

The Basics

Some Basic Tips for Designing Accessible Print Material

Content of Material

- Include images of people with disabilities in health promotion materials.
- Identify disability as a risk factor for health conditions where appropriate.
- Material testing / reviews should include people of varying ages, abilities, and linguistic and education backgrounds.

Design Layout

- The gutter margins (the adjoining margins in two facing pages) should be a minimum of 7/8 inches. The outside margins may be smaller, but should be at least 1/2 inches.
- The leading, or spacing between lines of text, should be at least 25 to 30 percent of the point size. This is because many people with partial sight have difficulty finding the beginning of the next line while reading.
- All text should be left aligned and right margins should ragged, not justified. Centered and right aligned text is difficult for some people to track.
- The line of text should be no longer than six inches (50-60 characters per line). Excessively short text lines should be avoided as well. Also, avoid hyphenations at the end of lines.
- Documents that are bound must be flexible, preferably allowing the publication to lie flat. Spiral binding is recommended for lengthy documents.

Text / Fonts

- Font selection should be as simple as possible. Avoid using compressed (**The Basics**), complicated (**THE BASICS**), decorative (**THE BASICS**), or cursive fonts (*The Basics*).
- Use standard serif or sans-serif fonts, with familiar, easy recognizable characters. San-serif fonts tend to be more legible when the character size is small.
Here are a few examples.
San-serif: Arial, Arial Narrow, Century Gothic, Verdana

Serif: Times New Roman, Bookman, Courier New

- Avoid using formatting codes such as *italics*, **bold**, *oblique*, and **condensed**.
- The main body of the text should always be in caps and lower case. Do not use all upper case lettering. However, the header and sub headers may be in all caps if you use a roman typeface, such as (Times or Times New Roman).
- Type point size should be no smaller than 12pt. and large print documents should be between 16 to 18pt.

Examples: **16 point font**, **18 point font**

Use of Images

- Photographs should have a wide range of color contrast or gray-scale variation.
- Images should always include a label or caption.
- Line drawings or floor plans should be clear and bold, with limited detail and minimum 12pt. type.
- Do not use any graphics such watermarks, over or behind any other images, photographs, graphics, or text.

Contrast / Paper Finish

- We recommend using traditional dark text on light background. However, some partially sighted readers, prefer a high contrast of white / light-colored text on dark (black) background. Both are suitable.
- Print material is, generally, most readable in black or white text. Different colors may be important for aesthetic or other reasons, but it is better to reserve them for larger text such as headlines and titles.
- Use light yellow or off-white non-glossy paper for print. Glossy paper can be both difficult to manipulate and to read off of.

This information was compiled by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and North Carolina Office on Disability and Health

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