

# Design for screen readers

## Top tips

1. Use Styles for headings and text – don't just increase font size and change the colour. This enables the screen reader to announce headings, particularly useful in long articles and documents with multiple sections.
2. Reduce clutter. ...
3. Don't manually format bulleted and numbered lists. ...
4. When using a numbered or bulleted list of points, put punctuation at the end of each point to help screen readers differentiate the end of one point and the start of the next. If you don't want the punctuation to be visible, change its text colour to match the background – the screen reader will still recognise it.
5. Use Alt Text on all graphics and images: brand identifier, photos, clip art, any other graphic or image so the screen reader can say what the image or graphic shows
6. Use spaces between letters in abbreviations and acronyms: a screen reader will try to pronounce "RAF" or "ERG" as a word, but it reads R A F or E R G as separate letters, which means they make sense to the listener. However, if the abbreviation or acronym is normally pronounced as a word, e.g. RAG leave it as a word in the text.
7. Strong contrast between text and background is important. The main text in any article should be high contrast black or very dark grey on white or off-white.
8. When using white text on a coloured background, make the colour bold and the contrast strong.

This	is not as readable as	this.
This	is better than	this.

9. Don't be afraid of empty space: space between paragraphs makes a document easier to read.
10. Left align text (or right align if text is read right to left). Don't justify.

### Source:

Information from ENabled Group, BAE Systems

## Other useful information

Windows has a built-in screen reader called Narrator, available via the Start Menu Search field. It doesn't have the functionality of a dedicated screen reader but it will give you a flavour of how a screen reader works.

Microsoft advice:

<https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d>

## Tips for website design (from Making Music)

### 1. Put things where people expect to find them

Unless you have a very good reason not to, put your primary navigation at the top of the page.

### 2. Use whitespace for clarity

Employ whitespace, or space in general (with whatever your background colour is) to give more room for the main elements of the website, so that they can be perceived clearly and if needed emphasised easily.

### 3. Pick effective pictures

The traditional, posed 'school photo' style is often not the best choice: since there is no focus on individuals or normal human interactions, they can feel a bit cold and intimidating.

#### The basics:

If you are using images, ensure they are:

- a reasonable size (open the image (e.g. in Windows Photo Viewer) - it should be the same or slightly larger than the space it will go in on the web page)
- Not too low resolution (not fuzzy or pixellated)
- well lit (not too dark and not over-exposed)
- well-framed (is the focus of the image clear? Have you cropped out any distracting or dull elements from the background or edges?)
- realistic (people tend to ignore low quality stock imagery, so if you do use stock photos, choose better ones (there are plenty out there) and ensure that they are 'naturalistic' rather than artificial or obviously posed)

#### Think about your audience

Beyond the basics, think about what you are trying to communicate about your group (or your concert) when you choose your images.

### 4. Design for performance

Website load speed is highly tied to success of your website. If your page takes more than 3 seconds to load, 4 out of 10 of visitors will abandon it without waiting to see any content.

Be wary of using too many large images on each page. Large images usually mean large file sizes, which means more time needed to load the page. If the image is very large (above c1MB file size) it's sensible to use an image programme to 'resize for web' (i.e. reduce the resolution or image dimensions) so that it's no bigger than the slot it is filling on the page.

*Good performance is tied to good design.*

## 5. Make it work on mobile devices

In the past, most people didn't worry about what their site looked like on a mobile phone simply because so few people were using mobile devices to access them. But things have changed.

According to Jim Edwards of Business Insider: "The number of people using mobile devices outstripped people on desktop computers in 2014."

The general public are increasingly expecting a mobile-friendly experience and avoiding sites that don't provide them: 67% of users are more likely to purchase a product from a mobile-friendly site than one that is designed only for desktops.

### What does that mean for your website?

When you are thinking of building a new website, build, or chose, a 'responsive' site. That is, where the visual elements and text are all automatically resized and re-organised to suit whichever size screen the user is on.

If you're not sure if a website or template is responsive, a quick way to check is to open it up on your browser, then use your mouse to drag your browser edges to resize the visible window. On a responsive site, the content should re-size and reorganize automatically as you drag, so that the content remains within the visible window and text and buttons remain big enough to read and use on any screen size. If it doesn't, and you have to scroll left or right to see some content, the website isn't responsive.

## 6. Tidy up your typography

It is crucial to pick the right fonts, colour and spacing in order to ensure that your website copy works in harmony with all the other elements.

"95% of the information on the web is written language." Information Architects Inc.

Things to note:

- **Contrast.** Make sure that your copy is significantly darker than the background or vice versa (this is especially important for users who may be visually-impaired or colour impaired).
- **Line-height.** Set line-height from 1.5 to 1.75 to ensure that lines have enough space to breathe.
- **Hierarchy.** Systemise your copy – most people now 'scan' text rather than reading it in full, so make it easier for them by using noticeable headlines, sub-headlines, bullet points and paragraph breaks.
- **Font pairing.** As a general rule you should not be using too many different fonts on your website. Two typefaces can usually do the job perfectly well. Don't prioritise 'snazziness' in design above your users' sanity!

## 7. Get people to convert

There's no point having people visit your site if they aren't doing what you need them to do – whether that's booking tickets, joining your group, sharing your news, donating, or anything else.

Some of this is down to positive measures, and some of it is down to avoiding the kind of mild irritations that can lose you a surprising proportion of potential buyers/members.

## Have strong calls to action

If you want people to do something, you've got to make it obvious, so make sure that you identify and highlight, with colour, size, placement or style, your key calls-to-action.

Major online retailers have increased their conversion rates in the past by 15-20% just by changing the colour of their buttons. Likewise, changing the text (say, from 'click here' to 'get tickets now') can have a significant effect for minimal effort.

## Make your forms friendly

Your forms are often the final point before a visitor does something you want them to (book tickets, get in touch etc.).

Things to consider:

- *Remind users why they are bothering:* Rather than labelling a form 'contact form' (they know it's a form!), remind the user what the point is - 'Get in touch to find out about joining', or 'Sign up to our newsletter to be first to hear about forthcoming concerts'
- *Make form inputs bigger:* Not only desktop users will have easier time clicking on these but mobile users won't get frustrated when clicking on that small field.
- *Make buttons bigger:* This is especially important for mobile/tablet users - trying to click small buttons using your fingers on a screen is a pain!
- *Don't use unnatural language forms:* Normal (rather than computer or overly-formal) language .
- *Use fewer form fields:* Get rid of unnecessary fields and consider autosuggestions to improve the overall user experience.

## Add credibility

Social proof is a very effective persuasion tactic as people tend to trust other people. If you've been featured on any better-known website, list these logos on your website to associate yourself with these brands.

Likewise, if you have received great reviews or feedback, make sure you include them at key points in the user's journey to help convince (e.g. a great quote about a previous concert would be useful to show near booking forms to give the user a final push into buying).

### ***Tips on copy***

Your copy and messaging are important to get right. Tone, language, length and layout can have a big effect on whether and how users respond to your information.

## 8. Refine your messaging

Your website is an extension of *you*, so don't get stuck in the trap of only talking about how good your group is.

You may find it's worth explicitly addressing, for example, potential members' fears of not being good enough, or concert-goers fears of not knowing 'how to behave at a concert'.

## 9. Try the 'golden circle'

Extending your messaging, try to sell people what they *want and desire*. Consider using [Simon Sinek's 'golden circle' concept](#).

Why = the purpose. What is your cause? *E.g.: we believe in ensuring that everybody in our can experience classical music*

How = the process. Specific actions to realise the 'why'. *E.g.: our concerts are affordable, accessible and enjoyable*

What = the result. What do you do? The result of 'why'. Proof. *E.g.: we put on six sell-out concerts each year, attended by people of all ages and interests from the area*

Fundamentally, the central theme should be *benefits, not features*.

## 10. Write copy, not essays!

When we read on the web, we tend to do so in a non-linear fashion – we skip about looking for key words and headings and we have very short attention spans. Try the following to address this:

### Keep it short

A first step to more effective copy is to shorten it. One study found that just cutting the length of copy in half increased scores for the recall, accuracy and speed of use for users by 58%. Get to the point early, avoid long words where shorter ones will do, and avoid long paragraphs and sentences.

### Use headings to break up text into identifiable chunks.

We tend to scan web pages in an F shape. That is, paying more attention to the top and left than the bottom and right, but we also skip chunks of text on the way down. If you break up long pages into short sub-sections with descriptive headings your users will find it easier to get to and retain the information.

### Use bullet points and text formatting like 'bolding' to simplify information.

Again, it's much easier to take in and retain information in bullet point form than in sentences or long copy. Added to that, users are familiar with bullets, so they will spend longer taking these in than they would allow for an unformatted sentence.

### Extracted from:

<https://www.makingmusic.org.uk/resource/tips-designing-website-your-group-part-2-design-and-copy>