

Accessible Language Checklist

Make the purpose clear

Most people read only the first few words or sentences of content. Making the purpose clear not only engages users, but it makes the information more accessible.

Use active voice

Active voice is clearer, more direct and easier to translate. Using active voice whenever possible is important for accessibility.

Stay consistent

Use the same terminology throughout your copy (don't use both "doctor" and "physician"). And try not to use the same word two different ways ("tear a paper" vs. "eyes make tears").

Organize with headings

Headings outline information for easier skimming. Tagging content with standard heading styles can also help people who use screen readers and boost your SEO.

Add descriptive links

Hyperlinks should make sense out of context. The more descriptive linked text is, the easier it is for people (or screen readers) to understand what they're clicking.

Remove extra words

Words that only take up space — very, seriously, some, just, even or I think — without adding meaning make sentences longer and the message less available to users.

Chunk information

Limiting paragraphs to one main idea makes content more accessible. Bulleted or numbered lists, where appropriate, can also help.

Avoid jargon and idioms

Simplify complex healthcare terms like "hypertension" or "cardiovascular." Look out for idioms and think about different ways the audience could interpret your content.

Define complex terms

The key to making complex words accessible is to define them. Adding a glossary can help. Look at acronyms and see if it makes sense to use the full phrase.

Remember multimedia

When possible, try to use multimedia elements in addition to words. Consider audio clips, videos and images. And don't forget descriptive alt text and captions.