# Usability Checklist

Remember your design decisions determine how usable and accessible the documents are. This checklist will ensure it is usable and accessible by anyone. Whilst not a complete list, it is extremely useful when creating EPUBs.

## Start accessible

* Create and use an accessible template. (This includes specifying the document language.)
* Use Checking for accessibility in Microsoft Word,

## Write in an accessible style

* Write text that is clear and direct. Aim for a maximum reading age of 12 yrs
* Supplement text with graphics when this would help explain ideas, processes or concepts
* Avoid using idioms, jargon or unusual words. If you cannot, explain or define these terms
* Avoid using abbreviations. If you cannot, provide access to the expanded form
* Do not write instructions that rely only on sensory characteristics such as shape, size, location, orientation, colour or sound
* Provide a pronunciation of words when the meaning would otherwise be ambiguous

## Structure content

* Chunk and organise your content with headings
* Show the structure of your content by using the relevant heading tag (h1-h4)
* Write headings that describe the topic or purpose of the content they label

## Typography

* Use standard Sans serif fonts (e.g., Arial, Calibri Verdana) with clear spacing and easily recognised upper and lower case characters.
* Choose fonts with a tall lowercase ‘x’ height to improve readability.
* Ensure large text (over 18 point or 14 point bold) has a contrast ratio of at least 3:1.
* Include text as text unless a graphic is required for the visual presentation.
* Use font sizes between 12 and 18 points for body text. If the document is designed to be read on screen, make 14 point your normal paragraph size.
* Use fonts of normal weight, rather than bold or light weight fonts. If you do choose to use bold fonts for emphasis, use them sparingly.
* Avoid large amounts of text set all in caps, italic or underlined.
* Use normal or expanded character spacing, rather than condensed spacing.
* Use a line spacing of a minimum of 1.2 preferably 1.3 – 1.5
* Avoid animated or scrolling text.

## Tables

* Use tables sparingly. Only use tables for tabular data and not for layout. Don’t use blank cells for formatting.
* Ensure data tables maintain a regular structure and include a header row.
* Add a bookmark in the header row. Ensure it has an appropriate and unique name.
* Add captions and summaries to data tables where appropriate.

Enhance meaning by multiple modalities

* Use icons consistently
* Use accessible rich media (images, charts, audio, video)
* Provide appropriate text alternatives for any non-text content such as graphics.
* Ensure text and images of text have a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1.
* Avoid “floating” elements. All images and other objects are positioned inline with text.
* Avoid the use of repeated ‘blank’ characters.
* Do not rely on shape, size, or visual location, sound or colour for instructions.
* Do not rely on colour alone to convey information or distinguish visual elements.
* Ensure labels for form and interactive controls are informative and avoid duplication.
* Closed captions are included for inserted audio and video

## Support navigation

* Write page titles that clearly describe the topic or purpose of the page
* Ensure links can be readily distinguished from the surrounding text.
* Ensure the purpose of each link can be understood from the link text.
* Avoid using the same text for links that go to different locations.
* Provide bookmarks for long documents.

# Accessibility Descriptions /Alt Text

## What is alternative text?

It is a short text alternative that explains the content and / or function of non-text content (photos, buttons, graphs) in most digital documents. Alternative text can be presented in two ways:

* Within the alternative text field related to the image.  (Sometimes this field might be called alt text or accessibility description)
* Within the text information surrounding the image itself.

## What role does alternative text serve?

It is read by screen readers (such as VoiceOver, NVDA or JAWS) in place of images. This allows the content and function of the image to be accessible to anyone with a print disability.

It is displayed in place of the image in web browsers if the image file is not loaded or when the user has chosen not to view images.

## Understand the context *first*.

What you write as the alternative text really depends upon its’ context. In general, you need to think about the purpose and function of the image. Describe the most important aspect(s) of the image first and omit decorative details unless they are crucial to understanding the image. If an image acts as a link or button then where it will link to decides the alternative text. If the image is of text, the description must convey that text to the user. Finally, don’t worry about including descriptions for background or purely decorative images.

## How do I write great alternative text?

* Think about the context
* Be accurate and equivalent in presenting the *same* content and function of the image.
* Write simply
* Keep it short, like a Tweet.