Accessible Google Docs: Guidelines

Guidance from UKAAF

UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF)

Because format quality matters

Why format quality matters

"When organisations send me information in formats that I can read myself it allows me to be independent, feel informed and appreciated - just like every other customer."
End-user

"Producing consistently high quality accessible formats helps us to maintain our reputation, to gain new customers and to retain existing ones."
Transcription agency

"We are committed to ensuring that our customers with print disabilities receive the same information, of the same quality, as everyone else."
Service provider

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance from the UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is primarily aimed at anyone that creates documents using Google Docs to ensure they are made accessible for candidates with print impairments. This document is guidance, for experienced desktop publishers: it is not a detailed training manual.

Disclaimer

This guidance may include references to external websites, services or products for which UKAAF accepts no responsibility. This information is given without any representation or endorsement of those websites, services or products.

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1 Introduction

By obtaining these guidelines you are demonstrating your commitment to helping people with a print disability to read your materials if they find reading standard print materials difficult or impossible.

UKAAF guidance concentrates specifically on materials suitable for blind and partially sighted people - such as large print, audio, braille and electronic file formats. However, this guidance is intended to support the provision of material for individuals with other print disabilities, such as dyslexia.

The provision of accessible information is a key requirement of the Equality Act which service providers must follow, but good customer service and business practice includes communicating with your customers and staff in ways which meet their reading needs. By providing accessible format materials, you not only demonstrate your commitment to equality and inclusion, but also increase your reach and customer base. It therefore makes good business sense.

This guidance will help you and your organisation to incorporate good practice into your business and provide good quality accessible format materials in a timely and appropriate way.

2 About UKAAF

The UK Association for Accessible Formats (UKAAF) is the industry association whose mission is to set standards for accessible formats that meet end-user needs through:

- development, delivery and promotion of codes, standards, and best practice for the production and provision of accessible formats

- consultation and collaboration with transcribers, service providers and users of accessible formats.

Members of UKAAF include organisations and individuals with an interest in the provision of quality accessible formats, such as service providers, transcribers, educators, researchers, print services, publishers, and end-users.

Through its leadership and representation, standards-setting, and by fostering a spirit of cooperation between members, UKAAF ensures that the needs and requirements of end-users are understood by service providers and transcribers to help improve the quality of accessible formats.

Please see the section on "Where to get further help" (Page 33) at the end of this document for more information about the benefits of being a member of UKAAF.

3   Definition of print disability

A print-disabled person is anyone for whom a visual, cognitive, or physical disability hinders the ability to read print. This includes all visual impairments, dyslexia, and any physical disabilities that prevent the handling of a physical copy of a print publication. Source: Copyright Licensing Agency Print Disability Licensing Scheme, Guidelines for Licensees 2010.

4   General information

Google Drive Documents (Google Docs) is the widely used word processing application through Google's G Suite (Google G Suite Link). Google Docs is missing some key accessibility functions, but the methods in this tutorial will increase the accessibility of documents produced through Google Docs. As the program can be used in a collaborative basis, the importance of making it

accessible is necessary for users editing documents as well as those with print impairments.

5   Document Accessibility Guidelines

5.1 Include alt text

Include alternative text for images, drawings, and other graphics. Otherwise, screen reader users just hear "image." Some images automatically include alt text, so it's a good idea to verify that this automatic alt text is what you want.

5.1.1   Add or edit alt text

1   Select an image, drawing, or graphic.

2   Right click ❯ Alt text.

3   Enter a title and description.

4   Click Ok.

5.2 Use tables for data

Use tables for presenting data, not for changing the visual layout of the page. In the table, include a heading row (rather than starting with data in the first row) because screen readers automatically read the first row as a heading row.

5.3 Use comments and suggestions

Use the commenting and suggesting features instead of writing notes within the text of your document or presentation. Screen reader users can jump to comments using keyboard shortcuts rather than hunting through your file. The file owner can also receive email notifications or review comment threads.

5.3.1   To use Comments:

1   Highlight the text, images, cells, or slides you want to comment on.

2 To add a comment, in the toolbar, click Add comment .

3 Type your comment.

4 Click Comment.

5.3.2 To use Suggestions:

1 In the top right of your document, if you don't see "Suggesting," click Editing ⟩ Suggesting. If you don't see this option, ask the file owner to let you suggest changes.

2 Edit the document.

3 You'll see your change in a new colour. Anything you delete will be crossed out.

4 To add more detail, click your suggestion and type a comment. Then click Reply.

5 The owner of the file will get an email about your suggestions and can decide whether to keep them.

5.4 Check for high colour contrast

High colour contrast makes text and images easier to read and comprehend. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 recommend a minimum ratio of 4.5:1 for large text and 7:1 for other text and images. For example, avoid light grey text on a white background.

To check contrast, use the WebAIM contrast checker.

5.5 Use informative link text

Screen readers can scan for links, so informative link text is helpful. It's best to use the title of the page as the linked text. For example, if you're linking to your profile page, the link text should say "my profile," not "click here" or the full URL.

5.6 Check text size and alignment

To make your document easy to read, use large, left-aligned text when possible. Justified text is more difficult to read because of extra space between the words. To change the alignment, press Ctrl + Shift + L (Windows or Chrome OS) or ⌘ + Shift + L (Mac).

5.7 Use text to support formatting

It's best not to rely on visual formatting alone to communicate meaning. Screen readers might not announce formatting changes, such as boldface or highlighting.

For example, to mark an important section of text, add the word "Important."

5.8 Use numbered and bulleted lists

Google Docs automatically detects and format some lists for accessibility. For example, if you start a new line in your document by typing the number 1 followed by a period, the new line automatically becomes the first item in a numbered list.

5.8.1 To make a list:

1 Click on the page where you want to add a list.

2 In the toolbar, choose a list type. If you don't see the option, click More .

- Numbered list
- Bulleted list

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5.9 Use headings to organise your document

Headings divide your document into sections, making it easier for people to jump to a section (especially if they're using keyboard shortcuts). You can use the default heading styles or create your own.

5.9.1 To create a heading:

1   Select the text you want to change.

2   Click Format ＞ Paragraph styles.

3   Click Heading 1-6.

4   Click Apply 'text style.'

5.10 Include navigation landmarks in your document

Landmarks like headers, footers, page numbers, and page counts help your readers find where they are in your document. To maximize accessibility, especially in long documents, include one or more of these landmarks (available in the Insert menu).

5.10.1 Create Headers or Footers:

1   In the top left, click Insert ＞ Header & page number.

2   Choose Header or Footer.

3   Enter text into the header or footer.

- To make the first page header or footer different from the other pages, check Different first page header/footer. You can't add different headers or footers to every page.

5.10.2 Create Page Numbers

1   In the top left, click Insert ＞ Header & page number.

2   Then choose:

- Page number: Choose where you want the page numbers to go, and whether you want the first page to be skipped.

- Page count: The page count will be added wherever your cursor is placed in the document.

3 The page numbers or page count will be added automatically.

5.10.3 Create Footnotes

1 Click where you want to insert a footnote.

2 In the top left, click Insert ⟩ Footnote.

3 Type your footnote.

6 Further resources

As well as the guidance referenced in earlier sections more general information on creating accessible Google Docs are listed here.

- Grackle Docs – Grackle Docs is commercial software that will automatically check any Google Doc and assist in its remediation to gain accessibility

7 Where to get further help

UKAAF assists businesses and organisations by advising how to meet the needs of customers and clients with print disabilities; providing guidance on how to source and provide quality accessible formats like large print, audio, braille, electronic file formats and Easy Read; and helping you to understand your responsibilities as a service provider.

Through our website and magazine, members will also gain access to:

- findings from public consultations and end-user research

- research and innovation in accessible formats

- information on suppliers of transcription services

- guidance and advice on standards for accessible formats

- opportunities to review and help to develop standards and guidance.

In addition to supporting service providers and transcribers, UKAAF also represents people with print disabilities. We believe that because format quality matters, end-users should have genuine input into the development of standards for accessible information. By collecting and sharing users' views with service providers and transcribers we can help them to deliver a quality service which meets users' needs.

There are many benefits of being a member of UKAAF, not least to demonstrate your commitment to quality accessible formats. For more information visit us at www.ukaaf.org.

8 Your feedback is welcome

We would welcome your views on this guidance, any suggestions for additions, or case studies of how this guidance has helped you. You might like to share your experience in an article in our magazine 'Format Matters'.

You can phone, email or write to us - our details are at the back, or use the feedback form on our website www.ukaaf.org.

If you find UKAAF's guidance valuable, please encourage others to join by visiting our website.

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