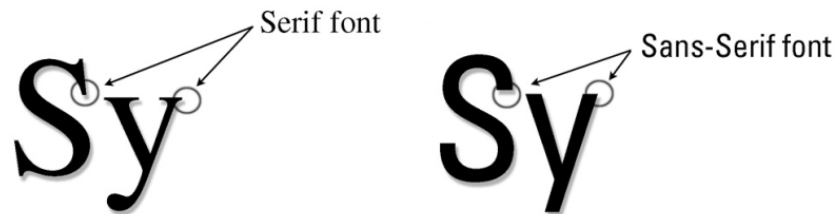


The way we choose to present or lay out information is key to creating accessible content. We have to be intentional when choosing layout elements such as [font](#), [alignment](#), [spacing](#) and [lists](#).

Some layout and formatting choices still used today are based on old habits and practices that are not accessible. We need to move past these dated practices that continue to be systemic barriers to accessibility.

## Font Type and Size

**Font type:** Certain types of fonts are more accessible to readers. These are called **sans-serif fonts**, which have even letter thickness and do not have decorative endings (known as serifs) on each letter.



**Font size:** When it comes to font size, bigger is always better. Larger fonts have higher resolution, reduce the need for users to zoom in or enlarge text, and are all around easier to read.

**Did you know?** Text larger than size 18 (or size 14 with bold) can meet accessibility requirements with lower contrast ratios.

## Alignment and Spacing

**Alignment:** Text should always be aligned to the left margin to keep even spacing between words. Justify aligns text to both the left and right margins and

creates uneven spacing between words. The extra space between words is much harder for some people to read because it can create “rivers of white” that flow down a page and distract from the actual text (see example below).

Justify aligns text to both the left and right margins and creates uneven spacing between words. The extra space between words is much harder for some people to read because it can create “rivers of white” that flow down a page and distract from the actual text.

**Spacing:** The spacing between lines of text is just as important as the alignment and spacing between words. Some people have trouble tracking lines of text if they are too close together (see example below).

Some people have trouble tracking lines of text if they are too close together. Line spacing at 25 to 30% of the point size allows users to move down or track to the next line of text more easily.

Line spacing at 25 to 30% of the point size allows users to move down or track to the next line of text more easily. However, the default line spacing is set to less than 25% in word processor software like Microsoft Word and Google Docs.

The built-in paragraph or line spacing tools in these programs allow you to create both visual and non-visual space. Using the space bar, ‘Tab’ or ‘Enter’ key repeatedly only creates visual space, which is not accessible to people who use screen readers. Every extra line or ‘enter’ will be read as the word “blank” with screen reader software.

**Did you know?** You only need one space after a period, question mark or exclamation point. The use of two spaces to begin a new sentence is a dated practice that adds unnecessary spacing to a document.

## Lists

Using nugget or number lists are an effective way of presenting information so it is easier to process and understand. We are more likely to read content presented in lists than in long paragraphs that we see as “walls of text”. Lists help to break up text into smaller parts or chunks of information. Chunking is the preferred way of reading and scanning information, especially for reading online.

The practice of writing long paragraphs (often learned for essay writing) is not recommended for creating accessible content. Instead, use lists to present key concepts, ideas, steps or procedures. Short paragraphs can also be used (just avoid long paragraphs).

To create accessible lists:

- Use the built-in nugget or number lists available in different programs or website builders;
- Use the standard nuggets that come up automatically (custom nuggets may not be accessible to screen reader software);
- Add appropriate spacing between list items (just like between lines of text); and
- Try to split longer lists into separate smaller lists with headings if possible (a long list that takes up a whole page may still look like a “wall of text”).

## Do (Best Practices)...

- Use a consistent sans-serif font with clear upper and lower case letters (e.g. Arial, Gill Sans, Verdana).
- Keep text above a 12-point font size and use larger font sizes for headings.
- Use **bold** to emphasize text.
- Align text to the left margin to keep even spacing between words.
- Ensure appropriate spacing between lines of text (25-30% of the point size).
- Use built-in paragraph or line spacing tools to create both visual and non-visual space.
- Start a new sentence with only one space.
- Use nugget or number lists (and short paragraphs) to chunk information.

## Don't (Dated Practices)...

- **Don't** use serif fonts like Times New Roman or different fonts throughout a document or web page.
- **Don't** use font sizes below 11.
- **Don't** use all capital letters, italics or underline (hyperlinks excluded) for emphasis.
- **Don't** justify text alignment as it causes uneven spacing between words.
- **Don't** use single-spacing between lines of text or default line spacing settings.
- **Don't** use the 'space' bar or 'enter' key repeatedly to create visual space.
- **Don't** use two spaces to begin a new sentence.
- **Don't** have long paragraphs or "walls of text" in a document or web page