




Accessible digital communications

A BT Group guide for internal
communicators



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BT Group



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1 Introduction

This guide outlines the minimum standard of digital accessibility we need all BT Group's internal communications to meet. It applies to emails, newsletters, documents, presentations, and visual content - especially images, audio, and video content.

1.1 Why create accessible digital communications?

We aim to make communications accessible to everyone. We risk excluding colleagues if we don't meet a minimum level of accessibility. Making sure our communications are inclusive and accessible is core to our BT Group manifesto, and our purpose: we connect for good.

Colleagues might access communications using assistive technology, such as a screen readers. The more we understand the differing needs of colleagues, the more success we'll have in making our comms accessible. We recommend taking the time to learn more about the topic through your learning and development plan.

We also have a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to produce content which doesn't directly, or indirectly, disadvantage colleagues for any reason related to a disability.

1.2 Who is responsible for creating accessible communications?

Everyone involved in creating and publishing digital communications is responsible for proactively applying these guidelines, including briefing our suppliers and anyone who works closely with communications in the content creation process.

2 How to create accessible digital content

2.1 In-house style guide and templates

- Always follow the [Tone of Voice](#) guide, either BT Group's or your local brand, to get our tone of voice right, and make sure you're using accessible language.
- Always use our brand templates when creating Word, PowerPoint or PDF documents. The templates have been designed to be accessible and include guidance to help you maintain this accessibility.
- If you work with teams who use InDesign, or a bespoke content generation tool, to produce PDF documents, they'll need to create and test their accessible templates.

2.2 General guidance when writing documents

- Use the BT Font or a similar sans-serif font (for example, Arial). These fonts don't have decorative lines or tapers, and are easier for some users to read.
- Use font size 12pt in documents, and font size 16pt for PowerPoint.
- Use gender-neutral text, for example, 'they, them, their'.
- Write in plain English and use short, concise sentences.
- Use left-aligned text rather than justified text.
- Repeated use of the 'return' key to create white space isn't recommended – use section breaks and paragraph spacing instead. You'll find these options in the 'Layout' tab in Microsoft Word.
- Always use the heading styles built into Microsoft Word, rather than manual formatting, because it creates important structure used by assistive software. Use different heading levels to break up large blocks of text. Use heading styles in the correct order to make sure that the information hierarchy is clear.
- Always put a full stop at the end of bullet points and paragraphs.
- Always use 'paste special' and 'unformatted' when copying text from other sources. Or you can use Notepad to strip out formatting. You can then apply the correct accessible formatting yourself to ensure consistency with the rest of your document.
- Don't underline words, and don't use *italics* or CAPITAL LETTERS for large amounts of text. Underlining can confuse assistive software as it looks like a hyperlink. Assistive software helps colleagues overcome barriers they might experience due to an impairment or condition.
- Always follow our guidance on hyperlinks in Section 2.6 below.
- Further information is available from the [detailed accessibility guidelines](#).

2.3 General guidance when using colour

- Avoid using colour alone to convey information (for example red and green to show risk) – always check that your content still makes sense if viewed in black and white. This will help colour blind people and anyone who uses a screen reader.

- Make sure you use a strong contrast between text and background so people with low vision can better see the content. For example, dark text on a white/off-white/light background or white/light text on a dark background. You can use a colour accessibility checker, for example, [the WCAG Contrast Checker](#), to help.

2.4 General guidance when using images

- It's important to make sure all images are accessible. This applies to photographs, icons, infographics, text embedded in an image, logos and any other images you use.
- Please note that large screen grabs and scanned pages, especially those that contain text or important information, can be a significant barrier to creating accessible content. So, replicate the text content wherever possible rather than inserting a screen grab.
- The use of images should support your text but shouldn't be used instead of your text.
- Images must have Alt (alternative) Text added to help colleagues with a visual impairment understand what's important in the image or visual.
- You should mark images as decorative if they're irrelevant to the copy, as this informs the screen reader software to skip the image.
- Make sure your Alt Text describes the message the image conveys. Note: you don't need to repeat what's said in the text, and you don't need to use the word 'image' as the assistive software automatically announces this.
 - Don't use images that flash or move unnecessarily.
 - GIFs or emojis should be used on Workplace only, but exercise caution when using them. And make sure the meaning of the post is clear without relying on solely on the GIF or emoji, for example, by providing a description of the GIF in your post.

2.5 General guidance when using tables

- Use column headers to identify the nature of the information in the tables.
- Screen readers read in rows, so don't include nested tables, merged cells or split cells within tables, and make sure there are no blank rows or columns.
- If you really need to produce a more complex table, use Alt (alternative) Text to give a narrative explanation of the data you're presenting.

2.6 General guidance when using hyperlinks

- Don't use the full web address, as the assistive software will read it out in full and doesn't guide the reader to where the link takes you. Instead, select and hyperlink the relevant text.
- Write your link in a way that tells you accurately where it leads. For example, don't write "click here" or "read more"; instead, make sure the link explains where it's

going. An example of a descriptive link is: “Learn more about our accessibility guidelines”.

2.7 General guidance when using hashtags

- When using hashtags, always use [CamelCase](#) and capitalise the first letter of every Word (for example, #WhoCaresWins). It means that the words in the hashtag are read out correctly by screen readers, and are easier to read for everyone else.

2.8 General guidance when creating video content

- All videos must have accurate subtitles.
- If the channel allows, subtitles should always be closed captions (added by the system and not hard-coded), as this will give people more flexibility in how they view the captions. If possible, create a transcript and upload it to the platform or, as a minimum, check the automatic subtitles for spelling and grammatical errors.
- Open captions (hardcoded into the video) should always be proofed for accuracy, spelling and grammatical errors, and correct use of abbreviations and business terms.
- Always brief those appearing in videos to speak plain English and avoid jargon. Videos don't need to be audio described as long as they're audio-led. This means the audio must be as important as what's on screen. The video should send the same message, both audibly and visually. If it doesn't, add a description of what happens in the video, either as a follow-up comment on your post or as part of the caption.
- Accurate captioning and transcripts will provide good accessibility for our colleagues. We may consider creating BSL versions of video content in some very specific circumstances, such as mandatory training.
- There are different national and regional sign languages, so BSL may not work for everyone. If using BSL, it's important to have two versions of the content, as some neurodiverse colleagues find the BSL version very distracting.

2.9 General guidance when creating audio files

- Where possible, provide subtitles and/or a transcript.
- When the main audio is a person speaking, and you have background music, set the levels so people with hearing or cognitive disabilities can easily distinguish the speaking from the background (so the background audio is 20db quieter than a speaking voice).
- If you're recording audio in Teams, please use the noise suppression feature to help make the audio clearer.

2.10 General guidance when using PowerPoint

- Give every slide a unique title. Use the in-built slide titles to do this, rather than adding a text box for the title. This is to ensure to ensure your content will be read aloud correctly.

- Always use the built-in slide designs and check the slide contents' [reading order](#) so they can be read in the order you intended. Avoid using slide animations or transitions that flash unnecessarily. If you must use either, please keep them simple.
- Any animations or transitions must use the "on click" option rather than automated/timed, so that users can control the speed as they read the slide.

2.11 General guidance when creating a portable document format (PDF)

- Avoid using PDF documents if another format is available (for example, Word or PowerPoint). PDFs can cause issues for people with visual impairment, as screen readers and Microsoft's Accessibility Checker can't access them.
- If you really need to produce a document in PDF format, for example if you need to protect the content:
 - Check the original document is accessible before converting.
 - Test the document with a screen reader to make sure it reads aloud correctly. For Microsoft and Adobe products, there are in-built tools you can use.

2.12 General guidance when hosting a virtual Teams meeting

- In advance, always ask attendees if they need any workplace adjustments, such as:
 - Sending documents in advance.
 - Making documents available in alternative formats.
 - Providing any communication support, such as BSL signer or note-taking, and make budget available where possible.
- When organising large meetings (10+ people):
 - Turn off mics and cameras (to reduce noise and visual distractions).
 - Always enable transcription and live captioning.
- When presenting:
 - Always present in full screen – not screen share.
 - Check your slides are accessible using the above guidelines.
 - Avoid having the light behind your face when presenting so colleagues can see your face, expressions, and can lip-read when required.

2.13 Web content accessibility guidelines

In BT Group, we're required to meet level [web content accessibility guidelines \(WCAG\)](#) AA as a minimum, which should provide a good level of accessibility for our colleagues. These standards are internationally recognised in legislation and industry.

In addition to the AA standards, our BT Group guidelines also include some elements of the WCAG AA+ and AAA standards, where they're practical and affordable to implement, and don't compromise usability.

The success criteria for the higher levels are more subjective. However, in some exceptional circumstances (for example, some mandatory training), we'll consider aiming for a higher level where it's feasible, cost-effective and practical.

3 Links to relevant guidance and training

3.1 Accessibility-related training and guidance

[SCULPT accessibility guidance](#)

[Detailed accessibility guidelines](#)

[Making meetings accessible](#)

[Digital accessibility playbook](#)

3.2 Disability-related training

[Introduction to disability](#)

[Introduction to neurodiversity](#)

[Introduction to inclusive design](#)

3.3 Brand resources

[Brand library](#)

[BT image library](#)

3.4 Diversity and Inclusion resources

[D&I glossary](#)

[What not to say](#)



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