Preparation of Written Material/Handouts for schools, Education Institutes and Employers

Adopting best practice for dyslexic readers has the advantage of making documents easier on the eye for everyone.

Media.

- Paper should be thick enough to prevent the other side showing through.

- Use matt paper rather than glossy (same rule applies to matt laminates). Avoid digital print processing which tends to leave paper shiny.

- Black ink on white paper, computers, interactive whiteboards can lead to eyestrain. Cream can reduce 'glare' and be easier to read. Alternately, write using blue or grey Font.

- Use a plain, evenly spaced sans serif font such as Arial and Comic Sans. Other suggestions include Verdana, Tahoma, Century Gothic and Trebuchet. Helvetica and Sassoon are further options.

- Trial Opendyslexic or Dyslexie. Macquarie University research suggests that people with reading difficulties can read 7.5% faster using this font

- Font size should be 12 point minimum.

Headings and Emphasis.

- Avoid underlining and *italics*: these tend to make the text appear to run together. Use **bold** instead.

- AVOID TEXT IN BLOCK CAPITALS: this is often much harder to read.

- For Headings, use larger font size in bold, lower case.

- important information should be inside a text box.

Layout.

- Left justify helps a dyslexic person find their place more easily.

- Avoid narrow, 'centre justified' columns (as used in newspapers).

- Lines should not be too long: 60 to 70 characters and avoid starting a sentence at the end of a line

- Avoid cramping material and keep paragraphs short:

- Ensure line spacing and margins are of an adequate size (1.5 is a good line spacing default on Word).

- Use bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose. More than 4 bullets; use numbers

- Leave a line between paragraphs as opposed to indenting.

- Keep the design simple and consistent throughout

Writing Style.

- Use short, simple sentences in a direct style.

- Give instructions clearly. Be concise; avoid long sentences of explanation.

- Use active rather than passive voice. 'John congratulated Jane' as opposed to 'Jane was congratulated by John.'

- Avoid double negatives.

Increasing accessibility.

- Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures and processes

- Diagrams and graphics help to locate information.

- Lists of 'do's and 'don'ts' are more useful than continuous text to highlight aspects of good practice.

- Avoid abbreviations if possible; provide a glossary of abbreviations and jargon.

- For long documents include a contents page at the beginning and an index at end.

Checking Readability.

To set your spell checker to automatically check readability, go to Tools, Options, Spelling, and Grammar, then tick the Readability request. Word will then show your readability score every time you spell check.

- **Flesch Reading Ease score:** Rates text on a 100-point scale; the higher the score, the easier it is to understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 70 to 80.

- **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score:** Rates text on a U.S. grade-school level. For example, a score of 5.0 means that a fifth grader, i.e. a Year 6, average 10 year old, can understand the document. For most standard documents, aim for a score of approximately 5.0, by using short sentences, not by dumbing down vocabulary.

- **Hemingway app** shows you how to make the text more readable. Aim for a grade rating of 10 or less.

2. Preparing a document for text-reading software.

Reading a document using a text reader will take longer than visual reading. Put full stops after headings to make a pause; a pale tint similar to the background colour will make the dots less visually distracting.

- Put semi-colons, commas, or full stops after bullet points in order to separate each point.

- To aid navigation use internal and external hyperlinks. Number menu items.

- Include as few signs and symbols as are absolutely necessary, e.g. asterisks or dashes (both short and long), as these will be spoken.

- Long dashes should be avoided: use colons to make the voice pause.

- Use straight double quotation marks. Avoid single curly or slanting quotation marks.

- Avoid Roman Numerals and No. for number.

- Screen readers may have difficulty with tables and may not automatically move on to the next cell without manual use of the Tab key.

- Avoid text in images. Listeners cannot hear it. Repeat in the main text.

- Use hyphens in compound words to aid text reading pronunciation.

- Chunk phone numbers to avoid being read as millions or hundreds of thousands.

3. Website Design.

Research shows that readers access text at a 25% slower rate on a computer. This should be taken into account when putting information on the web. When a website is completed, check the site and information for accessibility by carrying out these simple checks.

- Navigation should be easy. A site map is helpful.

- You might want to use smaller font size to 12; ensure there is the option to enlarge the font.

- Use graphics, images, and pictures to break up text, while bearing in mind that graphics and tables may take a long time to download.

- Very large graphics make pages harder to read.

- Offer alternate download pages in a text reader friendly style.

- Where possible design web pages which can be downloaded and read off-line.

- Moving text creates problems for people with visual difficulties. It also creates a difficulty for text-reading software.

- Contents links should show which pages have been accessed.

- Encourage the use of hyperlinks at the end of sentences.

- Avoid green and red/pink as these are difficult for colour-blind individuals.

- Provide an option for users to set their own choice of font style and size, background and print colours.

REF: B.D.A. Information Sheet Dyslexia Style Guide.