

Web accessibility

Content needs to be simple for users with different abilities to navigate, read and interpret.

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Website accessibility describes whether a website can be used by people of all abilities. Good accessibility makes it simple for every user to navigate, read and interpret content. These are the main standards for accessibility that should be met:

- write all content in plain English, and explain all acronyms or jargon
- include a summary or key points of the main information at the beginning of content
- make paragraphs no more than five or six sentences, breaking up the text into short chunks
- use headings and sub-headings to break up sections of text
- use bullet points for all lists
- don't use directional text, like "the list below", which is misleading when using screen readers

Italic

Don't use italics. Use single quotation marks to distinguish titles of books, journals and articles.

Bold

Only use bold in headings.

Underlining

Don't use any underlining.

If you want to create emphasis, you can do this through what you write. If you need help rewriting, contact the [Editorial team](#).

- acronyms should be written out in full or clearly explained
- column headings in tables should be clearly visible
- avoid using zip files unless spreadsheet files are very large or a number of different file types need to be bundled together

- all content in an image (such as axes, keys and other labels) and footnotes must be easy to read for someone with typical eyesight
- upload a larger version of the image so users can click on it to enlarge it if chart labels are not easily read
- write out acronyms in full or clearly explain them
- don't use red and green together, as it's difficult to distinguish between them
- make sure there's clear distinction between different lines

All images must have alt text. When you hover over the image, a box will appear with a brief, accurate description of the image. This should be around 15 words, and not repeat the image title or content in the text. Screen readers read this out for people with visual disabilities.

Images must be no more than 600 pixels wide but can be longer than 600 pixels. However, consider usability when determining the length of an image; it needs to be fully visible on-screen without too much scrolling.

Don't use directional text, such as "click here" as this is misleading for users with screen readers.

When creating hyperlinks, the text containing the link should be a specific description of the destination page.

EXAMPLE

There's more information about accessibility within GOV.UK content if you're interested.

The full terms and conditions for competitions explain more about this.

Assistive technologies separate out links, so each one should be easy to identify.

EXAMPLE

accessibility within GOV.UK content

terms and conditions for competitions

If a hyperlink will involve downloading a file rather than going to another web page, users should be informed what they are about to download and its size.

EXAMPLE

In July we published a new user guide for population statistics (PDF, 100KB)

Quotation marks are not needed around a hyperlink.

This can present barriers for some users, but can enhance accessibility for others. Some users may prefer to access data in a non text-based format. When presenting data in an interactive format (for example, SVG or Flash), provide the data being used to create the animation as a download file in CSV or XLS format. Give a description of the main points where possible. When using audio or video content, always provide a transcript. If the content is also on a third-party website, provide it there if possible. For example, on YouTube you should provide a transcript in the comments section.

Websites should allow users to change viewing schemes, which change the size of text and colour contrast. Users should also be able to use assistive technologies, such as Jaws or Dragon screen reading software, to read content out loud.

PDF files are less accessible than web flat pages so PDFs should not be used without a flat page alternative. Make sure PDFs are altered to meet accessibility standards, you can check this using the accessibility checker in Adobe Acrobat Pro.

The PDF should have:

- correctly tagged content within Adobe (as headings, text, tables, images, etc)
- the correct reading order within Adobe
- alt text added to all images
- bookmarks for all main headings in the navigation pane and the PDF file set to open this pane automatically
- the language specified (usually English)