# Creating accessible handouts and documents

This resource explains how to create accessible handouts and documents for use in teaching sessions and sharing electronically, so benefiting all students, not just those with identified needs.

## Making text accessible

* Ensure that a sans serif font is used (eg Arial, Calibri or Verdana) with a print size of at least 12 to 14 points, 1.5 spacing and aligned to the left. Note some font sizes appear bigger than others.
* Rather than using italics and underlining, which can be difficult to read, use bold text to emphasise words.
* Use flexible formats so that students can adjust the layout, size and font of electronic documents. These include Microsoft Word, Open Document Text (ODT), accessible PDFs and HTML.
* To create an accessible PDF in Microsoft Office, use the ‘Save as’ option rather than ‘Print to PDF’. Go to Save As>Options to check that the ‘document structure tags’ and ‘create bookmarks using headings’ boxes are ticked. (for further information, see our guide to [creating accessible PDFs](https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-teaching#collapse2358291)).
* When linking to other resources, avoid using the phrase ‘Click here’. Instead, give hyperlinks descriptive text such as ‘Find resources by [searching the University’s Library listings](http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/search?vid=SOLO&lang=en_US&sortby=rank)’. This allows students using assistive technology such as screen readers to follow the link.
* Use a strong contrast between text and background, for example, dark text on a [pastel coloured or cream background](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/add-change-or-delete-the-background-color-in-word-db481e61-7af6-4063-bbcd-b276054a5515) (not white). Avoid contrasting red and green as these colours can be difficult for those with colour blindness to differentiate.
* Ensure that colours are not the only means of conveying information: use headings to help students distinguish between content.

## Sharing handouts in advance of teaching

Make documents available online **24 hours in advance** of teaching. This allows time for students using assistive technologies to access materials and will give all students time to prepare. Sharing documents in advance, including glossaries of new terms or acronyms, is especially helpful for those with disabilities (eg dyslexia) and those whose first language isn’t English.

## Structuring documents

Give documents an explicit structure using formatting (headings, bullet points and numbered steps) instead of using dashes or the space tab to indicate structure.

Rather than indicating headings solely through font style or size, use the Quick [Styles tool](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Video-Using-Styles-in-Word-9db4c0f4-2754-4294-9758-c14a0abd8cfa) in Word (Heading 1, Heading 2, and so on) which can be recognised by a screen reader and used to navigate a document. This also means that content is visible in [Outline View](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/use-outline-view-to-manage-headings-and-arrange-text-5e4c6831-b495-4aec-a7b8-7899b0ffda04), which all students can use to navigate the words and structure of a document.

Use Word to add headers and footers that contain key information (eg author, name of course and session, version, date).

Number pages if the document is longer than a single page.

## Making images accessible

Using charts, graphs and illustrations can be a useful means to convey information. Using the [Alternative text](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/add-alternative-text-to-a-shape-picture-chart-smartart-graphic-or-other-object-44989b2a-903c-4d9a-b742-6a75b451c669) feature to add a description to images ensures this information is available to all students, including those using assistive technologies such as screen readers. This function is available in Word, PDF and HTML files. Read our [Creating Accessible PowerPoints](https://ctl.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-teaching#collapse1852431) resource for more guidance on describing images in alternative text.

## Displaying data

When displaying data, try to avoid using tables simply for formatting purposes. If you do need to display data in a tabular format, use the table function rather than formatting using the space bar. This will allow assistive technology to recognise the format. If you decide to use a table to display data, use column headings to indicate information needed to read cells. Read our [Creating Accessible PowerPoints](https://ctl.ox.ac.uk/accessibility-teaching#collapse1852431) resource for more guidance on using tabular content.