

# Accessible Communication Guidelines

2021

A guide used to create accessible communications for people with disability.





# Table of contents

|                |                                                            |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4</b>       | Disability and accessibility; Understanding the difference |
| <b>5 - 6</b>   | Inclusive communication matters                            |
| <b>7 - 10</b>  | Glossary of terms                                          |
| <b>11 - 15</b> | Colour                                                     |
| <b>16 - 23</b> | Typography                                                 |
| <b>24 - 27</b> | Print                                                      |
| <b>28 - 30</b> | Digital                                                    |
| <b>31 - 34</b> | Office documents                                           |
| <b>35 - 40</b> | Accessible PDF's                                           |
| <b>41 - 45</b> | Social Media                                               |
| <b>46</b>      | References                                                 |

# Disability and Accessibility; Understanding the difference

It's important to understand the difference between disability and accessibility how it can support the inclusion and access through communications to people with disability or accessibility needs.

There are two models of disability; the medical model and the social model. The medical model refers to the conditions that affect people and the way they live in their daily life. A disability can be but not limited to; physical, non-physical, sensory, intellectual, neurological and present in different ways. Many people might experience a form of disability that is invisible.

The United Nations internationally recognises the social model of disability as the contemporary and preferred way of understanding disability. It promotes disability as being caused by the way society is designed, rather than by a person's disability and it identifies ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices. This helps us understand that practices and policies are what matters the most, rather than the nature of a person's disability.

Accessibility on the other hand, is how we make products, services, built environments, learning, digital technologies, communications and information services more available to someone with disability or accessibility needs.

Accessibility is about appreciating the diverse needs in our society and making sure we work to satisfy as many of those needs as we can. 20% of the Australian population are living with disability, that's why making communications accessible is critical to inclusion.

The Accessibility Guidelines have been written by people with disability and draw on current accessibility best practice (January 2021).

# Inclusive communication matters

Inclusive language is constantly evolving, is critical in promoting diversity and demonstrates respect for different backgrounds and experiences. When incorporating inclusive language you have the opportunity to break down barriers for a person with disability so they feel fully included and can engage in the content you publish with dignified access.

## Here are some key elements to remember:

- Person-first language means that you focus on the person before their disability e.g. “person with a disability” rather than “disabled person”.
- Avoid using outdated terms like “disabled” or “special needs” instead use “people with disability”.
- Be open and flexible on how you present information to be more accessible.
- When developing written content, use Plain English - this means using short sentences and easy words to convey meaning.
- The use of Easy English means presenting information using pictures and Plain English is to communicate meaning more effectively.
- The use of Easy and Plain English supports people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities in having a greater ability to understand the information being communicated.
- The use of social scripts is displaying images, Easy English and storytelling techniques to support Autistics to understand and prepare for a new experience to avoid feeling overwhelmed. For example, a social script could describe an activity, what might occur during the activity, how long the activity may last and what will happen at the end of the activity.

- Use a diverse range of marketing images, including people with disability as a symbol of inclusivity.
- Video Live captioning and Australian Sign Language (AUSLAN) are critical for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to be fully included in communication formats that are video, live stream or face-to-face events.
- Avoid the use of capitals when writing more than a few words. Capitals can make it harder for people with dyslexia or learning difficulties to distinguish the words and for assistive technology to decipher.
- People who are blind or have low vision may also have cognitive disabilities or low literacy levels and will use assistive technology to consume content. It's important to know the most common assistive technologies when designing accessible content, they can include:
  - Screen readers
  - Voice recognition,
  - Keyboard navigation
  - Screen magnifiers helps people
- Using the principles of Universal Design coupled with disability consultation will allow you to adequately provide communication materials in a range of alternate formats, improving ease-of-use and accessibility for your audience.

# Glossary of terms

| Term/Acronym                                                                              | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GSA                                                                                       | Get Skilled Access                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Disability<br><i>Accessible Island: Tasmania's Disability Framework</i>                   | Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Accessibility                                                                             | Includes physical, digital, informational, sensory and social with the goal of access being full participation of people with a broad range of abilities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Discrimination<br><i>Human Rights Commission</i>                                          | <p>Direct discrimination happens when a person, or a group of people, is treated less favourably than another person or groups because of their background or certain characteristics. Indirect discrimination occurs when an unreasonable rule or policy applies to everyone but has the effect of disadvantaging some people because of a personal characteristic they share.</p> <p>Discrimination can be against the law if it is based on a person's: age; disability; race, including colour, national or ethnic origin or immigrant status; sex; pregnancy, marital or relationship status; family responsibilities or breastfeeding; sexual orientation; gender identity; or intersex status.</p> |
| Universal design<br><i>The Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) 2007</i>      | The design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| The World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0/2.1) | The WCAG 2.0/2.1 is the international technical standard used to design to and measure against for equal access.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## Closed Captioning

Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications.

Closed captions—can be seen only with a decoder, capable television or capable digital set-top box. This is because they are added to the television signal after the original program or movie was recorded. For television services in Australia, closed captioning is available on most televisions by clicking on the ‘cc’ button on the remote control or through the digital set-top box.

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## Alternative Text (alt-text)

*W3C Web accessibility Initiative*

All non-text content that is presented to the user has a text alternative that serves the equivalent purpose.

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## Audio Description

*W3C Web accessibility Initiative*

An alternative for time-based media or audio description of the prerecorded video content is provided for synchronized media.

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## Braille

*Vision Australia*

Braille is a combination of raised bumps in cells consisting of two vertical rows of three and is used for reading and writing.

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## QR codes

*Tech terms*

A QR code (short for “quick response” code) is a type of bar code that contains a matrix of dots. It can be scanned using a QR scanner or a smartphone with built-in camera. Once scanned, software on the device converts the dots within the code into numbers or a string of characters.

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## Social Scripts

*AMAZE*

A social script is a document that uses storytelling techniques to explain new experiences and environments to autistic people through simple language and images.

|                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Screen Reader<br><i>Vision Australia</i>                      | A computer screen reads out loud the content that is on the screen. The program translates the written text displayed on the screen for the voice synthesiser which then reproduces text as speech.                                                                                                      |
| Colour Contrast<br><i>Bureau of Internet Accessibility</i>    | The difference in colour between font or anything in the foreground and it's background. How well one colour stands out from another determines whether or not most people will be able to read the information.                                                                                         |
| Typography<br><i>Wix</i>                                      | The visual aspect of type. It is the practice of rearranging text in a way that is legible and aesthetic by using different typefaces, font styles as well as adjusting size, spacing between letters and words and more.                                                                                |
| Dynamic Content<br><i>Techopedia</i>                          | Website content that constantly or regularly changes based on user interactions, timing and other parameters that determine what content is delivered to the user. Any element in a page which contains movement and can change over time may also be considered dynamic content.                        |
| Tagging "artifact"<br><i>W3C Web Accessibility Initiative</i> | A technique to show how purely decorative images in PDF documents can be marked so that they are ignored by assistive technology. In PDF, artifacts are generally graphic objects or other markings that are not part of the authored content e.g. page headers, information lines or decorative images. |
| Semantic Markup<br><i>W3C Web Accessibility Initiative</i>    | A technique to mark-up the structure of content, the elements are used according to their meaning not because of the way they appear visually. The nature of a piece of content as a paragraph, header. emphasised text, table etc. can be indicated in this way.                                        |

Transcript

*Media Access Australia*

A written or printed version of material originally presented in a way that contains audio such as a video or podcast.

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Hashtag

*TechTerms*

A number symbol (#) used to label keywords in a social media post. A hashtag can be any word or combination of words and can also include numbers.

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CamelCase

*TechTerms*

A naming convention in which each word within a compound word is capitalised except for the first word.

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HTML

*TechTerms*

Stands for Hypertext Markup Language. HTML is the language used to create web pages.

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E-Book EPUB

*TechTerms*

A format that is an open standard for E-books created by the International Digital Publishing Forum. It is designed for flow-able content that can adapt it's presentation to the readers device.

# Colour

The use of colours and tonal contrast can increase or decrease the readability of your communications. How human-beings perceive colour can be impacted by conditions such as colour blindness, low vision, age, injury or cognitive load. Maintaining adequate tonal contrast and brightness is essential for accessible communication.



Example of a GSA document in black and white

Contrast is the measure of perceived brightness between two colours. A quick check for colour contrasting can be done by turning a design into gray-scale or printing your work in black and white. People with low-vision or colour blindness require a colour contrast ratio of 4:5:1 to read information effectively.

Adobe Photoshop can be configured to simulate Deuteranopia or Protanopia, two common forms of colour blindness. From the menu select 'view' then 'proof setup' then select 'Protanopia' or 'Deuteranopia' to view your design from the perspective of someone with colour blindness and the colours adjust accordingly.



Deuteranopia GSA document example



Protanopia GSA document example

You can use a colour contrast analyser to more precisely measure the contrast and verify the colours against accessibility standards. We suggest using the Webaim colour contrast checker: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/> or the Paciello Group colour contrast analyser that is free to download: <https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/>  
Example: Show image of colour contrast analyser

Foreground Color

#FFFFFF

Lightness

Background Color

#171647

Lightness

Contrast Ratio

16.9:1

[permalink](#)

Normal Text

WCAG AA: Pass

WCAG AAA: Pass

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Large Text

WCAG AA: Pass

WCAG AAA: Pass

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Graphical Objects and User Interface Components

WCAG AA: Pass

Text Input

Foreground Color

#FFFFFF

Lightness

Background Color

#FF5100

Lightness

Contrast Ratio

3.26:1

[permalink](#)

Normal Text

WCAG AA: Fail

WCAG AAA: Fail

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Large Text

WCAG AA: Pass

WCAG AAA: Fail

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Graphical Objects and User Interface Components

WCAG AA: Pass

Text Input

Example of GSA colours passing a colour contrast check  
Source: WebAim Colour Contrast Checker

Example of GSA colours failing a colour contrast check unless the text is large.  
Source: WebAim Colour Contrast Checker

For maximum readability typography tonal contrast should be at a minimum of 10:1

The image shows the WebAIM Colour Contrast Checker interface. At the top, there are two color selection panels. The 'Foreground Color' panel shows a black color swatch with the hex code #000000 and a lightness slider. The 'Background Color' panel shows an off-white color swatch with the hex code #F9F9F0 and a lightness slider. To the right of these panels, a green-bordered box displays the 'Contrast Ratio' as 19.83:1, with a 'permalink' link below it. Below the color panels, there are three sections: 'Normal Text', 'Large Text', and 'Graphical Objects and User Interface Components'. Each section shows the WCAG AA and AAA compliance status (all 'Pass') and a sample of the text or UI element. The 'Normal Text' section shows the sentence 'The five boxing wizards jump quickly.' in a standard font. The 'Large Text' section shows the same sentence in a larger, bold font. The 'Graphical Objects and User Interface Components' section shows a 'Text Input' field with a checkmark above it, indicating it passes the contrast requirements.

**Foreground Color**  
#000000  
Lightness

**Background Color**  
#F9F9F0  
Lightness

Contrast Ratio  
**19.83:1**  
[permalink](#)

### Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Pass**  
WCAG AAA: **Pass**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

### Large Text

WCAG AA: **Pass**  
WCAG AAA: **Pass**

**The five boxing wizards jump quickly.**

### Graphical Objects and User Interface Components

WCAG AA: **Pass**

Text Input

Example of a high contrast ratio of black text on an off-white background  
Source: *WebAim Colour Contrast Checker*

# Typography

Readability refers to the accuracy and speed with which content can be consumed. The readability of a document can be negatively effected by the Typography, also know as; typeface selection, font size, spacing, line length, alignment and formatting, and in turn effect the accessibility of communications.

The use of common typefaces such as Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Times New Roman and Verdana are considered most accessible based on their familiarity. The more practiced people are at reading a typeface, the easier it is to read. Sans serif typefaces are considered more accessible as some people with disability can find the decorative “flick” on serif text distracting.

**Arial: Impacting generational social change by decoding the myths of disability.**

**Calibri: Impacting generational social change by decoding the myths of disability.**

**Helvetica: Impacting generational social change by decoding the myths of disability.**

**Times New Roman: Impacting generational social change by decoding the myths of disability.**

**Verdana: Impacting generational social change by decoding the myths of disability.**

For people who have low vision, dyslexia and intellectual disabilities, it can be hard to differentiate between letter forms that have a similar shape such as 1 | | i. Choosing a type face that has a clear distinction between each letter and number will mean content can be read by a broader audience.



Example

In a similar vein, typefaces with letters that tend to mirror each other can be hard to differentiate between. Avoid typefaces that use reflected or mirror letter forms as it can be confusing for some people with disability.



Example

The most accessible font is FS Me designed by Jason Smith and used by the NDIS. Every letter of FS ME was tested by people with a range of learning disabilities across the UK for its appeal and readability.

The accessible type

FS ME example

A benchmark  
in *legibility*.  
**Easy reading  
lettershapes.**

FS ME example

Character spacing within words is important for readability and accessibility of content. Letters that are tracked too close together can be hard to differentiate for people who have low vision or learning difficulties. Small increases in tracking is advised for words that are bold, all caps, condensed and light coloured.

**Real life disability experience delivered by real-life  
people with disability**

Example of letter spacing being too close together using Impact font.

Best practice is designing content so a user can adjust the text to their desired size. In the instance that information cannot be designed this way, a minimum of 12 point text size is required for readability for people who are elderly and/or have low vision. Avoid any fonts with a height smaller than 1.5mm even for fine print.

Por aut rerumque venis nullitatis con non nus simi, vellaut officip idignit acceptia aut aut ea dit odi ratem elestis aborerum vel evelestum  
renditas ea voluptaqui venis net pre accuaptas dolupti arcid etur? Qui cus.  
Faciustrunte voluptati ulluptatio. It, invent volupta quatut?  
Num es dolor mo dolerferum fugia cotes non et, as ressimia dis nonsentis et enemqui sin resta rem et unt autesto ex ent dolore omnis es et  
officio lum del ipsum fugiamenest fugit, arunt ulpa pa dit officit asperum as ma cus si con re imagnam fuga. At quatus am, ut utenia ped quo  
ma aut qui to vel expe natem sintur autem et re officiate nissunt.  
To modi quost fugit a num, tempore ribus.  
Di occum se pore proremoporem quam eicabo. Et est hilibuscilur reperum quiaecusapis pero occabori od molorem pororro berum volorendae

Example of fine print in a text size of less than 1.5mm.

Large print is generally 3 to 5mm high or 18 point plus and is considered accessible for people who have low vision. Large print is accessible at a contrast ratio of 3:1. Having a large print version of your information available for people who need it is considered best practice.

Example: A text colour combination in a normal accessible font size of 12 - 14 point that does not pass a contrast analysis may pass an analysis in a large print size of 16 - 18 point.

**Foreground Color**  
#FF5100  
Lightness

**Background Color**  
#FFFFFF  
Lightness

Contrast Ratio  
**3.26:1**  
[permalink](#)

### Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Fail**

WCAG AAA: **Fail**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

### Large Text

WCAG AA: **Pass**

WCAG AAA: **Fail**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

### Graphical Objects and User Interface Components

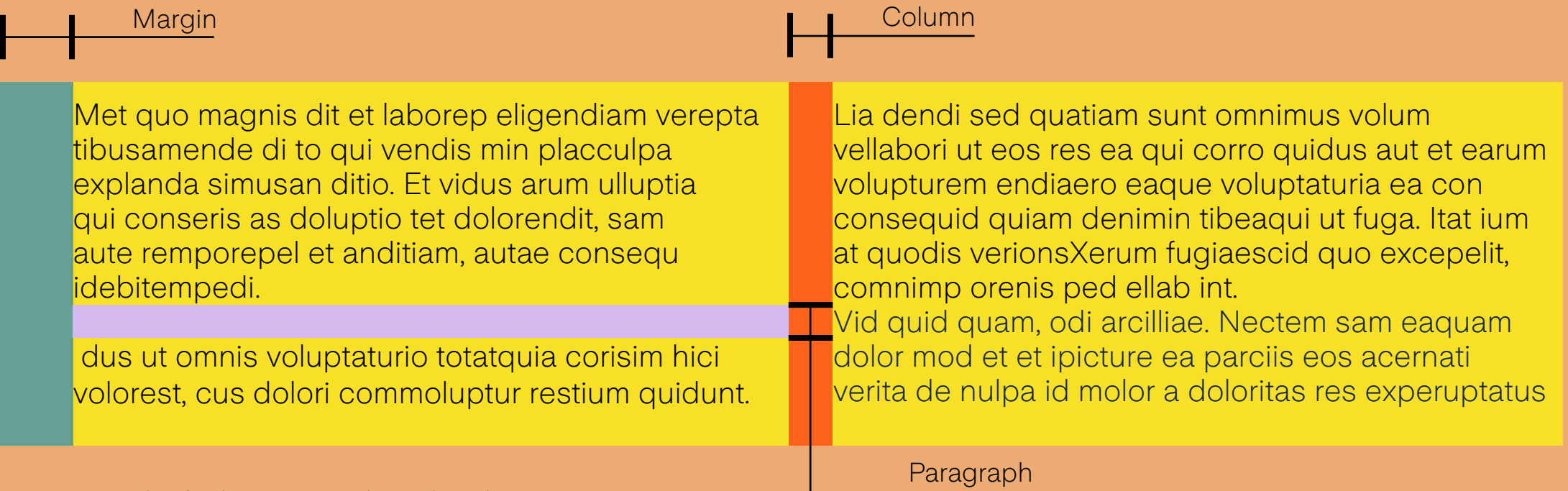
WCAG AA: **Pass**

Text Input

Source: WebAim Colour Contrast Checker

Increase the amount of space after each paragraph to be noticeably greater than the line spacing. Aim for a minimum of 50% more space between paragraphs than between lines. Having larger paragraph spacing will help people with low vision and learning difficulties take time to process information in between each paragraph. Larger paragraph spacing will also assist a screen reader in taking a break before reading out information to a person meaning they can process the information more coherently.

Column spacing should be larger than the paragraph spacing but less the distance from the margin to the edge of the page. Column spacing provides white space verticals to bodies of text. The white space should provide a big enough gap so that people with low vision can easily differentiate between lines of text that sit next to each other.



Example of column spacing being less the margin spacing.

A person's ability to decipher words will directly effect how they process information. Considering text alignment and paragraph styles in printed and digital content will increase the accessibility for people who have low vision and cognitive disabilities and in-turn positively effect the way they interpret the information.

Flush left is the best choice when setting out text, it creates a common starting point that the eye can quickly follow which can be helpful for users with restricted visual fields. Flush right is okay if it is used for a small amount of text that is designed to stand out.

Get Skilled Access was founded by Dylan Alcott OAM 3 x Paralympian gold medallist and 9 x tennis grand slam champ. It's our mission to help organisations understand disability and the opportunities to create a more inclusive and accessible experience for people with disability.

Example of flush left text.

Centered text is okay if it used sparingly for headings or other small amounts of text.

## WHAT WE DO

Example of centered text used sparingly as a heading.

Avoid using justified text because of distracting spaces between words called "rivers". Rivers are the white spaces between words when a line of text is stretched out to meet the edges of a bounding box. Rivers can create a visual distraction for people who have low vision or learning disabilities.

We are changing the way organisations and governments view disability by harnessing the benefit and business opportunity by engaging with 20% of Australia's population who have disability. Our unique and innovative approach to accessibility and disability helps your organisation become not only inclusive but drives productivity and profitability.

Example of rivers when text is aligned as justified.

Some readers will identify words from their shape, when a word is written in all capitals its shape becomes a rectangle and can be unidentifiable to some readers. Avoid all capitals for longer than a few words.

A screen reader will not announce the bold, italic or underline aesthetic applied to text. People who use screen readers will be unaware that the text is defined by its look. Use bold, italic and underline sparingly and make sure the semantic mark-up of a document is correct to assist screen readers with the hierarchical layout of text.

Bold, italic and underline can also act as a visual distraction for people who have low vision and learning difficulties. Using bold, italic and underline sparingly and providing a large text version of your document will help people with low vision and learning difficulties read the information.

**Remove the barrier.**

*Remove the barrier.*

Remove the barrer.

Example of bold, italic and underlined text.

Avoid hyphenating lines of text as remembering partial words can add to a readers cognitive load specifically in people with cognitive disabilities. Too many hyphens can also create a visual distraction. Deselecting the 'hyphenated' option in your paragraph style will eliminate end of line hyphens that divide words.

Inclusive cultures give everyone the same opportunity to contribute and thrive. GSA has identified seven critical values required in an organisation for it to be inclusive. Our organisational review includes interviews, focus groups and a survey to identify whether these values are being lived within your organisation.

We will also review your organisational accessibility

Example of hyphenated lines of text.

Avoid background images or other graphic elements behind text. Background images can cause a visual distraction for people who experience difficulties reading text.

**Our services include:**

- Face-to-face engagement sessions
- Disability and Inclusion action plans
- Inclusive events
- Inclusive culture review
- Online learning and development
- Digital review
- Consulting
- Audits

Example of bullet points.

Use bullet points where possible for better visibility. Bullet points are a clear, visual way to define lists and can make reading easier for people with low vision, people who are elderly and people with learning disabilities.



Example of text in front of an image.

# Print

Whilst digital information is the preferred method of communicating information due to its ability to adapt to accessibility requirements, it is hard to avoid having to print tangible information. In the event of having to print information, there are some guidelines you can follow to ensure that information is accessible.

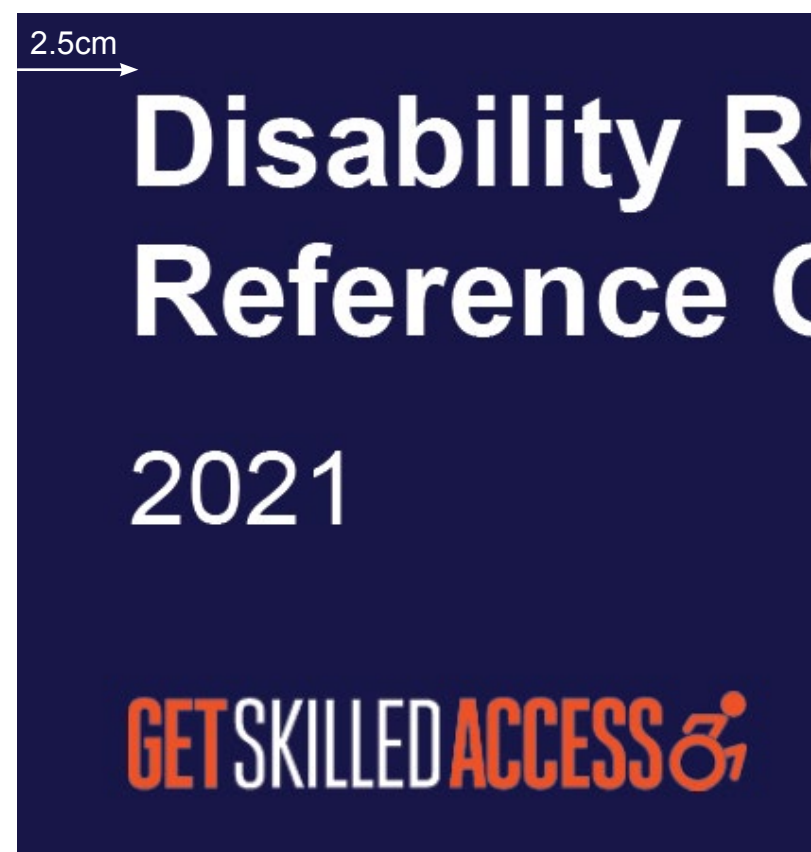
As printed text can't be enlarged to a user's desired size, text should be a minimum of 12 to 24 point text size for people with low vision. Providing a printed large print and a plain English version is considered best practice.

Ensure that there are adequate margins at least 2.5cm on each side of the page. Margins create white space around the outside of the design and can make it easier for people with low vision and learning difficulties to focus on text.

Decorative font such as a cursive font can be hard to read for people with disabilities. Repeat display font content elsewhere in the document in an accessible font such as a sans serif in a size 12 – 24 point.

Remove the barrier - 12pt  
Remove the barrier - 14pt  
Remove the barrier - 16pt  
Remove the barrier - 18pt  
**Remove the barrier - 24pt**

Example of text size 12 to 24 point.



Example of a margin size 2.5cm.

Many people with low vision have a sensitivity to light. Stark white or glossy paper can create glare that can cause headaches, eye pain and make text hard to read. Choose paper or printing processes that minimise glare and enhance contrast and clarity.

Some options include:

- Matte paper
- Uncoated paper
- Off-white paper

Paper stock should be thick enough to prevent any distracting ink show through. If paper stock is too thin, text and images from one side of the document can show through to the other side making the text hard to read.

Some options include:

- 128 gsm
- 210 gsm
- 300 gsm

Choose a paper weight and binding style that allows the page to lay flat when open to reduce optical distortions and glare.

Some options include:

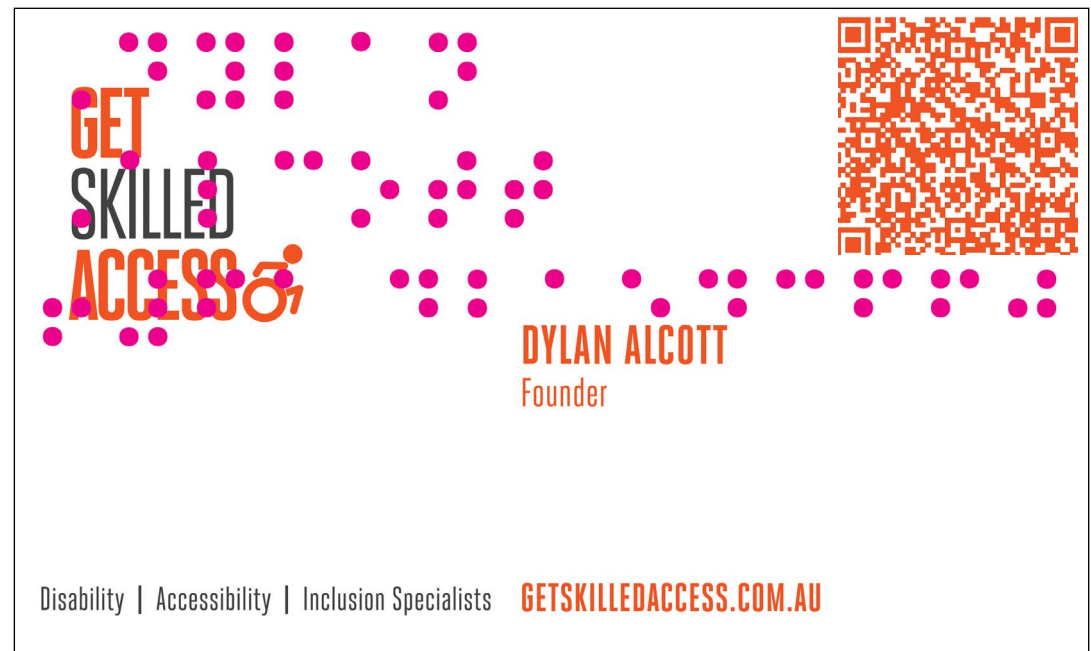
- Lay flat binding
- Screw and post binding
- Spiral wire binding



Always supply an accessible digital version of a printed document. Provide a contact name, number and email address for people who require a digital version of the information. Using a QR code is a great way to direct users to an accessible digital version.

Example of QR code for a printed business card.

Making printed documents more accessible and available to people who are blind or have low vision might mean converting documents into Braille. Braille is a tactile written and reading format used by some people who are blind or have low vision to access and read printed materials. For more information please see the link for Vision Australia resources and support.

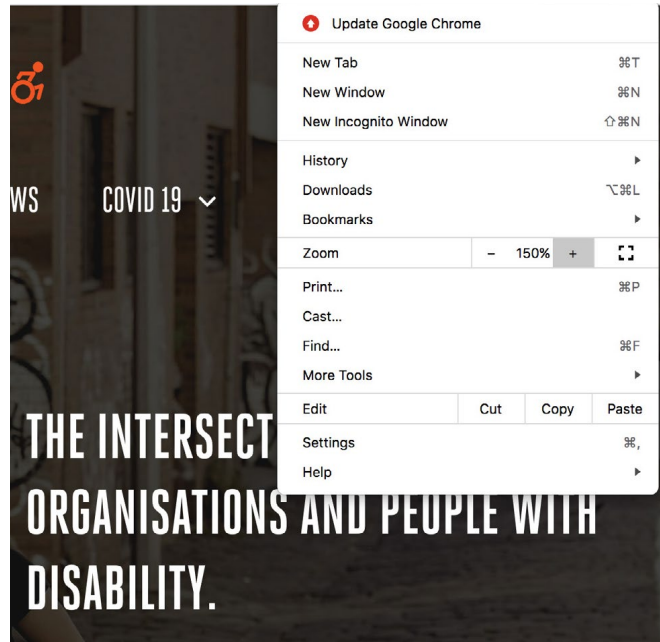


Example of braille layout for a printed business card.

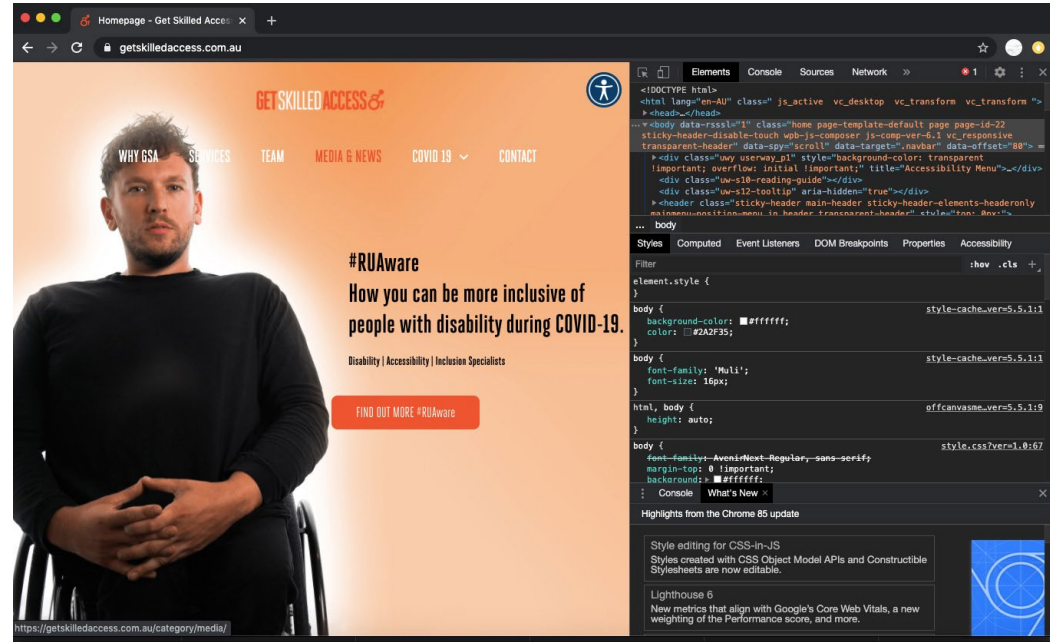
# Digital

The accessibility of digital information requires an accessible way of thinking from the beginning of the build stage. Implementing compatibility processes in the build will make for a smooth and accessible process when launching information to users. Allowing the user to make changes dependent on their requirements will leave the user in-charge of their accessibility and make the development easy for designers.

When designing ensure the content you are creating is dynamic and has the capabilities for a user to adjust the text size to their liking without the digital content breaking. For example, when a user could be using screen magnification on their computer or zoom-in function on their smartphone.



Example of a web browser zoomed in at 150%.



Example of correct HTML tagging for an accessible website.

It's important that content available online is compatible with assistive technology e.g. screen readers for users who are blind or have low vision. This means that the website content, images and videos are tagged in the proper reading sequence so when a user is moving through the content with a screen reader they are moving through it in the logical way a seeing reader would, this order of the content is called the semantic structure. When tagging isn't in sequence, it becomes challenging for the user to engage effectively with the content. While the content sequence may look visually in sequence, this is not always necessarily the case in the back-end of the website, before uploading new content always check with your development team that the correct sequence tagging has been completed.

Alternative text more commonly known as alt text means non-text content like images or icons can be converted by assistive technology into a written description format – or descriptive identification of the image. When writing alt-text consider the audience, context and intent of the image. Sometimes a literal description is not warranted e.g. description of a logo.

### Some tips when writing alt text include:

- Alt text is usually 1 – 2 sentences long but there may be cases where a longer description is warranted.
- Structure the alt text to mention the most important details first.
- Avoid subjective judgments or opinions when writing alt text.
- Avoid starting your alt text with words like “image of” “picture of” “video of” or “link to” – this should be obvious due to the semantic structure and can delay the reader reading the relevant information.
- “Drawing of” or “photograph of” is okay because it makes a meaningful difference in how the information might be considered.
- Always end alt text with a full stop.
- Embedded text needs to be included in the alt-text if it provides context for understanding the content.

Get Skilled Access > Uploads – x +

← → ↺ getskilledaccess.com.au/wp-admin/media-upload.php?post\_id=183&type=imag

From Computer From URL Media Library

### Insert media from another website

☒ Image ☐ Audio, Video, or Other File

Required fields are marked \*

URL \*

Title \*

Alternative Text   
Alt text for the image, e.g. "The Mona Lisa"

Image Caption

Alignment ☒ None ☐ Left ☐ Centre ☐ Right

Link Image To:   
   
Enter a link URL or click above for presets.

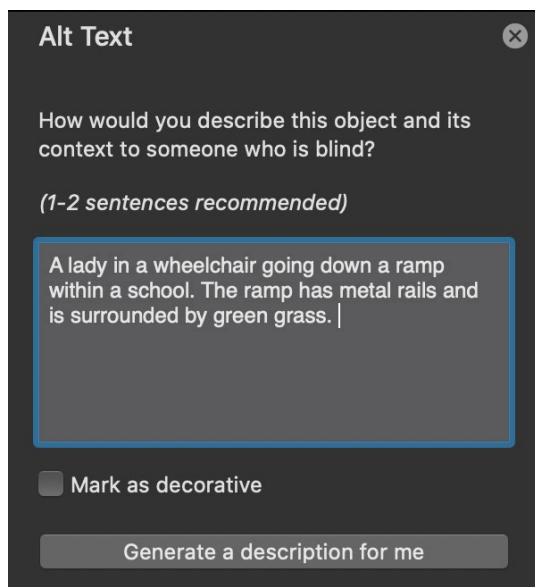


# Office documents

The inclusivity of people with disability in the work place relies heavily on how they can access information in the form of office documents. Office documents can include anything from a Word document to an Excel spreadsheet, and can extend tables, charts, graphs and images. Most office programs will have information online on how to make documents accessible within their suite; some can be found within this document.

Organisations should employ best practice by always making an accessible digital version available to people who cannot access printing facilities.

As with digital design, all non-text components of office documents require alt text. Be sure to check over any automatically generated alt text to make sure it is accurate and descriptive.



Example of inserting alt text using Microsoft Word.  
*Source: Microsoft Word V. 16.40*



Example of Microsoft Word automatically generated alt text.  
*Source: Microsoft Word V. 16.40*

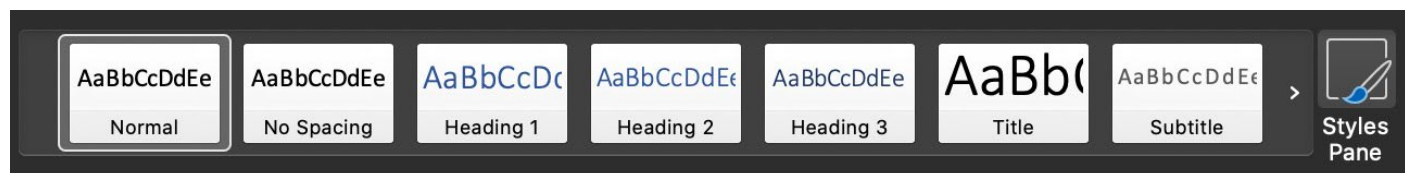
For images such as graphs, be careful not to rely on colour to interpret any data. For people who have trouble seeing colour e.g. people who are blind, colour blind or have low vision it means they will miss out on information. Be sure to accompany any graphs or images with appropriate alt text and label the axis clearly.

See the following link for a more detailed explanation on accessible Excel spreadsheets:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-excel-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6cc05fc5-1314-48b5-8eb3-683e49b3e593>

When designing office documents in programs such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel, it is important to use the programs in-built features for building objects like graphs, charts and tables. These in-built features have already been designed to be clearly defined by a screen reader, as opposed to an object that is manually drawn.

Much like accessible PDF's, accessible office documents also require semantic mark-up using paragraph styles e.g. title, subtitle, heading, paragraph. In Microsoft Word, the paragraph styles can be edited and applied through the home tab, then selecting the styles pane.

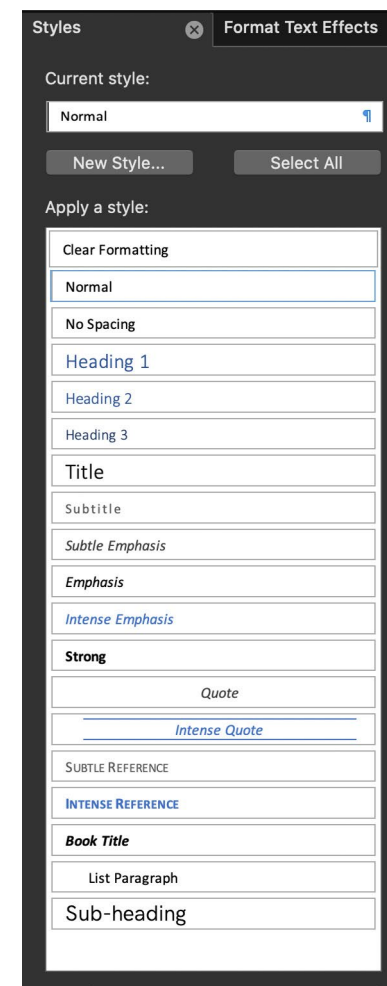


Example of some paragraph styles in Microsoft Word.

Source: Microsoft Word V. 16.40

When designing a spreadsheet document ensure that the title, header cells and all other cells with special functions are properly defined using the built-in features. Screen readers will use header information to identify rows and columns. Ensure all sheets are labeled uniquely and the all blank sheets are deleted.

Adding plain English instructions on how to navigate the document will add extra context for people with disability who use screen readers.



Example of applying paragraph styles in Microsoft Word.

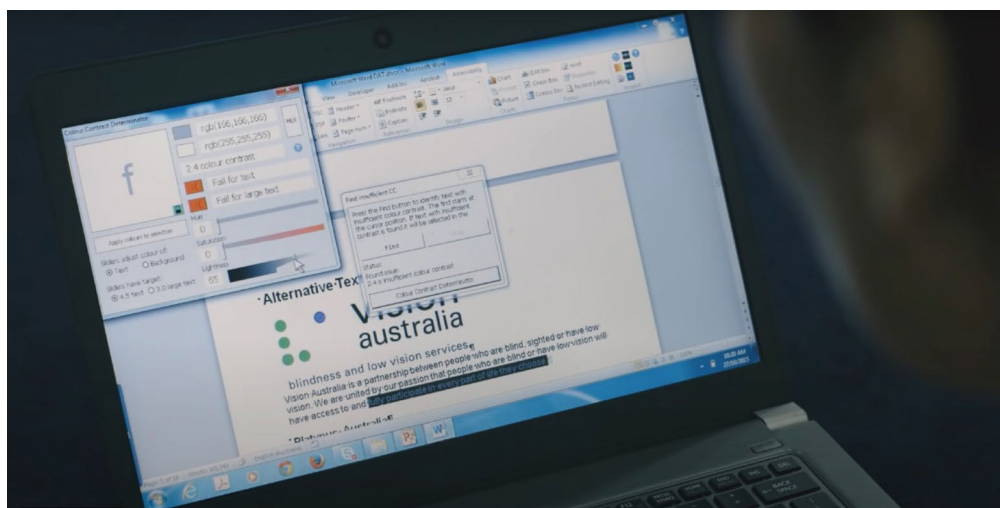
Source: Microsoft Word V. 16.40

As pioneered by Vision Australia, DAT or Document Accessibility Toolbar is a downloaded ribbon menu for Microsoft Word that aids in making documents accessible. DAT features a range of functions such as:

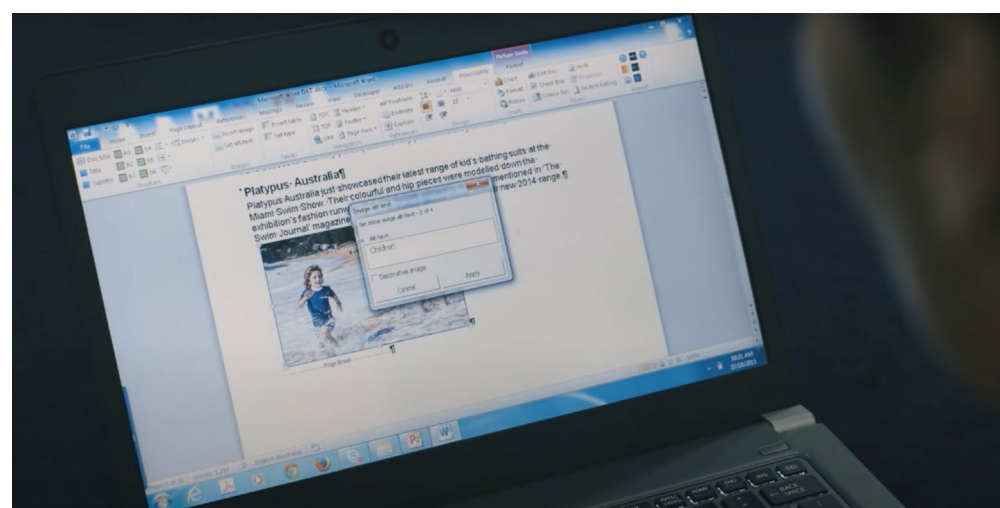
- Centralised location for accessibility functions
- A checklist for accessibility
- A built in screen reader
- A table wizard
- An alternative text wizard
- A colour contrast tool
- A Word to HTML converter

DAT can be downloaded by following this link: <https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/digital-access/document-accessibility-toolbar/form-multi-user>

Please note\* a Mac version of DAT is currently unavailable.



Example of the DAT colour contrast analyser.  
Source: Document Accessibility Toolbar Video - Vision Australia



Example of the DAT alt text wizard.  
Source: Document Accessibility Toolbar Video - Vision Australia

# Accessible PDF's

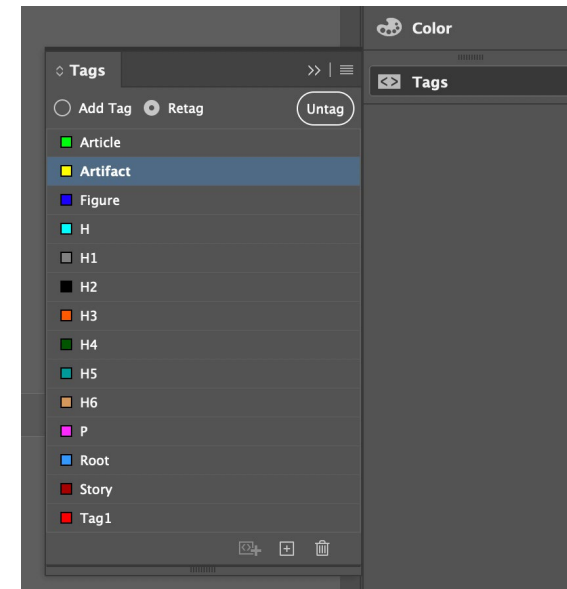
Organisations commonly use PDF files to share information both internally and externally with clients. PDF's can pose challenges to people with disability to access the content in the document in its entirety. There is a range of PDF's accessibility features available that can enhance access and usability for people with disability using assistive technology that will enable equal access for all.

Content needs to be ordered in a hierarchical structure and reading flow must follow a linear path as it's crucial for readers using screen-reading technology to read in a logical order. If the content structure isn't linear, the reader might be unable to access or understand the document.

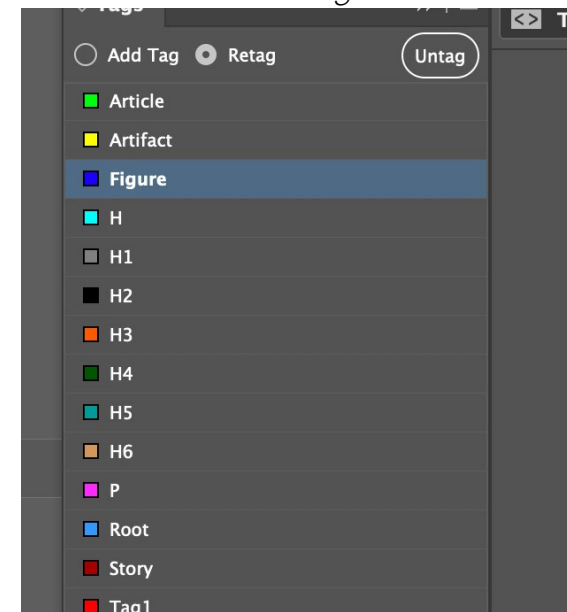
The majority of work to ensure a PDF is accessible can be done in InDesign.

Tagging an object as 'artifact' means a screen reader will ignore them e.g. decorative elements, backgrounds, running headers or footers. To tag an object as an artifact in Indesign click on the object, go to the object menu, click object export options and through 'tagged PDF' apply the artifact tag.

Visual elements that are not decorative need to be defined as 'figure' or 'image' and have alt text set for them, for example photographs, images and screen shots. The alt text can be set in either InDesign or Adobe Acrobat Pro. In InDesign click on the object then go to the object menu, click 'object export options' and under the alt text header change the alt text source to custom and add the alt text in the box. In Adobe Acrobat choose the Accessibility menu on the right hand side of the page then click 'set alternate text', Adobe Acrobat will automatically pick up any elements of the document that need alt text and prompt you to type it in.

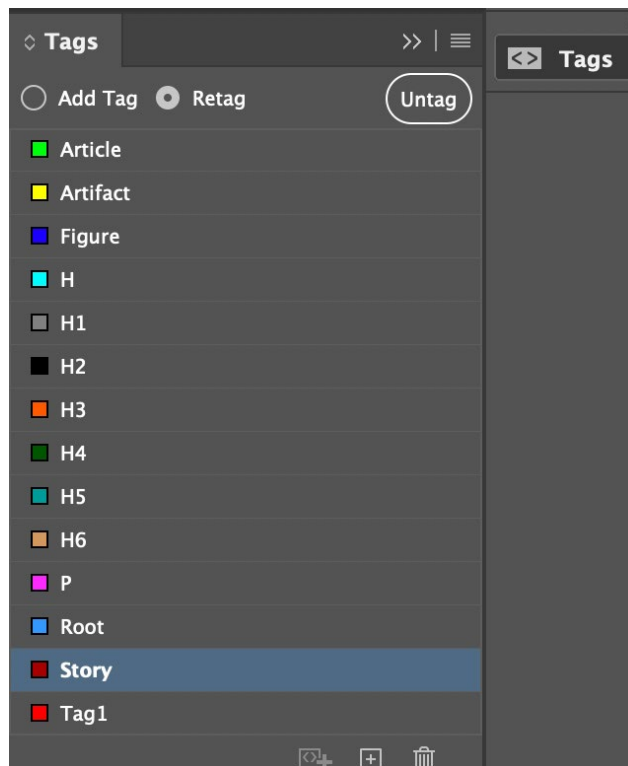


Example of tagging an object as 'artifact' in Indesign.  
*Source: Adobe Indesign V. 15.1.2*

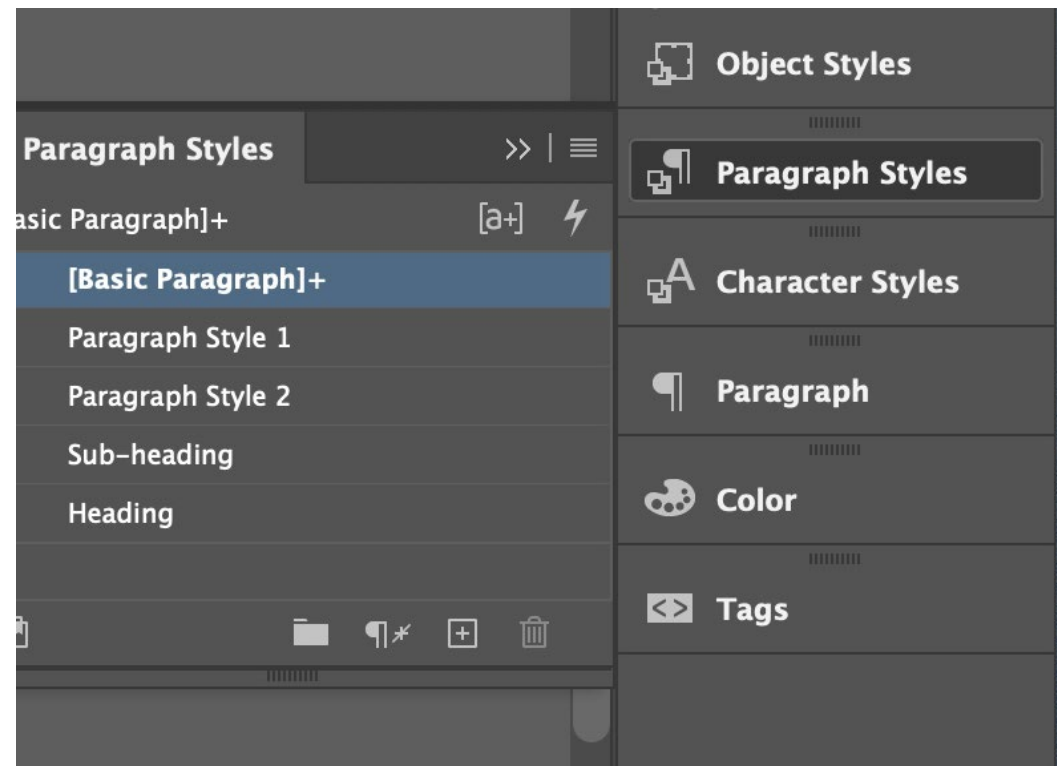


Example of tagging an object as 'figure' in Indesign.  
*Source: Adobe Indesign V. 15.1.2*

Text objects should be tagged as 'story'. In InDesign select the text box you wish to tag then right click, choose the 'tag text' option and click on 'story'.



Example of tagging text as 'story' in Indesign.  
*Source: Adobe Indesign V. 15.1.2*



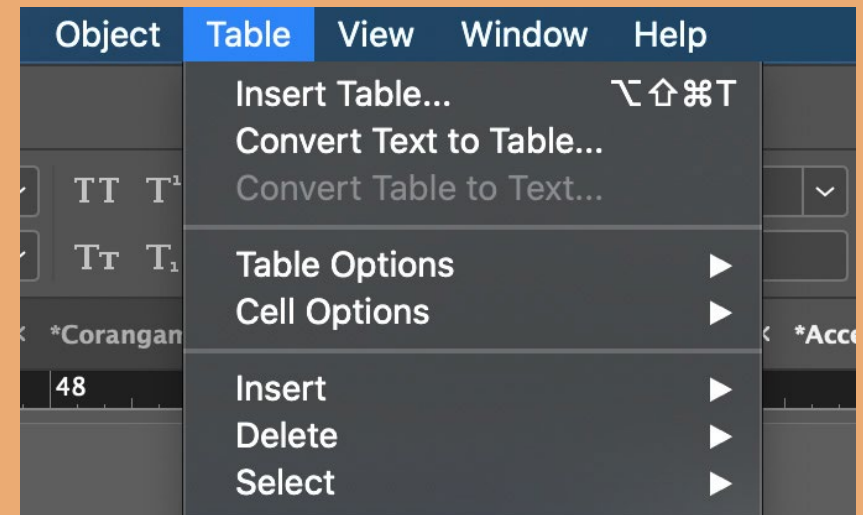
Example of paragraph styles in Indesign.  
*Source: Adobe Indesign V. 15.1.2*

Export tagging in InDesign can be used to tag your paragraph styles before you export a document to PDF. Tagging paragraph styles will let a screen reader know which order to read the content and will apply the same style to each paragraph with a matching tag, for example heading 1, heading 2, paragraph. To correctly tag paragraph styles click the paragraph then in the 'type' menu click 'paragraph styles'. In the paragraph styles menu you can make paragraph styles and edit them. Once you have double clicked on a paragraph style, choose the 'export tagging' option from the menu on the left and under the PDF heading to apply the appropriate tag.

See the following link for a more detailed explanation on document tagging in InDesign:

<https://www.adobe.com/content/dam/cc1/en/accessibility/products/indesign/pdfs/accessibledocswithindesignCS4.pdf>

Use InDesign's built-in table feature and be sure to properly label all rows and columns. When tagged correctly, the InDesign built-in table feature already has accessible features that will translate to an accessible PDF. Drawing your own table will not translate into an accessible PDF.



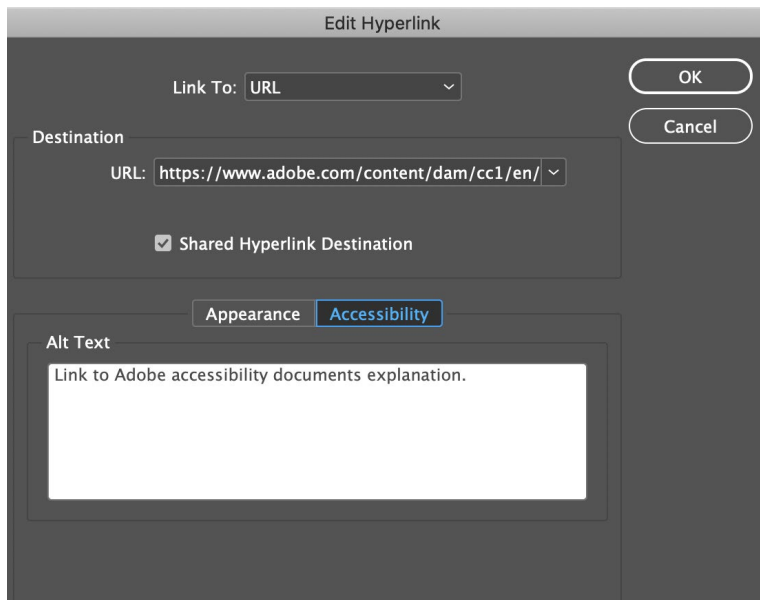
Example of where to find the Table settings in Indesign.  
*Source: Adobe Indesign V. 15.1.2*

Where possible try to avoid compressing a PDF file, a PDF should display clearly when zoomed in up to 200% for people who have low vision.



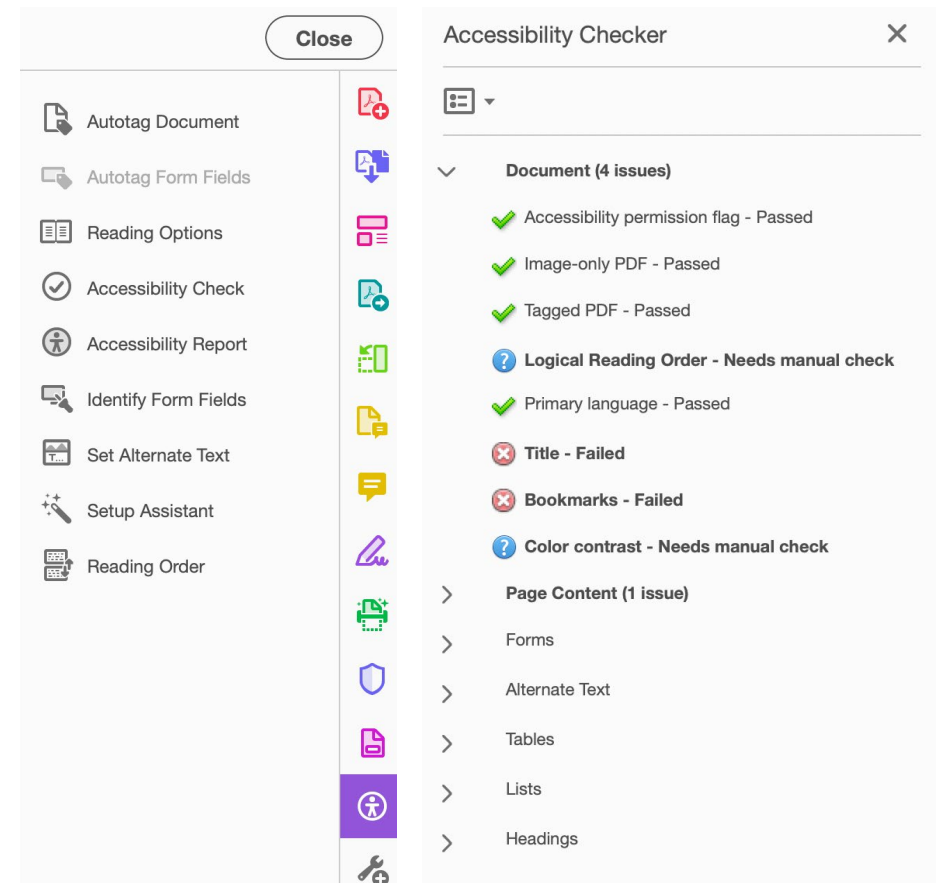
Example of Acrobat Pro zoomed in at 200%.  
Source: Adobe Acrobat Pro DC V. 2020.012.20043

All PDF links should have clear label names for each hyperlink and where they lead e.g. website, phone number, emails and forms making it a seamless user interaction.



You can perform an accessibility check using Acrobat Pro, and where accessibility issues are detected allows you to amend the accessibility issues.

Always include a contact email address so users can request the information in a different format if required.



Example of the Accessibility menu and Accessibility checker in Acrobat Pro.  
Source: Adobe Acrobat Pro DC V. 2020.012.20043

# Considerations

The Australian Human Rights Commission's advice is; whilst PDF's can be made accessible for use on desktop devices, the features lack the same support on a mobile device. PDF's can be a barrier for an equal user experience when interacting with the documents. PDF's cannot be regarded as a sufficiently accessible format for a person with a disability that is equivalent to that available to a person without a disability, and which is also equivalent to that obtained from using the document marked up in traditional HTML.

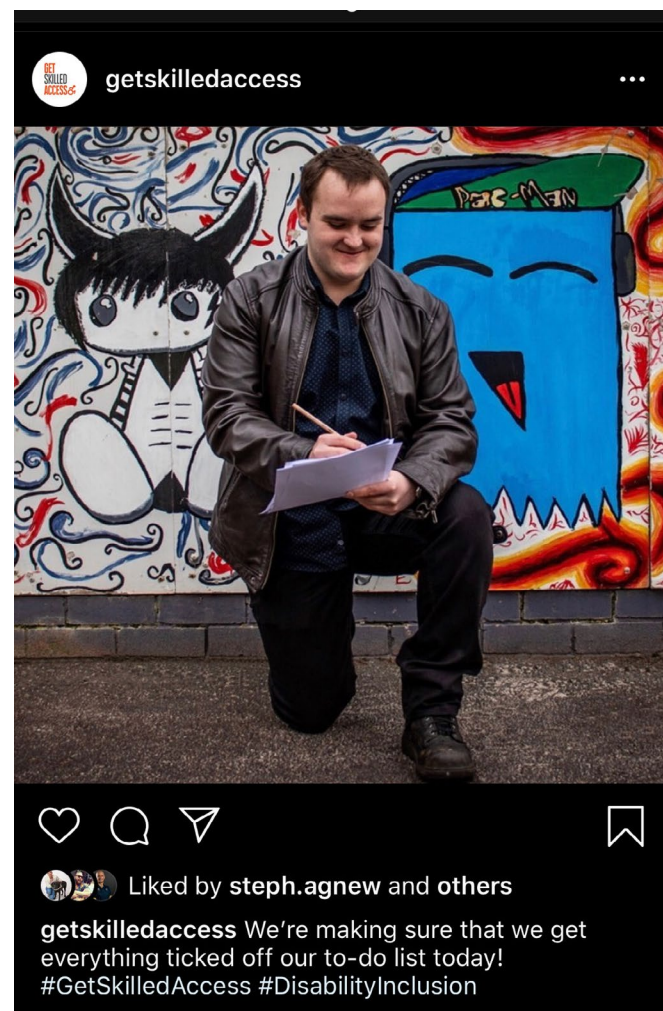
Microsoft word documents are preferred over PDF's from an accessibility standpoint, as you can incorporate a mix of HTML and e-book file format EPUB as accessible alternatives.

Organisations that publish documents only in PDF risk complaint under the DDA unless they make the content available in at least one additional accessible format that disseminates semantic meaning of the document structure, its design and content to mobile users.

# Social Media

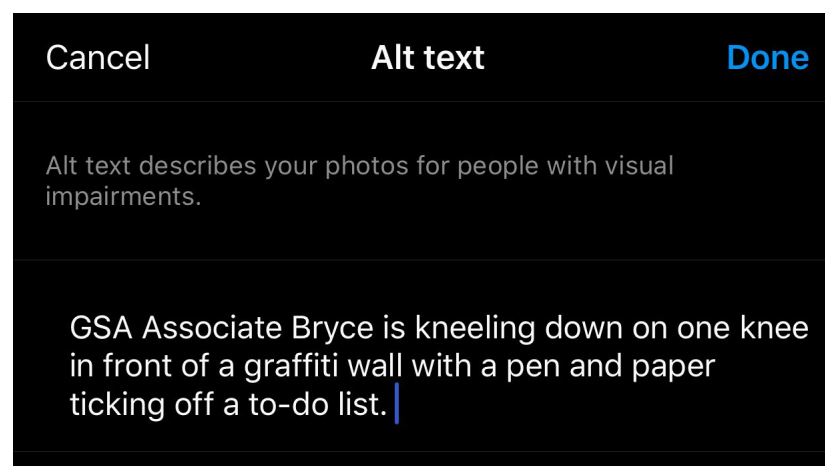
According to the 2018 Yellow Social Media Report, almost 8 in 10 people use social media and businesses with a social media presence has reached it's highest levels ever recorded. With social media becoming a popular avenue for users to engage with organisations, it is crucial that all social media posts are as accessible as possible to ensure the reach includes people with disability. While the accessibility of the platforms is up to the designer, there are a series of steps you can take to ensure your posts are as accessible as they can be.

When writing a social media post, the use of plain and Easy English increases understanding and readability for audiences with varying cognitive disabilities, Dyslexia, Autistics and assistive technology users. The use of simple, short text and everyday language is key.



Example of a plain English captioned Instagram post.

Ensure all of your social media images or graphics include Alternative Text (alt text). Alt-text allows users who are blind or low vision and using screen reading technology to visualise what is in the image. The alt-text features descriptors can be added on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and some scheduling platforms when posting but can also be included in the caption or can be added after posting by using the edit function. The key is the more detailed the descriptions, the better and more engaging it is

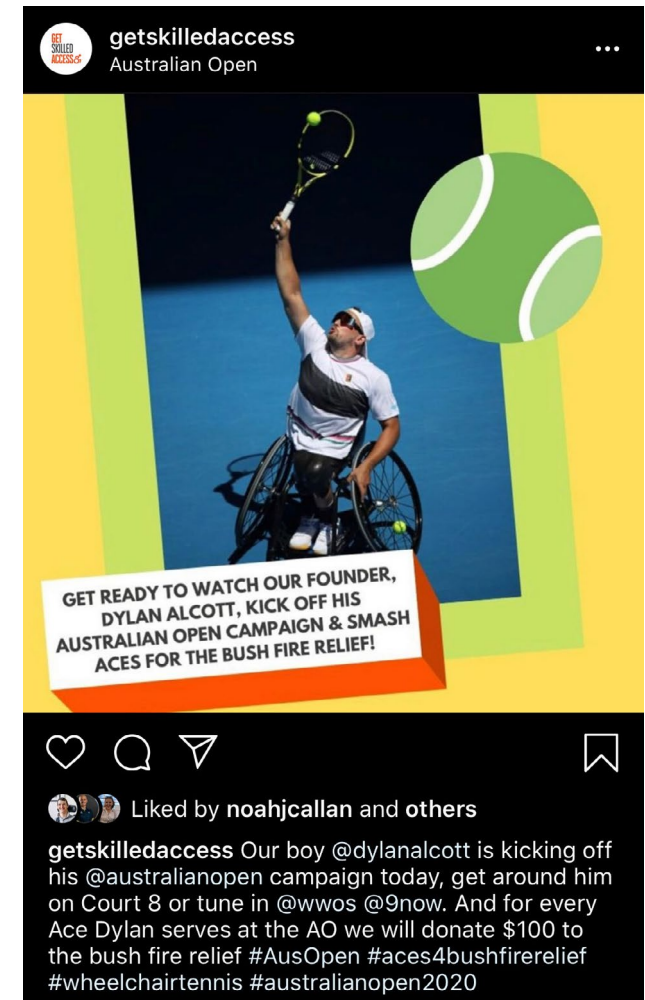


Example of alt text applied to an Instagram post.

Written graphics on social media also require alt text, for example in posts where the text is within the image. If there is information a user needs or wants that is pictured within the image, include the copy in the captions.

- Ensure that all audio and visual content has the functionality to be stopped, paused or hidden by users.
- Avoid using colour as a prompt to convey information. For example, using a red Instagram tile.
- For live social media video streams, it's best practice to have live captioning or additionally an Auslan Interpreter allowing users who are Deaf or hard of hearing to fully participate.

All video files should include closed captions or a written transcript, if your video hasn't been produced with closed captions you can simply add them using video platforms like YouTube or Facebook's automatic captioning. It's always a good idea to review the auto captioning before you push the video live as some of the auto captioning can incur small errors, which can't be simply edited.



Example of an Instagram post where the text in image is repeated in the image caption.

# Alternative text Social Media tips (current of September 2020):



## Instagram

1. Take a photo or select one to post
2. Select a filter or make your edits
3. Continue to write your caption then select advanced settings at the bottom of the page
4. Select write Alt text
5. Write your alt text and press done
6. Return to your caption and post
7. To add alt text to older posts
8. Select your post and click on the 3 dots
9. Select edit
10. On the right side select edit alt text
11. Write your alt text and select done
12. To save your changes select done again



## Facebook

1. Select your photo in the create post screen
2. Press More next to the edit photo options (... icon)
3. Select edit Alt text
4. Write your alt text and press done
5. Select post
6. To add Alt text to old posts
7. Select the post
8. Click on the photo
9. Select edit alt text
10. The Automatically generated text will appear, select override generated alt text
11. Write your alt text and press save



## LinkedIn

**\*\*NB** at present this is only available on a desktop computer not on mobile devices

1. Select start post and select an image
2. Select add description at the top right of the image
3. Write your image description in the alternative text box
4. Select save in the alternative text box



## Twitter

1. Select compose tweet and attach your photo
2. Select the +alt button on the photo
3. Write your Image description and select done

When uploading audio files have a written transcript available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing to fully engage in the content.

Hashtags are a fundamental to engagement and search functionality for content on social media. When hashtags are made up of multiple words, it can be difficult for adaptive technology to read. A simple solution is to use a capitalisation of each word to make it easier for screen readers and users to read; this is known as CamelCase, for example #GetSkilledAccess #DylanAlcott #DisabilityAndAccessibility.

Screen readers can read emojis. If you post a smiley face emoji the screen reader will read it as “smiley face”. To post multiple emojis include spaces in between them for screen readers to identify them separately.



**Example of an emojis with a space in between each one.**

If social media posts are being scheduled on a social media marketing and management dashboard it is important to understand the accessibility features of the platform you are using by researching on their website or talking to your account manager.

# Resources

WebAim

Guidelines and standard

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>

How to Meet WCAG (Quick Reference)

Web3C

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG21/quickref/?versions=2.0#qr-text-equiv-all>

Microsoft Word

<https://webaim.org/techniques/word/>

Alt-text

<https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/>

Colour contrast

<https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

Creating accessible PDFs (Acrobat Pro)

<https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/creating-accessible-pdfs.html>

Inclusive Design Checkpoints (Acrobat Pro)

<https://spectrum.adobe.com/page/inclusive-design/#Checkpoints>

Reading order for PDF (Acrobat Pro)

<https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/touch-reading-order-tool-pdfs.html>

Editing Document structure (Acrobat Pro)

<https://helpx.adobe.com/acrobat/using/editing-document-structure-content-tags.html>

Braille Print Accessibility

Vision Australia

<https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/print-accessibility-scripts>

Amaze - Shaping Autism

<https://www.amaze.org.au/training/social-scripts/>

Inclusive Language

Diversity Council Australia

<https://www.dca.org.au/inclusive-language>

Inclusive language and terms

Australian Government Digital Guidelines

<https://guides.service.gov.au/content-guide/accessibility-inclusivity/#inclusive-language-and-terms>

National Disability Practitioners

[http://www.ndp.org.au/images/factsheets/NDP\\_Factsheet04.pdf](http://www.ndp.org.au/images/factsheets/NDP_Factsheet04.pdf)

Access Ability - A practical handbook on accessible graphic design 2019

<https://www.rgd.ca/resources/accessibility/access>

Yellow Social Media Report 2018

<https://www.yellow.com.au/social-media-report/social-media-report-2018/>

The Makaton Charity

<https://www.makaton.org/aboutMakaton/>

Document Accessibility Toolbar

<https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/digital-access/document-accessibility-toolbar>





[info@getskilledaccess.com.au](mailto:info@getskilledaccess.com.au)

[www.getskilledaccess.com.au](http://www.getskilledaccess.com.au)

