

Accessible Marketing

The following is a brief outline introducing some ideas about how to make your marketing materials, communications and website more accessible for disabled people.

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Overview

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 gives rights to people who currently have, or have had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has a “substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities.”

Approximately 10 million people the in UK are covered by this definition. The estimated purchase power of this market is £80billion each year.

The Equality Act requires all service providers to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to ensure your services (including your marketing) are accessible to disabled people. This means you.

Language

Language matters. Inappropriate language can cause offence and trouble. Talk to disabled people to get a feel for what language they consider offensive or disabling and don't be afraid to correct your colleagues. It helps people avoid embarrassment. As a start, think about:

Appropriate

- Disabled Person
- Wheelchair user
- Learning disabled
- Visually impaired people
- Mental health service user or survivor

Inappropriate

- Person with a Disability
- Wheelchair bound
- Mental handicap
- The Blind
- Mentally ill

Readability

- Write in plain, simple English. It's clearer for everyone. Keep your sentences short and don't use a complicated word if an easier one will do
- Keep it simple and short
- Check your reading age in Microsoft Word. Here's how to do it...

* In Tools – Spelling and Grammar – Options tick 'show readability statistics'. Every spell-check you do will give you a Flesch- Kincaid Grade Level (the school year your writing is suitable for).

* Add 5 to this to get the reading 'age' – you should aim for a reading age lower than 13 (or 8 on Flesch-Kincaid)

Counts	
Words	215
Characters	1102
Paragraphs	14
Sentences	10
Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	2.5
Words per Sentence	12.2
Characters per Word	4.9
Readability	
Passive Sentences	0%
Flesch Reading Ease	61.7
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	7.4

'Deaf, 'deaf' and 'disabled' mean very different things

British Sign Language (BSL) is an official language in the UK. Deaf culture is very strong for people whose first language is BSL, who see themselves as a linguistic minority rather than disabled people. People who have become deafened and non-BSL users are more likely to think of themselves as disabled. The term 'disabled' can include 'deaf', but not 'Deaf'.

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Formats

Working with Designers and Developers

- Marketing materials can't be all things for all people, but design doesn't have to be sacrificed for readability
- If your marketing doesn't communicate to everybody, then it's not good design
- A good designer will see the creative challenge in making your marketing and website attractive and accessible

Print

- Use text at 14 point (12 point is the absolute minimum). Avoid italics, serif or 'handwritten' fonts or capitals for long, continuous text
- Contrast between colours and text should be at least 25%
- Avoid putting text over images, unless you use a gradient or a semi-transparent layer between the text and the image to 'smooth' the image so the text can be read more clearly
- Close-set type can be daunting. Leave space between paragraphs and keep your paragraphs short.
- Don't cram the page – keep it clear and simple
- Avoid glossy papers (they reflect too much light), low paper weights (because text can show through) and paper folds that obscure text

Online

- Write in even more simple English and keep your paragraphs really short – two or three lines are enough
- Use images of your work. For each image provide a text alternative that describes the picture (the title is not enough). Check that your website shows this ALT text for every image
- Use meaningful links. Imagine the link appears on its own at the top of the page – will people know where they'll go / what they'll get if they 'click here'? Make the whole sentence the link by saying "click here for more info about accessible marketing" or "click here for more details of our next exhibition". Check your existing links are descriptive.
- Turn off the sound and check whether audio content is still available through text equivalents
- If you have control over your website design or are in the process of redesigning it, do a quick scan of your website's accessibility. Choose a sample page and run through the following checklist:
 - Look at the page using a range of web browsers, your website might appear differently on each one
 - Use browser controls to change the font-size. Is the page still readable using larger font sizes?
 - Resize the window to make sure horizontal scrolling is not required
 - Change the display colour to gray scale (or print out the page in gray scale or black and white) to check the colour contrast

- Without using the mouse, use the keyboard to navigate through the page. Can you access everything?
 - Look at the page using a voice browser (such as Home Page Reader) and a text browser (such as Lynx) to make sure all the information is available and makes sense
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- Make sure your web designer knows that you want your site to be accessible and knows about the tools and standards that can help them make it so.

Alternative formats

- Invite people to ask for them – don't make it sound like a chore. Say "please ask us for this information in alternative formats" rather than "this information is available in alternative formats upon request"
- Know which alternative formats you can supply and how long this will take. Find some suppliers and find out their costs
- Keep some funds available for alternative formats
- Don't assume 'alternative formats' always means Braille. A BSL video or an audio format is just as likely
- Think of additional benefits of alternative formats: audio brochures are accessible for visually impaired people, people with learning disabilities and people with English as a second language, but did you think about using them to reach a podcast audience?

Resources

The Worldwide Web Consortium (WC3)

WC3 publish a list of web accessibility evaluation tools on their website.

Web Accessibility Initiative (WA1)

WC3's Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) is an accessibility standard for website, allowing you to achieve an A, AA or AAA rating. For more information, visit their website.

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All information and details were updated at the time of publish September 2012. Please note that any products/ organisations included in this pack are not endorsed by Shape.

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