

Guide to making information Easy Read

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1. Why make information Easy Read?

Easy Read is a way of making information easier to understand for people with a learning disability and can also help people with low literacy levels or dementia.

The Easy Read method uses images and simple text to convey information in a way which removes barriers to understanding. Making information accessible is a duty under the Equality Act 2010. Web pages and documents such as leaflets, posters, and agenda can be produced in easy read format. Alternatives are video or animation.

2. Experts by Experience

Experts by Experience, people with a learning disability, can provide feedback on your easy read information. Contact the Equalities Team on 01992 555131 or equalities@hertfordshire.gov.uk for further information.

3. Creating your document

This guide explains how you can produce your document in easy read to meet Accessibility and Easy Read standards.

You can also use an external provider to make your document easy to read for a fee. It is recommended to obtain more than one quote. You can ask for examples of work. You will need to send your document and ask for an estimate of the cost and time to create an easy read version. For contact details of easy read providers and a quote request template email equalities@hertfordshire.gov.uk

4. Layout

The Easy Read format has a picture on the left matching the text on the right of the page.

- An A4 document or A5 booklet is easiest to follow. Keep it short – maximum of 12 pages. Use page numbers.
- Use a clear font such as Ariel or Comic Sans in at least 14 point with line space 1.5 or 2. Use clear headings. Leave space around the writing.
- Dark text on a white or pale background is best. White text on a dark or coloured background is harder to read.
- Highlight important words in **bold**. Do not underline or use italics or block capitals as they are harder to read.
- Use a logical order and keep to one subject on a page. If it must run over, start the page with **More about ...** Start a new page for a new subject.
- Use whole words and sentences. Do not split words across two lines. Do not split a sentence over two pages.

5. Words

Use simple, everyday words and avoid jargon and difficult words. Be concise and give the key information in a logical order.

- Use direct language such as **we** and **you**
- Use the same word to mean the same thing throughout
- Explain a difficult word if you must include it.
- Avoid idea or concept words such as **equality** or **freedom** unless you are sure they will be understood or unless you explain the idea
- Do not use confusing phrases such as **The grass is always greener**
- Do not use abbreviations such as **e.g.** or **don't**. Use **for example** and **do not**.

6. Grammar and style

Short sentences with just one idea in a sentence are best. Use short paragraphs and break up big chunks of text.

- Use bullet points, lists, step by step instructions or photo stories. Ensure these are not too long and they make sense.
- Use figures for numbers – **8** not **eight**
- Use a full stop. If essential use a comma. Avoid hard punctuation “ * : ; ! % ”
- Use active verbs – **We will send you a letter** not **You will be sent a letter**.

7. Pictures

The Photosymbols website www.photosymbols.com has a large bank of up to date information pictures as well as templates for easy read format documents. To obtain a Photosymbols licence contact equalities@hertfordshire.gov.uk

Use images which help people to understand the text. Each picture should match the text next to it.

- Put the picture on the left of the page with the related writing on the left
- Be consistent. Use the same picture to mean the same thing each time
- Use colour photos with a clear uncluttered background
- Use a single image. Do not piece together multiple images. If images must be put together then save as a new image (to avoid confusing the screen reader)
- Online documents will require Alt Text for each image
- Do not use cartoon style childish images
- Use pictures of recognisable places. Explain how to find a place in words as well as pictures. Avoid maps and charts as they are difficult to understand.

8. Online easy read information

Most documents are now also available online. Local government online documents must comply with [Accessibility Standards](#). Use the Easy Read Template or follow these steps to meet accessibility standards:

- The header field is not read by screen readers, leave blank, put title in main field
- Mark the HCC logo as decorative to avoid confusing screen readers
- Use a simple table with two columns, first for the image, second for text
- Give an Alt Text description for each image
- Have a table header row defined in row tab found in table properties
- Header row title column1 **Picture** and column 2 **Information**.
- The header row check box is ticked in the table style options
- Title and description set in Alt Text tab in table properties
- Table margins of 0.19cm found in table properties under options
- Table borders set to no border after the document is completed so the lines are not visible when it is published
- Check accessibility in a Word document (using File – Info – Check for issues - Check accessibility) and make accessible before saving as a PDF
- Contact the Web Team for training and guidance

9. Checklist

Clear font such as Ariel or Comic Sans	
Font size 16 – 20, minimum size 14	
Dark font black or dark blue	
Important words in bold (or strong online)	
Pale or white paper	
Single sided if printing	
Line space 1.5 or 2 times	
Clear space between paragraphs and letters well spread	
Short document maximum 12 pages	
Booklet format	
Number pages	
Picture on left and words on right	
Pictures as large as possible with relevant text on the right	
Times in 12-hour format using Photosymbols of a clock	
Photographs of places rather than maps	
Simple every-day words, not jargon, explain any difficult words	
Numerals (8 not eight)	
Short clear sentences	
Active not passive verbs ('We will send you a letter' not 'You will be sent a letter')	
Limit punctuation to full stops if possible	
No abbreviations	
Bullet points for examples and instructions	
Accessibility standards met for online documents	