Dyslexia Style Guide 2018: Creating Dyslexia Friendly Content

This Style Guide provides principles that can help ensure that written material considers the difficulties experienced by some dyslexic people and allows for the use of text to speech to facilitate ease of reading. Adopting best practice for dyslexic readers has the advantage of making all written communication easier on the eye for everyone.

When making changes consider all the ways that you use written communications, such as emails, presentations, web pages and printed materials. Consider these principles in combination with other accessibility guidance such as the Web Accessibility Content Guidelines (WCAG).

Readable Fonts

- Use sans serif fonts, such as Arial and Comic Sans, as letters can appear less crowded. Alternatives include Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic, Trebuchet, Calibri, Open Sans.

- Font size should be 12-14 point or equivalent (e.g. 1-1.2em / 16-19 px). Some dyslexic readers may request a larger font.

- Larger inter-letter / character spacing (sometimes called tracking) improves readability, ideally around 35% of the average letter width. If letter spacing is excessive it can reduce readability.

- Inter-word spacing should be at least 3.5 times the inter-letter spacing.

- Larger line spacing improves readability and should be proportional to inter-word spacing; 1.5 / 150% is preferable.

- Avoid Underlining and italics as this can make the text appear to run together and cause crowding. Use bold for emphasis.

- Avoid text in uppercase / capital letters and small caps, which can be less familiar to the reader and harder to read.

Headings and Structure

- Use headings and styles to create consistent structure to help people navigate through your content.
  In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Home' tab:
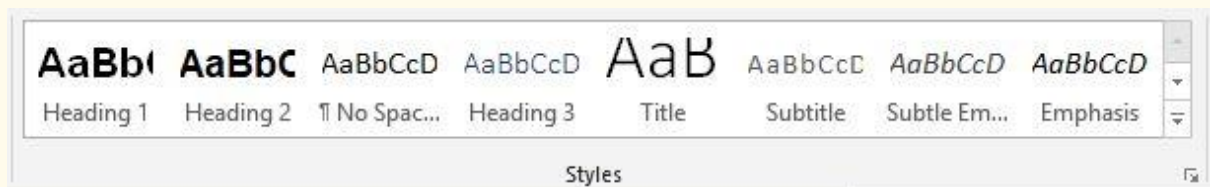
- For headings, use a font size that is at least 20% larger than the normal text. If further emphasis is required, then use bold.

- Use formatting tools for text alignment, justification, indents, lists, line and paragraph spacing to support assistive technology users.
  In Word, you'll find these tools in the 'Layout' tab:
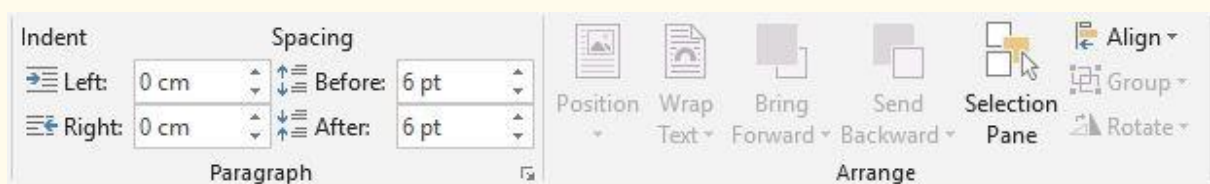
- Add extra space around headings and between paragraphs.

- Ensure hyperlinks look different from headings and normal text.

Colour

- Use single colour backgrounds. Avoid background patterns or pictures and distracting surrounds.

- Use sufficient contrast levels between background and text.

- Use dark coloured text on a light (not white) background.

- Avoid green and red/pink, as these colours are difficult for those who have colour vision deficiencies (colour blindness).

- Consider alternatives to white backgrounds for paper, computer and visual aids such as whiteboards. White can appear too dazzling. Use cream or a soft pastel colour. Some dyslexic people will have their own colour preference.

- When printing, use matt paper rather than gloss. Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.

Layout

- Left align text, without justification.

- Avoid multiple columns (as used in newspapers).

- Lines should not be too long: 60 to 70 characters.

- Use white space to remove clutter near text and group related content.

- Break up the text with regular section headings in long documents and include a table of contents.

Writing Style

- Use active rather than passive voice.

- Be concise; avoid using long, dense paragraphs.

- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.

- Use images to support text. Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures. Pictograms and graphics can help to locate and support information in the text.

- Consider using bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose.

- Give instructions clearly.

- Avoid double negatives.

- Avoid abbreviations where possible; always provide the expanded form when first used.

- Provide a glossary of abbreviations and jargon.