

Making it clear

Guidelines to producing printed material for people who are blind or partially sighted.

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1 Did you know?

There are nearly two million blind or partially sighted people in the UK.

People who are blind or partially sighted, or 'visually impaired' can be defined as having a sight defect which cannot be corrected by glasses alone.

All blind and partially sighted individuals have different requirements when it comes to the production of printed materials.

2 Clear print

All documents should be produced in clear print.

The minimum point size for clear print is 14.

The point size for large print is 16 - 22.

Remember to build the production of a range of accessible formats, such as tape, MP3 and Braille, into your production schedule and budget.

3 Fonts

Always use a sans serif font.

Fonts such as Arial, Helvetica and Futura are easier to read.

Some clear serif fonts such as Baskerville or classic Garamond may be used for small sections where a different text is required.

As a general rule avoid using highly stylised typefaces.

The use of handwriting requires felt tip pens, thicker lines and larger writing.

4 Typeface

Avoid italics and the underlining of text.

The type weight of headings should be bold or semi bold.

In body copy, however, bold type and the use of italics should only be used sparingly, for emphasis, as it can be difficult to read in large amounts.

Avoid upper casing. Capital letters give less variation and so are more difficult to read quickly.

Titles Should Be Written In Both Upper And Lower Case.

5 Design and layout

Keep design simple to ensure stand out. Design and layout should remain consistent throughout the publication.

Always keep layout clear and logical with an easy to follow contents list and headings.

Text is easier to read when broken up into short paragraphs with plenty of space.

Ensure consistency in the spacing between each word.

Never try and fit more text into a space by reducing the spacing between letters, words or lines.

Using short columns will also aid those people reading the document with the help of CCTVs.

Columns should not be too close together.

Leading: As a general rule the space between one line and the next should be at least 1.5 to 2 times the space between the words on a line.

The text should always be aligned to the left margin. The uneven right hand margin allows the eye to track more quickly to the next line.

Centred text is unclear. Avoid setting text over an image. Text set vertically is also difficult to read.

Avoid hyphenating words in text as it disrupts the reading flow. This is particularly important to remember when using word processors or desktop publishing as software packages will have their own default settings.

Do not print near folds as materials need to be held flat under a magnifier. Perfect binding is difficult to flatten.

6 Colour and contrast

Sharply contrasting colours are much clearer for people with sight conditions.

Individual preferences vary but black on white or black on yellow are generally regarded as the clearest combinations.

If using reversed type, try to avoid switching between dark on light and light on dark as this can be confusing to the eye. Light out of dark can have less glare.

Font size also has to be increased and made bolder when reversing out.

7 Paper stock

Paper with a matt finish is always preferable since glossy surfaces can create a glare which makes text and images difficult to recognise. This is very important when material is viewed with assistive technology.

Using lightweight or thin paper can also cause problems as any printing on the reverse will show through. A minimum of uncoated 100 gsm will avoid this problem.

8 Use of numbers

Keep numbers distinct.

Numbers such as 3, 5, 8, 0 and 6 can be confused or misread in certain typefaces. To avoid confusion, 1 - 9 should be written in full. Use numerals from 10.

9 Response mechanisms

Design all response forms carefully. People with a visual impairment may have larger handwriting and need more space in which to write.

Any boxes for writing or putting a tick in should therefore be of sufficient size and clearly associated with the text to which they refer.

10 Braille

Only 3% of blind and partially sighted people read Braille.

Information presented in Braille should be treated as a separate communication i.e. the information should be identical to that contained in printed materials; however the layout may need revising. For example, the total on a bill should still appear on the front page.

Braille is heavier than print and needs a thicker paper stock.

Do not send a printed letter with tape or Braille!

Care needs to be taken when sending Braille documents in order to ensure that the Braille print is not damaged.

11 Taping / MP3 audio files

Tapes can be produced as either a direct recording of the text on the printed materials or an audio description which also describes the images and layout of the materials.

There must be clear indexing on tapes and there should always be an announcement at the end of the side.

Voice-over artists must speak clearly and do not have to repeat everything they say. It is advisable to approve scripts for taping prior to commencing production.

MP3 audio files can also be provided from the original recording and stored on websites. These can be accessed online or downloaded for future use.

12 Disk and text versions

With new advances in speech technology, many blind and partially sighted people prefer to receive information on disk or CD which can be accessed through their personal computer.

These documents should be saved as text only formats to ensure they are fully accessible.

13 Tips to remember

Don't assume these guidelines apply to everyone who is blind or partially sighted!

Everyone has individual needs; so ask people which is their preferred format.

If in doubt, contact us for advice on 020 7635 4896. We are in regular contact with people with a range of sight conditions and will be able to deal with your query.

No demands are unreasonable as everyone should have equal access to information.

Would you like to know more about how to support someone who is visually impaired?

Call our Visual Awareness training team on **0207 635 4845** or email **visual.awareness@actionforblindpeople.org.uk**

Notes

If you need support with sight loss, talk to our experts - talk to Action.
Please call our National Freephone Helpline on **0800 915 4666**
or visit our website on **www.actionforblindpeople.org.uk**



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Action for blind people