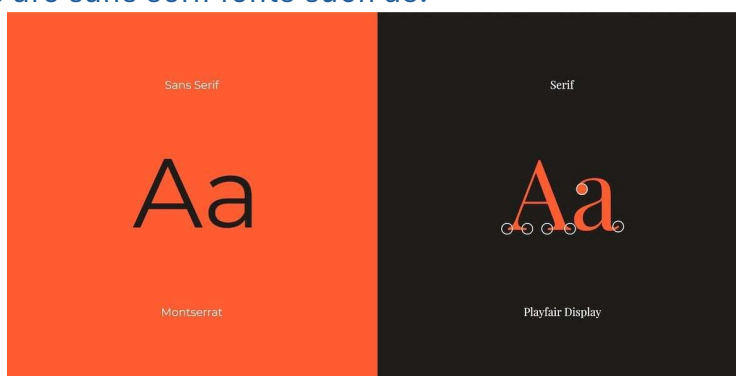


Fonts

Elaborate fonts, although beautiful, often have irregular letter shapes and are not well defined. This poses a problem for accessibility as it makes it difficult to read.

The most accessible fonts are sans serif fonts such as:

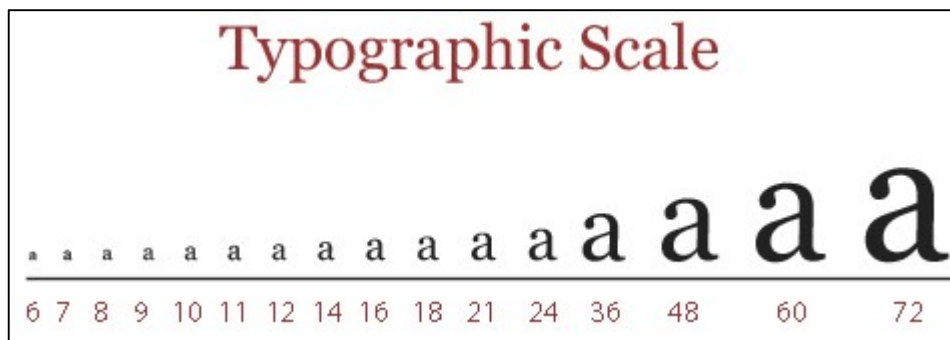
- Tahoma
- Calibre
- Helvética
- Arlla
- Verdana
- Times New Roman



Font weights that are too dark can become un-readable as it merges together. Lighter fonts tend to be more readable because they look simpler, cleaner and less chunky.

Size

Font size should be a minimum of size 12. On electronic documents, allow users to resize the font without losing quality or functionality.



Spacing

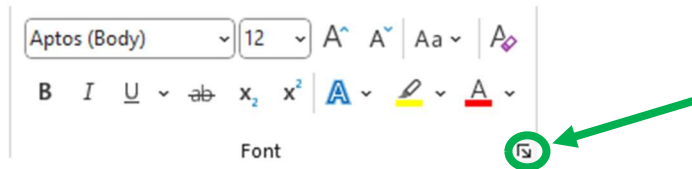
The spaces between letters (tracking / letter spacing) should be at least 0.12 times the font size. A step-by-step guide on how this can be done in Microsoft Word follows on the next page.

Line spacing (leading) should be at least 1.5 times the font size.

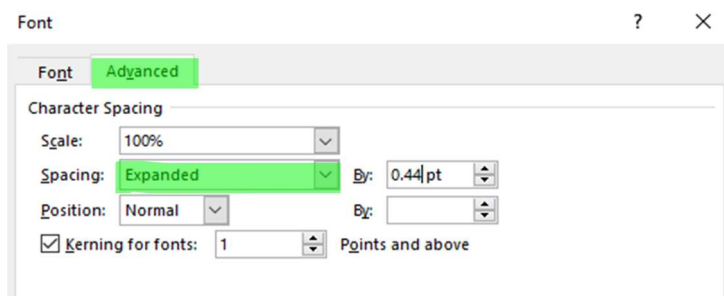
Fonts

How to increase letter spacing:

1. Highlight the text you wish to change
2. Open the Advanced Font options by clicking the expand icon



3. Go to the Advanced tab, change “Spacing” to “Expanded”



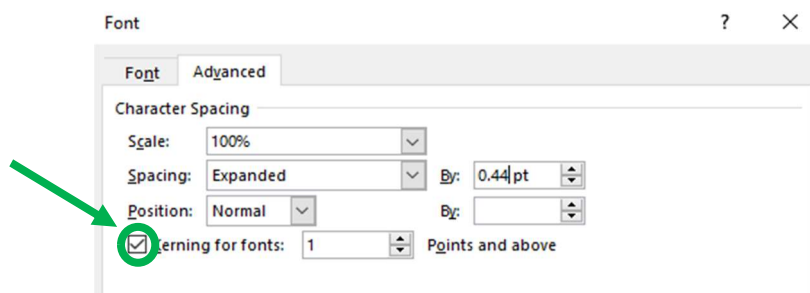
4. Change “By:” to 0.12 times the font size.

- a. Some common font sizes and their spacing include:

12pt	14pt	16pt	18pt	20pt
0.44pt	0.68pt	0.92pt	1.16pt	1.4pt

- b. Note: Microsoft Word may round your letter spacing. If it does so, please err on the side of caution and increase to the next round value.

5. Tick the “Kerning for fonts” option.



Layout

The layout of your text affects its readability.

Use a plain background and do not write text directly over an image. Add a dark overlay to the image where you are going to place the text.

Break information up into levels using headings.

Justification

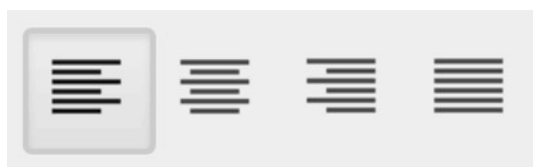
If text is fully justified or centre-justified, people may have issues with tracking (finding the beginning of each line of text).

Justified text is text that is spaced so that the right and left sides of the paragraph have the same edge. It does this by introducing blank spaces between characters of words. The text therefore appears as a single block with perfect margins.

Although this is visually appealing, it can also create issues for persons with dyslexia, low vision and other disabilities.

It also poses an issue for assistive technologies such as screen magnifiers as the users will see large empty spaces.

It is because of the above that left-justified text is best practice.

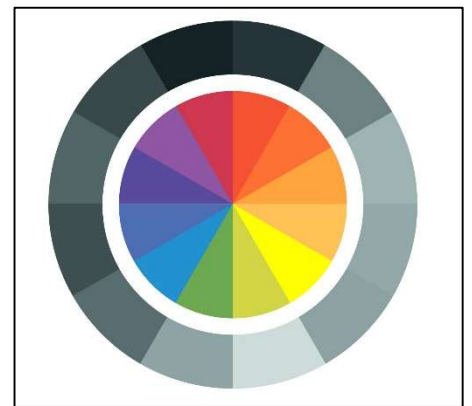


Colours

There isn't a universal combination of colours for text and background that is accessible to everyone as there are different types of disabilities with varying needs.

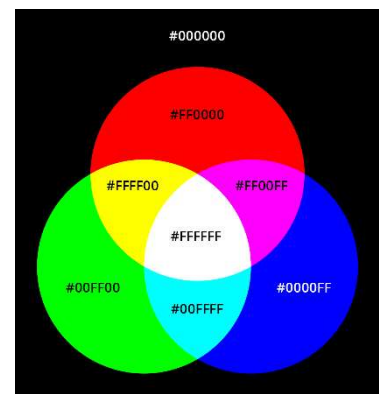
This is why colour contrast is key!!!

We cannot judge colour contrast between two colours simply by using eyesight alone. Tools are necessary to do this. You can take a screenshot and convert the image to black and white. There are also many tools in the market that can do this much more effectively and accurately.



Every colour used digitally has its own unique hex code. Make a note of this and check it in the colour contrast tool.

The contrast between the text and the background should always be greater than or equal to 4:5:1 for small text and 3:1 for large text. This ratio is based on the WCAG 2.1 scale. This explains how high levels of contrast is more valuable than hue difference.



Having said this, stark contrast between your text colour and background colour can result in blurred or moving text. For example, pure black text on pure white background. Use charcoal black on white.

Images

Anything that is indicated by colour needs to have a secondary way for it to be distinguished. For example, do not state: “use the green button if you agree” by itself.

Reminder: do not write text directly over an image. Use a dark overlay to the image where you are going to place the text.

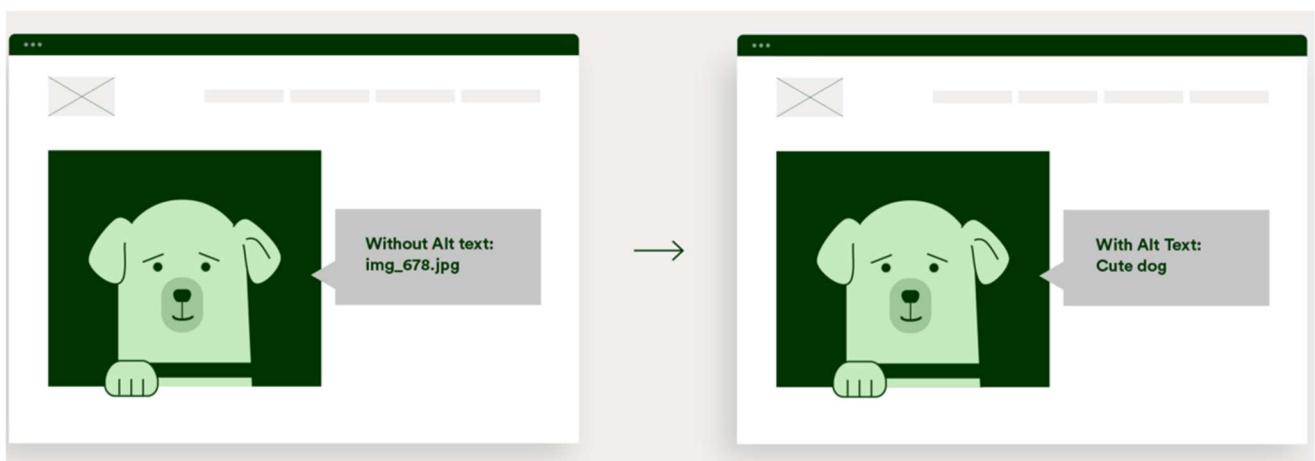
Images cannot be seen by persons with visual impairment / low vision. It is therefore important to describe them. There are two ways to do this:

- Alternative Text
- Image Descriptions

Alternative Text

Alternative text (Alt Text) is a written description of an image. It cannot be seen with the naked eye as it is embedded into the image. Adding Alt Text to all posts containing an image makes these posts accessible to those using screen readers.

A screen reader is a program which reads what is on the screen. This is used by persons with visual impairments and learning difficulties.



Images

What to write in your Alt Text:

1. Be specific and not overly descriptive
2. Good descriptions are concise so keep your alt text short
3. Steer clear of repetition
4. Consider the function / purpose of the image
5. Add context. Alt Text is a combination of the image itself and the elements of the content that surround it e.g. if the image is of a woman sitting at a desk sorting through papers, you might include an alt text like, “woman searching for tax filing documents at her desk”.
6. Avoid using the words “image of...” or “picture of...” as the screen reader already knows it is an image. What you can mention is the type of image: graph, illustration, screenshot, headshot, etc.
7. Check for spelling mistakes as the screen reader will read it incorrectly
8. Include Alt Text with button images so that the person knows where to click
9. Images that already have an Image Description may not need Alt Text



Images

It is noteworthy that Alt Text is used by search engines too so using Alt Text can help grow a brand's visibility online.

Adding Alt Text on Social Media:

Facebook -

Select your image(s) and compose your post.

Click the three dots in the upper right corner of the attached image.

Click "Edit alt text"

Add Alt Text.

Instagram-

Go to "Advanced Settings" at the bottom of the "New Post" page.

Add your Alt Text in the blank field

Click the blue check mark in the upper right-hand corner to save before publishing.

Twitter -

Select "+Alt" in the bottom right corner of your attached image in the tweet composer.

Add Alt Text in the blank field and click "Done".

LinkedIn-

Start a new post and select your image(s).

Select "Add alt text" in the bottom right corner of the footer menu.

Add Alt Text in the blank field and click "Next" to finalise and publish the post

Image Descriptions

An image description is a few sentences, usually under the image, explaining what the image is about. It is important that this information is kept:

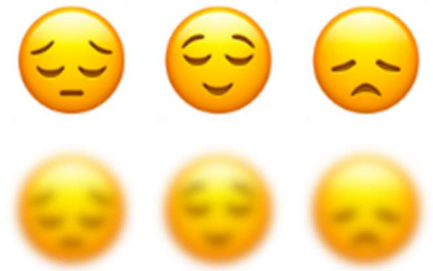
- Simple
- Clear
- Factual
- Relevant Image descriptions can be seen by everyone.

Image description is an alternative way for people to engage with the image.



Emojis

Emojis look very similar, for example, the pensive, relieved and disappointed emojis have only small differences that are often not visible when rendered on a smaller screen, let alone, if you are viewing them with a visual impairment.



Equally, if multiple emojis are used in a string and are the same colour, some persons may have difficulty distinguishing one emoji from another.

Some top tips:

1. Do not use an emoji as a replacement for text
2. Be careful where you place your emojis. Best placed at the end of your message.
3. Use emojis sparingly
4. Avoid a long emoji string
5. Do not rely on emojis to convey your message
6. Test emoji visibility in both dark and light modes
7. Steer clear of emoticonos as screen readers may just read it as punctuation. E.g. :) “colon parenthesis”.

Captions / Subtitles

Captions / subtitles are imperative for persons who are d/Deaf to be able to watch videos. They are also used by persons who can process written information better than audio information.

Captions / subtitles are usually displayed at the bottom of the screen and they are a text version of the speech and non-speech audio information needed to understand the content. They are synchronised with the audio and usually shown in a media player.



There are two types of captions:

Closed Captions – these are automatically added to a video through a third-party platform. They can be switched on or off by people watching the video.

Open Captions – these are added during the design process. They are always displayed and cannot be turned off.

All videos must have captions on them. You can add captions to make it accessible to a broader audience using the SubRip (.srt) file format. This is a free software program for Microsoft Windows and is supported by most software video players.

Captions must:

- Match spoken word accurately
- Have sufficient colour contrast to make them stand out
- Not obstruct key visuals
- Have legible font and size
- Work on a variety of devices
- Describe any sound that impacts the story
- Describe background sounds

Audio Transcriptions

An audio transcription is a text version of an audio file. This is particularly useful to persons who are d/Deaf or can process written information better than audio information.

Ensure audio transcriptions:

- Indicate who is speaking and when
- Is in accessible font, size and colour
- Note background music / noise



Websites

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) are guidelines that are internationally recognised. They advise on ways to make websites and digital products easier for everyone to use. These guidelines ensure that the content is readable, simple to navigate and compatible with tools like screen readers.

Many countries require you to adhere to WCAG and this is also the case in Gibraltar. The Gibraltar Regulatory Authority do check the accessibility of websites.

WCAG is based on four principles (POUR):

1. Perceivable: the user can identify content and elements – whether it's visual, sounds or touch.
2. Operable: the user can use controls, buttons and other interactive elements.
3. Understandable: the user can understand the content, format and presentation.
4. Robust: the product is designed to function on all appropriate technologies.

For more information on WCAG please go to: www.wcag.com

Plug-ins

Websites should be built in an accessible format from the beginning. Accessibility Plug-ins do help but it is not ideal.

Keyboard Navigation

Many users with motor, sensory or cognitive disabilities rely on a keyboard, instead of a mouse to navigate a web page.

Keyboard users typically use the tab key to validate through elements on a web page such as links, buttons and forms.

Camel / Pascal Case Hashtags

It is imperative that your webpage is keyboard user friendly as it will not only help a person with a disability, but it will also help anyone with a broken mouse or trackpad!

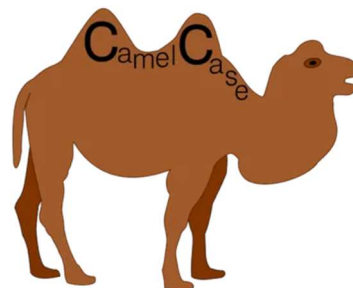
Hashtags using multiple words have become increasingly popular on social media.

In most instances, people write out the entire hash tagged phrase in lowercase like this:

#videotovoicerocks

However, this way of writing hashtags is problematic for many social media users as screen readers cannot recognise the individual words. This is also problematic for those with reading difficulties. When Margaret Thatcher passed away, the hashtag #nowthatcherisdead started trending. The problem was that many people read it as, “Now that Cher is dead” instead of “Now Thatcher is dead”.

Camel case is a way of writing phrases without spaces, where the first letter of each word is capitalized. This makes it easier to ascertain when each word begins.



It is called Camel case as the capital letters resemble the humps of a camel's back.

Here's an example from earlier made accessible by capitalising the first letter of each word:

#VideoToVoiceRocks

This practice improves readability for everyone!



Supported Needs &
Disability Office



HM Government
of Gibraltar

Ministry of Equality, Employment,
Culture and Tourism