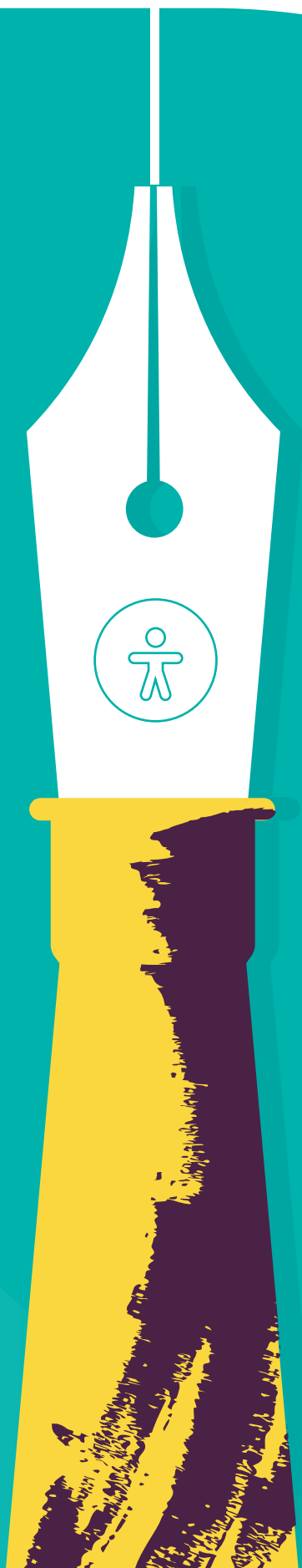


10 simple steps for writing accessible content

Your practical guide



Your quick introduction

What is it?

Content designed to be easy for as many people as possible to find, understand and use.

Who it affects

Everyone, including people with disabilities and people with different ways of accessing information.

Why it matters

Accessible content removes barriers, supports inclusion and helps more people access information independently.



Make your words work for more people, because good content should be easy to find, understand and use.

Whether you are writing for a website page, social media post, email, blog, report or online guide, a few considered choices can make your content more accessible.

You do not need to be an accessibility expert to get started.

This guide shares **10 simple steps** to help you create content that is **clearer, easier to navigate and more inclusive.**



1. Keep your language simple

Plain language helps more people understand your message.

Avoid unnecessarily complicated words, long sentences and technical terminology when a simpler option will do.

This supports people with cognitive or learning disabilities, people with dyslexia, and those who are reading in a language that is not their first.

Clear and concise content also makes information easier for everyone to understand.

Try this:

Instead of: “Individuals are required to utilise the registration portal in order to submit their application.”

Use: “Use the registration portal to apply.”

Ask yourself: “Could I say this more simply?”

Think about it: Clear does not mean childish or leaving out important details. It means making your message as easy to understand as possible.

2. Break your content into smaller sections

A large block of text can be difficult to read and navigate.

Formatting text can make content easier to read and help people find information quickly.

- Use lists when you are presenting a series of items.
- Use bold text carefully to highlight important information.
- Use headings to introduce new sections.

Try this:

Instead of one long paragraph, break your information into:

- **“What is happening?”**
A short explanation of the situation.
- **“What do I need to do?”**
A clear explanation of the next step.
- **“When do I need to do it?”**
The relevant date or deadline.

Breaking down content can reduce the effort needed to understand information. Simple changes can help readers be more confident when filling out instructions.

For example

Instead of:

"There are three things you need to bring: your passport, your ticket and your confirmation email."

Use:

"Bring these three things:

- Passport
- Ticket
- Confirmation email"



3. Use headings in a meaningful order

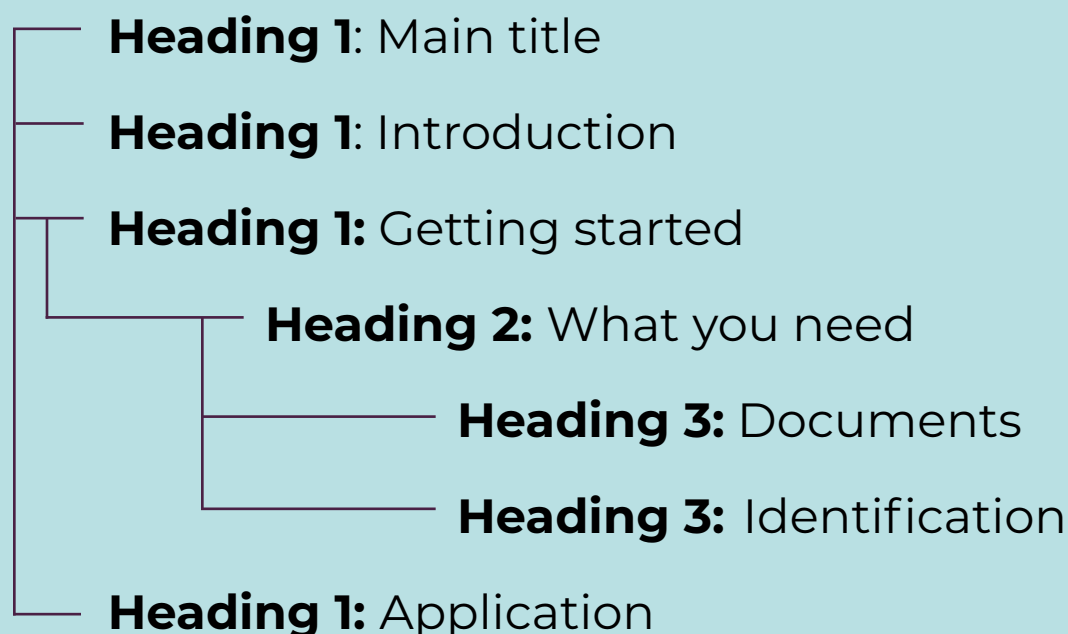
Headings are not just a way to make text look bigger or bolder.

They create the structure of your content and allow people to search content to find the information they need.

This is how screen reader users navigate from section to section.

Think of headings like the chapters and sections of a book. A clear hierarchy makes it easier for people to understand where they are and where to find the information they need.

A simple structure could look like this:



Avoid using a heading level simply because it looks the right size.

The visual appearance of a heading can be changed.

Its structural meaning should always be logical.



Remember:

A heading should describe the information that comes next.



4. Make your links meaningful

A link should tell people where it will take them.

Avoid vague link text such as:

- Click here
- Read more
- Find out more

These links can become confusing when someone navigates through links without reading the surrounding paragraph.

Instead, make the purpose of the link clear.

Try this:

Instead of:

“Click here to read our accessibility guide.”

Use:

“Our accessibility guide.” or

“Download the accessibility guide.”



5. Provide meaningful alternative text for images

Images can communicate important information.

If an image contains information that someone needs to understand, provide alternative text that communicates that information.

Good alternative text focuses on the image's purpose or meaning rather than simply listing everything visible in it.

For example

Imagine you are reading an article about guide dogs and there is an image showing a person with their dog walking through a town centre.

Less useful: A person with a dog.

More useful: A person and their guide dog are navigating through a town centre. They look happy and relaxed whilst other shoppers are walking past.

The second description tells the reader why the image matters in context.

Remember: not every image needs a description.

A purely decorative image that does not add information needs no alt text.

Ask Yourself

If someone could not see this image, would they miss important information?

If yes, provide that information in alternative text.



6. Do not put essential information in images only

Infographics, charts and tables are engaging, but important information should not be confined to an image.

Someone maybe unable to see the image because it has failed to load or have difficulty reading text embedded in graphics.

They may simply need to access the information in another format. For example, some screen readers struggle with reading tables in the correct order making the experience confusing for users.

Try this

Instead of: Using a image to explain key information, such as chart or event details.

Use: Supporting paragraphs, or an image caption, to display the key information listed.



A simple rule: If the information matters, write it out. Images support your message, they should not be the only way to access it.

7. Use inclusive language

The words we use matter.

Language can help people feel included, respected and represented. It can also unintentionally reinforce stereotypes or make assumptions about people.

Avoid outdated or collective terms that define people by a disability or characteristic.

For Example

Instead of: "The disabled..."

Use: "Disabled people..." or "People with disabilities..."

* Our [Anti-ableism dictionary](#) provides more guidance

Preferred language varies between individuals and communities, depending on whether they choose to use person-first language or focus more on the principles of the **Social Model of Disability**.

This tells us that people are disabled by the barriers society puts in their way, rather than by a condition.

When possible, listen to how people describe themselves and respect their preferences.

Avoid unnecessary assumptions

Be mindful of language that assumes someone's gender, identity, relationships or experiences

Try this

Instead of: "Dear Sir or Madam."

Use: "Hello" or "Good Afternoon."

Small changes can make language more inclusive without making it more complicated.

Write about people with respect, avoid unnecessary assumptions and let people define themselves whenever possible.



8. Make instructions easy to follow

Instructions should tell people exactly what they need to do.

Avoid unnecessary technical language and make requirements clear.

This is particularly important for forms, applications, registration processes and other situations where someone needs to complete a task.

For example:

Instead of: "Please ensure that all relevant documentation is uploaded prior to proceeding with the submission process."

Use: "Upload your documents before submitting the form."

Even better:

"Upload these documents:

- Proof of address
- Photo ID
- Application form"

Good instructions answer:

- What do I need to do?
- What do I need?
- What happens next?

9. Avoid idioms, acronyms and jargon

Whilst metaphors and idioms add flair, the meanings may be lost on people who have a second language or need to communicate more directly.

Acronyms and jargon should be explained the first time you use them. It is best not to assume knowledge on the reader's behalf.

Especially, as many acronyms have multiple meanings.

Try this:

Instead of:

"The software package cost an arm and a leg."

Use:

"The software package was expensive."



10. Read it as someone else would

You wrote it. You know what you mean.

That does not always mean your reader will understand it in the same way.

Before publishing, take a moment to review your content from the reader's perspective.

Ask yourself:

- Is the main message clear?
- Can I quickly find the information I need?
- Have I explained unfamiliar terms?
- Could someone understand this without specialist knowledge?
- Is important information available as text?
- Are the instructions easy to follow?

Last but not least, where possible, ask people with different access needs to review your work.

Tools and automated checks can help identify some accessibility issues, but they cannot tell you everything about how real people experience your content.

Your quick accessibility check

Before you press “Publish”, run through this quick checklist:

My language is clear and easy to understand.

☐

I have used short paragraphs and meaningful headings.

☐

My headings follow a logical structure.

☐

My links clearly describe where they go.

☐

Meaningful images have useful alternative text.

☐

Important information is not available in an image only.

☐

I have explained any acronyms.

☐

I have used appropriate inclusive language.

☐

My instructions are clear and easy to follow.

☐

I have considered how different people may experience this content.

☐

One final question

Can someone access, understand and act on this information without unnecessary barriers?

If **yes**, you are already moving in the right direction.

Accessibility is not about removing barriers wherever we can, nor just making content perfect.

Small changes to the way we write can make a big difference to how people find, understand and use information.



Want to make your content more accessible?



Creating accessible content is one part of creating a more inclusive digital experience.

At Passion4Social, we help organisations understand accessibility and turn good intentions into practical action through accessibility checks, user testing, training and guidance.



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