

Digital document accessibility guidance

Version number: 1

Status: Published

Department/Team: Inclusion and Wellbeing Team

Relevant policies: EDI Policy

Distribution: For internal use only.

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Consultees: Director of People

Approved by: Director of People

Application date: 29 January 2025

Review date: January 2027

Security classification: Official

Key messages

The main objective of this guidance is to provide colleagues with information on:

- Why document accessibility is important
- When this guidance applies
- When to use certain applications
- What we expect from colleagues
- Where to access help.

Does this guidance relate to me?

This guidance applies to everyone at the ICO and is relevant to everything you write, whether that's a code of practice an email to a colleague, letters to stakeholders or in our policy writing.

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1. Why is document accessibility important?

- 1.1 Inclusivity: In line with our aim to be inclusive, creating documents in a format that is accessible ensures that we are considering the potential preferences and needs of our audience. People like to review information in a variety of ways and some disabled people use screen readers or other assistive technologies. Creating accessible documents means that we're more likely to meet all preferences and needs and ensure that everyone can access and interact with the content effectively. Through our [corporate values](#), [EDI objectives](#) and supporting [EDI action plan](#), we're committed to ensuring that our culture is inclusive. This means creating an environment where everyone has equal access to information.

- 1.2 Legal compliance: We have a legal obligation under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty to provide accessible documents.
- 1.3 Broader audience: By making documents accessible, you can reach a larger and more diverse audience.
- 1.4 Colleague experience: Accessible documents improve the overall colleague experience by ensuring that we're meeting the needs and preferences of everyone.

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2. When does this guidance apply?

- 2.1 This guidance applies to everyone at the ICO and is relevant to everything you write, whether that's a code of practice an email to a colleague, letters to stakeholders or in our policy writing. It's really important that we all take ownership for the way we write because accessibility is everyone's responsibility.
- 2.2 The style and accessibility rules make sure our writing and presentation is accessible for everyone and that we use a consistent style that all our readers can understand, recognise and trust.
- 2.3 So, if you are creating any document (using any application such as Outlook, Word, PowerPoint, or Excel) that is going to be shared with colleagues (internally and externally), you must ensure that it meets accessibility requirements.
- 2.4 For existing documents: We would like to ensure that all of our documents are accessible. However, we recognise that there are likely to be a large volume of documents that may

need to be updated. We would encourage all teams to discuss this with their people managers and senior leaders, and agree how best to review, prioritise and update any existing documents.

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3. Deciding which application to use

- 3.1 Before producing your document, it is important to consider the application you use. The below provides some helpful guidance to support your decision making:
- 3.2 Word: 75% text and 25% (or less) of data or visuals is best in Word. If your information is mainly made up of words, for example a simple list, then Microsoft Word may be more appropriate.
- 3.3 Excel: If your document contains upwards of 75% data you should be using Excel. Excel is appropriate for organising data containing figures and sums. It is used for a range of purposes at the ICO, from complex data to simple spreadsheets.
- 3.4 Please note that because some of the guidance within the style guide relates to complex spreadsheets, there may be terminology that you are not familiar with or elements that you are unlikely to use for simple data. If you would like to develop your knowledge and skills around Excel, visit [GCFGlobal](#) – a free learning resource.

3.5 PowerPoint: 50% text and 50% data or visuals is best suited to PowerPoint. PowerPoint is appropriate for narrated presentations with visuals of some words and lots of images.

3.6 PDFs: We know that PDFs are not considered accessible in all circumstances and we would ask that colleagues don't create PDF documents. This is because if you do not have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro, it is not possible to check the accessibility and correct defects. We do, however, recognise that there may be some limited exceptions and that some teams across the ICO do need to be able to create PDF documents in their work. These teams have access to Adobe Acrobat Pro, enabling them to complete the necessary redactions, whilst also completing all accessibility checks. If you need to create a PDF for your work, please ensure you're able to check the accessibility of the document.

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4. What we expect from colleagues

4.1 All ICO colleagues must familiarise themselves with the style and accessibility rules contained within the Style guide and completed the civil service learning module on Creating Accessible Word documents.

4.2 When creating documents, please follow the below steps:

- Reviewing the [Style guide for style and accessibility rules](#). You will be able find guidance for written communication
- Reviewing the Style guide guidance for [Powerpoint](#) and [Excel](#)

- Completing an automated check using the Microsoft accessibility checker
- Consider asking a colleague to check through your document.

4.3 Once the above steps have been completed, your document should be accessible.

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5. Where to access help

If you have completed all the required steps and still require assistance, you can contact the Inclusion and wellbeing team:

inclusionandwellbeingteam@ico.org.uk

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Feedback on this document

If you have any feedback on this document, please [click this link](#) to provide it.

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Version history

Version	Changes Made	Date	Made by
1.0	Initial release	29 January 2025	Roshini Mylvaganam

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