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**Clear Print
Guidelines**

Introduction:

Everybody prefers clear, distinct print but for someone with low vision it may just make the difference between being able to read independently or having to rely on others. There are many different eye conditions among people who are blind or partially sighted so what they may be able to see can vary tremendously. Obviously some people will be unable to read print, no matter how large and clear, so alternative formats will need to be considered; for example, audio tape, computer disc or braille.

It is therefore impossible to devise a standard to meet the needs of all people who present with low vision. This guide offers a few commonsense suggestions which can be of great benefit to many people with vision loss. It may allow an individual to retain a degree of independence and will also help to promote social inclusion.

Contrast:

A very important aspect of print legibility is the contrast between the typeface and the paper on which it is printed. Contrast is therefore affected by paper and print colour as well as the size and weight of the typeface used.

Black type on white or yellow paper gives a good, clear contrast. If you wish to print text on top of tints, the background colours chosen must be very pale.

The foreground colour, if not black, should always be as dark as possible. Never use a yellow typeface on white paper, it will be virtually invisible. Avoid pale colours on coloured backgrounds such as grey on blue (see example below). Do not be tempted to 'run' typeface across a photograph or illustration – this limits the contrast and confuses the eye.

This choice of colours – a grey typeface on a blue background would be extremely difficult for a person with low vision to read.

Reversal of Typeface:

White typeface against a black background is acceptable. If not black, the background colour should always be very dark and the font size must be suitable (see below). Many people with low vision prefer 'reversed out' type if the font and point size are correct.

This 'reversed out' typeface is clear and easy to read

This is not – it is too small

Font Size:

The size of font chosen can significantly improve legibility given the principle of relative size. For the majority of people, point sizes between 8, 10 or 12 are perfectly adequate. These sizes are definitely unsuitable for people with low vision.

This is Arial type in 8 point
This is Arial type in 10 point
This is Arial type in 12 point
This is Arial type in 14 point
This is Arial type in 16 point

Another important consideration is the amount of space between each line. Quite often print is produced using narrow spacing between each line of text (see example below). This again can be difficult for people with sight loss to read. A recommendation would be to use spacing as in this document; i.e. 1.5 line spacing.

This short paragraph is printed in point size 12 but with less spacing between lines than the rest of this page. This can make it very difficult for people with low vision to read.

The text in this document is printed in Arial Point Size 16 Bold.
We recommend that this is the font, size and weight used.

Type Weight:

This can be almost as important as the point size in determining legibility. Typefaces are generally available in normal or bold versions. Normal should be avoided as there is not enough contrast between print and background. **Bold is always the preferred option.**

This is an example of NORMAL font weight

This is an example of BOLD font weight

Preferred Font:

We would advise Arial typeface as being an acceptable font; incorporating good contrasting, appropriate font size, weight and the formatting of line space. Fonts to avoid are the bizarre, italic or indistinct ones. See examples below.

This is Arial font

This is Arial font (italic)

This is ITC Zapf Chancery

This is Haettenscheiler

Numbers:

If you print documents containing numerals; for example, telephone numbers, bank statements, accounts or tables it is important to ensure the numbers are as clear as possible. People with low vision can easily misread 3, 5 and 8 in some typefaces. Even 0 and 6 can create misunderstanding.

Some typefaces have much clearer numerals than others:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

These numbers in Arial are clear and distinct

**However, some fonts such as Bookmans or Coronet
are not so well defined**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

Spacing:

It is advisable to evenly space words. Do not condense or stretch lines of text; or even worse, single words. A preference will be to use unjustified right hand margins as is used in this document.

Capital Letters:

Research has shown that it is more difficult for people to read words which are All CAPS. The brain cannot process All CAPITALS as quickly as words in lower case. This is because

we learn to read words by their shape. Plain English Campaign recommend that caps are only used for their original purpose, that is, the initial letter of a word.

Paper:

Print on glossy paper can be difficult to read as it will reflect too much light. Use paper with a matt surface wherever possible. Very thin, semi transparent paper can also cause problems because text can show through from the reverse side.

Design and Layout:

This is very important as many readers can be easily daunted by a page of close-set type. Layouts should therefore be clear, straightforward and well spaced.

- **Leave space between paragraphs and don't 'cram' the page.**
- **If text is in double columns, make sure the margins between clearly separate them.**
- **Good 'navigational' aids can help. For example a contents list and clear, bold headings.**

Remember, forms often need a generous amount of space to fill in any handwritten details. People with low vision often have handwriting which is larger than average.