Publishing content in an accessible format

Making content accessible means ensuring all users can interact with and understand it without issues. Some users will find it more difficult than others due to disabilities, language barriers or temporary constraints (e.g. poor connections). Making an effort to make content accessible helps everyone, and meets our legal obligations.

Ensuring content you publish is accessible

1. Use headings

Structure your document clearly using headings and sub-headings, using the styles shown in the paragraph styles menu when formatting a page or post. Within a piece of content, use Heading 2 or below (Heading 1 will always be the page title), and aim to use headings in sequence, e.g. Heading 2, then subheadings of Heading 3 and so on. Formatting content this way allows users of screen-reading software to understand how information is organised and navigate between sections easily.

2. Specify text alternatives for images and videos

When you add an image into content via the Media Library, make sure to set a short description of the image in the 'Alt text' field. Alt text is used by screen-reading software to read out an alternative for images. This is separate from the title (displayed when a user with a mouse hovers over an image) or the caption, shown underneath the image.

Alt text should be a succinct description of what the image shows, rather than its context or meaning.

When embedding video into content, ensure that videos you publish either have captions enabled (e.g. within YouTube) or you publish an accompanying transcript of the video on the page or as a separate link.

3. Write text for links which makes sense out of context

Screen-reading software enable users to skip between links which are read out to them, so it is important the text of the link itself makes sense out of context. For instance, 'Click here for our annual report' doesn't make sense, whereas 'Download our Annual Report' is more helpful. Links which open a new browser window or trigger a file download should be marked, so users know what to expect.

4. Use plain language and break up large chunks of text

Write in clear language, using short sentences and explain any technical terms or acronyms you use. This helps users who don't speak English as a first language. It also avoids confusion for people new to a technical area.
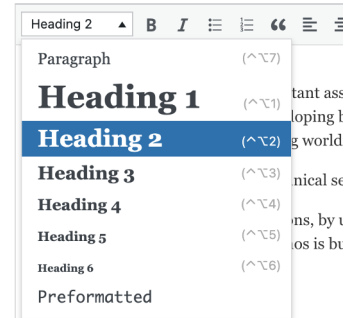
Online, people skim read and skip sections to find what they are looking for. Breaking up larger chunks into smaller ones, using headings and bullet points, helps everyone. It also helps people with learning difficulties who find reading longer sentences harder.

5. Be mindful of colour contrast

The website has been designed with enough colour contrast between standard text and backgrounds for users with visual impairments to use comfortably. Don't apply customised colours to your content and if embedding content from elsewhere (e.g. in a diagram) use online tools to check the contrast is adequate.

6. Be consistent with language and layout

People are used to certain conventions when navigating websites, which we've tried to respect with this website. For instance, links appear with a blue underline, and the search is top right. Use consistent terms to describe similar things in your content, to avoid users becoming confused.

Colour contrast analyser:
https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/

Find out more about us: https://helpfuldigital.com