VisitEngland

Universal Design Toolkit
for Customer Engagement

3 Electronic & Web Based Communication

www.VisitEngland.com/businessadvice

Contents

3.1 Introduction

Four reasons to use this Toolkit:

This Toolkit will help you assess how you engage with your customers to ensure information is easy to read, use and understand for your target market.

This Toolkit will help you to better engage with your customers through electronic and web based communication systems.

This Toolkit will help you to deliver a better customer experience.

This Toolkit will help you to develop new customer communications.

> Universal Design aims to simplify life for everyone by making products, services and communications, more usable by as many people as possible.

The guidance provided is just good common sense, but sometimes it's good to get a refresher on the small things that make a customer's experience better.

There are two levels of changes that this Toolkit will deliver:

- **Incremental changes:** these are small changes that are easy to put in place, which can improve your customer's experience and make information easier to understand. This can range from the language and tone you use in emails, to the images you use on your website to explain your services.

- **Radical changes:** these are bigger changes that create tangible impacts. This can range from creating more efficient and effective ways of communicating with your customer, enabling you to target new customer segments, to improving customer engagement by responding to your customers' enquiries faster.

Having an accessible website makes good business sense.
Accessible sites are more visible to search engines, 50% faster to navigate and they can also offer savings through reduced maintenance costs.[1]

This Toolkit provides practical guidance that you can apply in your business at little or no extra cost. So here's the challenge - read the Toolkit, keep the checklists handy and start applying the learning - one step at a time.

Destination London. Making your website accessible. Available from: [http://www.abilitynet.org.uk/advice-info/web-accessibility-resources].

3.2 Writing Good Web Content

Writing for the Web

Be personal

Use 'I', 'we' and 'you' on your website.

Use active verbs

Try to put the person, group or thing doing the action at the start of the sentence as much as possible. This will help make your text more personal and clearer.

For example write "We will send you a confirmation of your booking this afternoon" instead of "A confirmation of your booking will be sent this afternoon."

Make text easy to read and understand

Always use the simplest and clearest language possible. Avoid technical language that your customer may not understand. If you must use technical language, clearly explain what it means in plain English.

Learn more	The Plain English Campaign provides plain English guidelines in their 'How to' guide, available from their website: [www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf].

Where applicable, provide important information in other languages

If a large percentage of your target market does not speak English as a first language, where applicable, provide content in other languages.

Help customers to scan text

Break text into chunks using short paragraphs, lists and sub-headings in order to help customers quickly understand and absorb information.

Write for your customers

People interact with text differently online than they do in print. Most customers are more inclined to scan text on a website. Therefore, content should be presented in a way that your customers can obtain key information quickly when they scan your website.

Steps to achieve this include:

1. Present the key conclusion or facts at the start of the text.
2. Present information in order of importance. Support the key conclusion with the most relevant information.
3. Present supporting detail or background information.
4. Provide links to background or related information if available.

Tip	Train content authors and editors in using these techniques.

Learn more	Centre of Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) provides 'structure and style to maximise readability and scanning', available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].

Keep content clear and concise

Adopt word-count targets that are appropriate for your customers and your content.

Suggested word counts are as follows:

Type of content	Word count
Heading	8 words
Sentences	15 - 20 words
Opening paragraph	30 words
Other paragraphs	60 words
Web page	600 words

Use a clear, readable font

Use a clear and easy to read font that people are familiar with and recognise easily. For example, Arial or Helvetica.

Use bold or bigger sized text to emphasise text

The general guidance in emphasising important information is to:

- Avoid using BLOCK CAPITALS
- Avoid using *italics*
- Avoid using <u>underlining</u>

Use at least 12 point

Use a minimum of 12 point size font, with a recommended size of 14 points.

Avoid unnecessary technical terms

If you must use technical words, clearly explain what they mean.

Define unfamiliar abbreviations or acronyms

Where your customer may be unfamiliar with an acronym, spell it out the first time it is used, followed by the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. For example: the Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

Try to keep unfamiliar abbreviations or acronyms to a minimum.

Avoid Latin and French expressions

There can be confusion around words such as; e.g., i.e. and etc.

Try to use the full English equivalents such as: 'for example', 'that is' and 'and so on'.

Use your full business name on each page

Spell out your business name in full on every page. This is particularly important for customers who land there from search engines.

Use a house style

Develop a house style (or adopt a third-party style guide) to ensure consistency. This can also be applied to writing and layout standards.
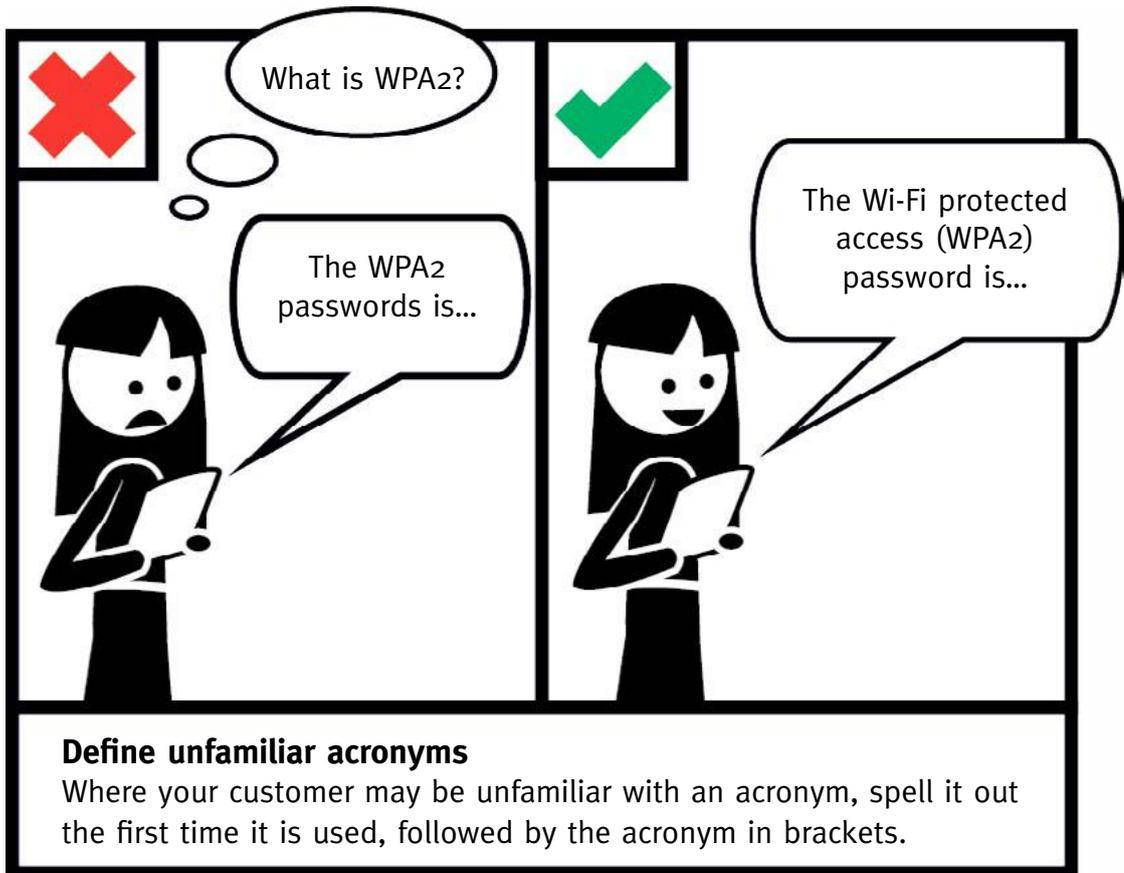
Define unfamiliar acronyms
Where your customer may be unfamiliar with an acronym, spell it out the first time it is used, followed by the acronym in brackets.
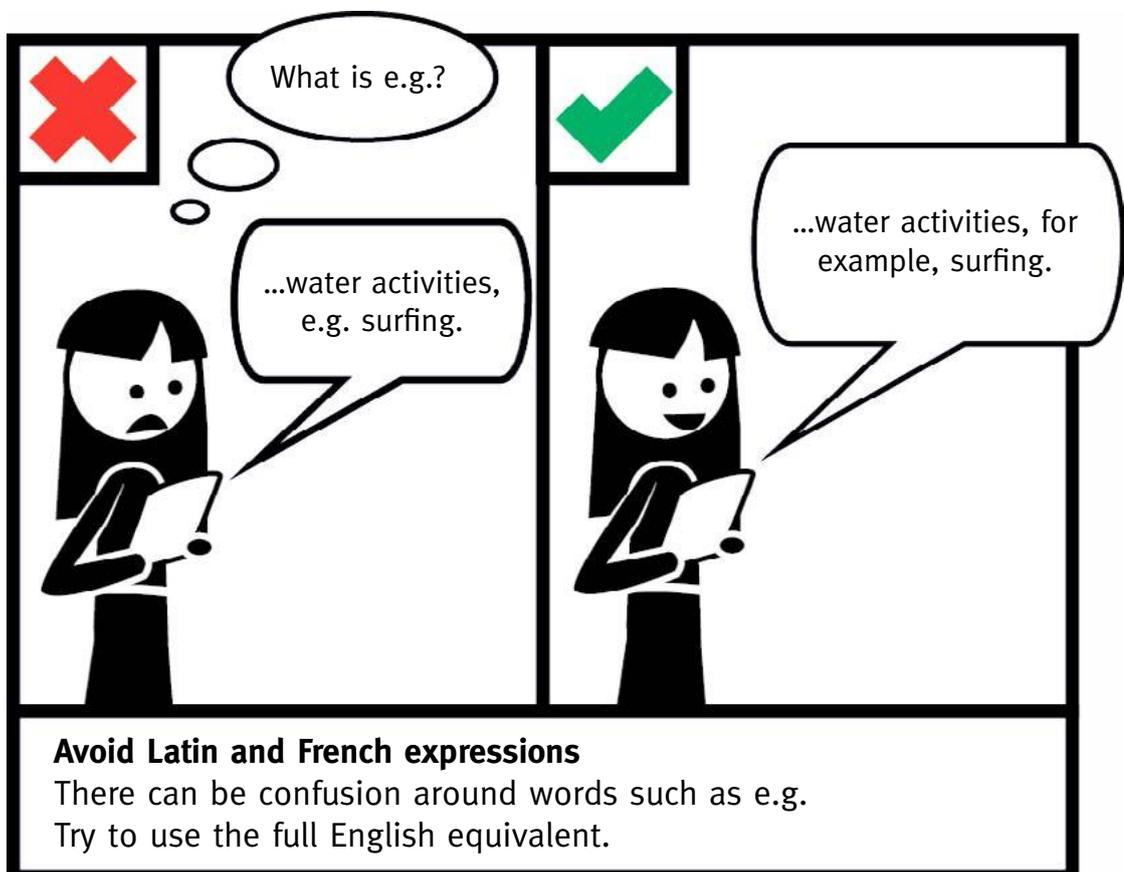
Avoid Latin and French expressions
There can be confusion around words such as e.g.
Try to use the full English equivalent.

Use 'Alternative Text' to make images and media accessible

Alternative (Alt) Text is text associated with an image or media that conveys the same essential information as the image.

You should provide Alt text for any images or time-based media used (for example videos and advertisements). This enables people who can't access the image or who have visual impairment to read the content of the image. A text description of the images also allows the text to be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.

Alternative text basics

- Alternative text may be provided in the alt attribute or in the surrounding context of the image.

- Alternative ways of communicating the information should also be provided for time-based media (videos, audio and commercials). For example, transcripts, captions and descriptive video all ensure that the experience is more accessible.

| Learn more | For information on captions and subtitles, please see page 59.

CEUD provides guidance on Alt text, available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web]. |

| Tip | Pretend to describe the image to a person over the phone. What does the image have to say to give the same meaning? This should be used as the Alt text. |
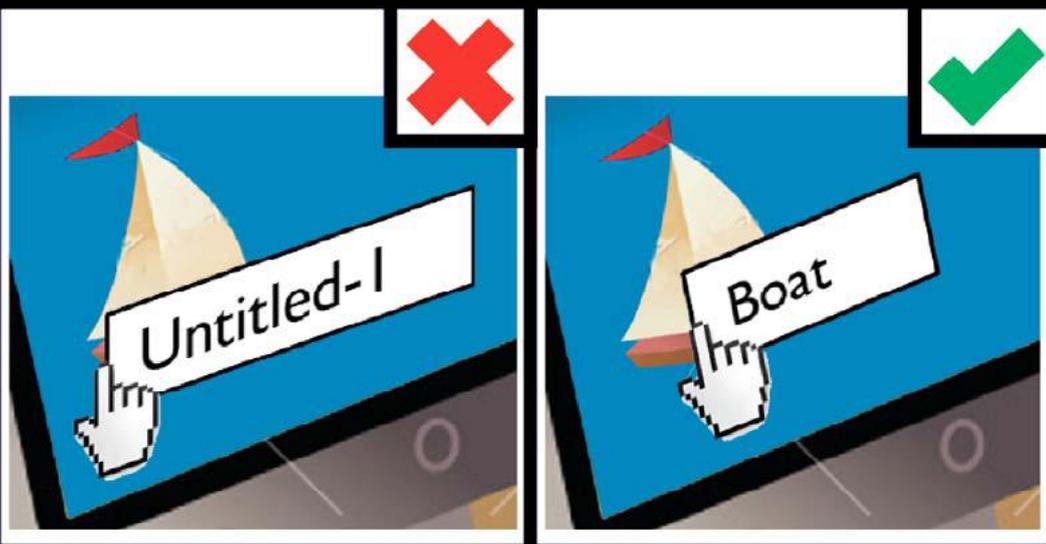
Provide Alternative Text for images
The image on the left shows an image that has no Alternative Text.

Use colour, spacing, images and layout to break up long blocks of text

- Use images to break up long blocks of text.

- Use images to support the information in text.

- Use white space to separate blocks of information.

- Use colour, spacing and layout to highlight the important information.

Use good quality, relevant images

Use good quality, relevant images that add to or support your text content. Avoid images that are low-quality or images that are not relevant to the text content.

Ann's Hotel

Normal text No text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Nor Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text N text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal te text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text

Avoid large blocks of text as it can be difficult to read and digest.

Ann's Hotel

Normal text Nor mal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text

Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Nor mal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Norm al text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text

Use spacing and images to break up long blocks of text. The selected images should support and add to the text.

Ann's Hotel

Normal text No

text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal te xt Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text NorNormal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Ntext Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal text Normal

Use colour, spacing and layout to highlight important information and to break up large blocks of text.

Content Quality

Trust is hard to win – and easy to lose

If there are issues with the quality of the content on your website, your customers will quickly identify it. If customers do not trust a site's quality they are likely to leave in search of a more reliable option.

The following guidance is provided to help develop good quality website content:

Make sure your content is up-to-date

Out-of-date content will undermine the quality of the surrounding content.

Use correct spelling and punctuation

This can impact on the credibility of your website, and additionally, your products and / or services.

Be consistent with terms and formats

Use the same terms and formats for the same concept throughout your website.

For example, don't change writing the date as '12 July 2014' to writing it as the '12/7/14'.

Learn more	For further information on writing dates, addresses and numbers, please see page 8, section 1: Written Communication.

Content Quality Control Process

The following steps can be put in place to manage the quality of your content:

Assign a designated manager

Have a manager take ownership of the content function and manage it actively.

Put in place a content review process

Establish an editorial process that involves at least one round of revision and sign-off on all content.

Provide training on developing web content

All content editors and authors should be trained so that they know how to prepare web content and monitor content quality.

Develop a house style guide

The content authors and editors should be supported with a house style guide, or relevant standards and guidelines.

Assign content development as part of their job description

Content development should be a core part of the authors' and editors' job descriptions.

Tip	One of the most valuable processes to ensure content quality is to carry out regular reviews and to include customer feedback in these.
	A review should look at each item in a body of text and assess it against the house style guide, standards and guidelines.

Links and Microcontent

Links

Write descriptive links to help your customers

Hyperlinks (links) are typically created by pasting in a url and pressing the space button. Edit these links to make them easier to understand for your customers by providing descriptors.

Note: If a document or content is to be printed you may wish to use the full URL and a description in the link text.

The following guidance is recommended when providing links:

- Link descriptions should be short but descriptive. It should typically be between two and five words long.
- Provide useful information about the link. For example, file size, and format.
- Link descriptions should describe the target that they link to.
- Link descriptions should avoid 'click here' type terminology.
- Link descriptions should occur naturally in the sentence.
- Links can be presented in the text of a page or separately, such as at the end of the page.

Learn more	CEUD provides guidance on making links meaningful, available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web]. CEUD provides guidance on writing good web content in 'Universal Design Guidance for Online Public Services', available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].

❌

https://www.visitengland.com/biz/
advice-and-support/businesses/
promoting-your-business/online-
marketing-toolkit

✔️

Online Marketing Toolkit

Descriptive Hyperlinks
Edit hyperlinks to make them easier to understand by providing descriptors.

❌

Click here to download the
2014 Local Hotels Guide

✔️

Download the
2014 Local Hotels Guide
PDF [72kb].

Link descriptions should describe the target that they link to
Avoid using 'click here' type terminology as link descriptors.

Microcontent

Microcontent refers to small groups of words that can be scanned by the customer to get a clear idea of what's on a web page. Microcontent includes:

- **Captions for images:** These provide the information required to help the customer understand the image in the context of the rest of the page.

- **Sub-headings:** These are used to break up long passages of text and to provide signposts to customers who are scanning the page.

- **Headings:** Use heading styles or tags correctly, so that it creates a structure that can be read using screen reader software. Don't create text that just looks like headings; for example, do not just increase the font size and weight of the text to create a heading.

Learn more	For further information see page 48, 'giving a document structure using heading styles'.

Titles and Descriptions

Well written titles and descriptions (metadata) help your pages to be found by customers using search engines and, once found, encourage those customers to visit your site.

To write good titles and descriptions:

- Pick out two or three key phrases that are the most distinctive and typical of your page.

- Use key phrases and terms that your customer is most likely to use.

- Select a key phrase for your title (fewer than 70 characters).

Descriptions should:

- Include key phrases, or variations of them, at the start.

- Be factual and accurately reflect the content.

- Be less than 156 characters long, including spaces.

Writing Good Web Content Checklist

Writing for the Web
☐ Be personal and use active verbs.
☐ Avoid technical language, Latin and French expressions and unfamiliar acronyms and abbreviations.
☐ Where applicable, provide important information in different languages.
☐ Present content so that customers can absorb and understand the content quickly. Help customers to scan text by: 1. Presenting key conclusions at the start.   2. Presenting information in order of importance.   3. Presenting detailed or background information.   4. Providing links to related or background information.
☐ Keep content clear and concise.
☐ Use the full business name on each page.
☐ Use a house style.
☐ Use Alt text to convey the same content as the images or media.
☐ Use good quality, relevant images that add to or support your text content.

Writing Good Web Content Checklist

Content Quality

☐ Make sure your content is up-to-date.

☐ Use correct spelling and punctuation.

☐ Be consistent with terms and formats.

☐ Put a content quality process in place:

- Assign a designated manager with responsibility for content.
- Put in place a content review process before information is placed on your website.

Writing Good Web Content Checklist

Links

- ☐ Link descriptions should be short but descriptive.
- ☐ Link descriptions should describe the target that they link to.
- ☐ Link descriptions should avoid 'click here' type terminology.

Titles

- ☐ Use key phrases and terms that your customer is likely to use.
- ☐ Select a key phrase for your title (fewer than 70 characters).

Description

- ☐ Descriptions should be factual and accurately reflect the content.
- ☐ Descriptions should be less than 156 characters long, including spaces.

3.3 Designing and Developing Usable Websites

Website Navigation Guidance

All customers should be able to use your website regardless of their level of experience in using the web or the device / operating system they use.

The following guidance aims to help make navigation easier to use and access for all customers:

All navigation should be fully accessible through the keyboard

A fully accessible site should have no applications that depend on the mouse.

Be consistent with navigation layout

Consistent and well laid out content makes it easier for the customer to navigate and find the content that they are looking for.

- The layout, structure and colour of the content should be consistent to make information easier to find. The exception for consistent formatting / layout may be the home page if necessary.

- The positioning and appearance of recurring items, such as the logo, navigation bar and headings should be consistent throughout.

- Provide a link back to the home page from every page.

Navigation bars should be easy to identify and distinguish

Use clear navigation bars that are distinguishable from the content.
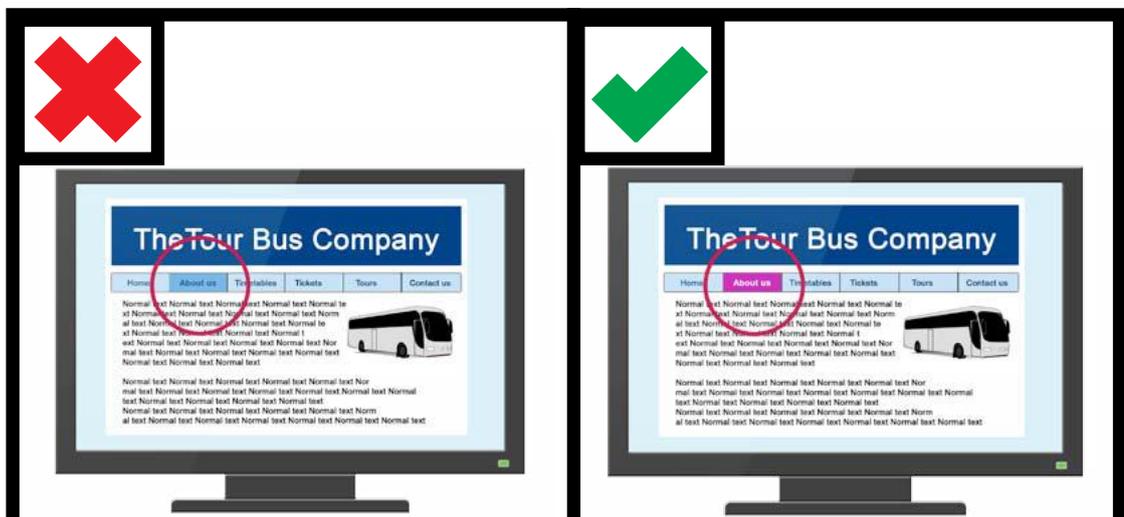
Navigation bars should provide feedback

The navigation bar should clearly identify where the customer is on the website. This can be done by highlighting the customer's current location on the navigation bar and by disabling the link to the current page.
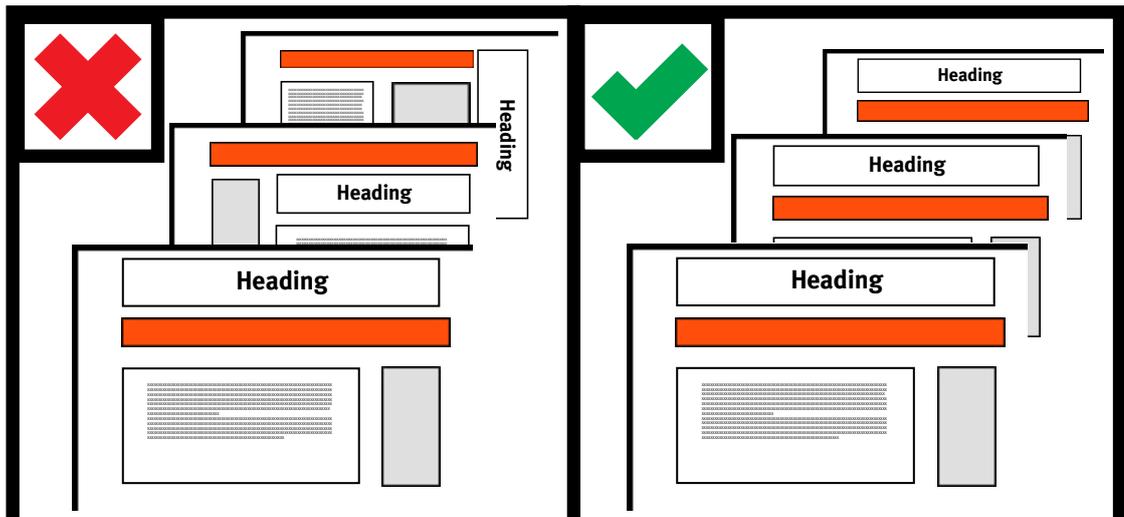
Use consistent structure and layout
By presenting recurring features, such as the navigation bar, headings and logos consistently; it helps make the website easier to navigate.

Navigation bars should provide feedback
The navigation bar should clearly identify where the user is on the website. This can be done by highlighting the customer's current location on the navigation bar, and by disabling the link to the current page.

Make webpages appear and operate in predictable ways

Webpages, applications and online interfaces should be intuitive and predictable in how they operate. Websites typically have a set structure. This helps customers to easily find information and navigate new websites.

Your website should be easy and intuitive to use for your customers. Examples of established website features which make navigation more intuitive to use include:

- **'Breadcrumb' navigation:** This provides information about where the current page is in the site structure and provides navigation to higher levels. An example of this could be: Home › About › Services.

- **Within page 'contents' section:** For long pages, provide a contents list for the page.

- **Primary navigation bar:** This is usually presented horizontally near the top of the page.

- A **search box:** This is usually in the top right area of the page. The search box should be visible on each page without scrolling.

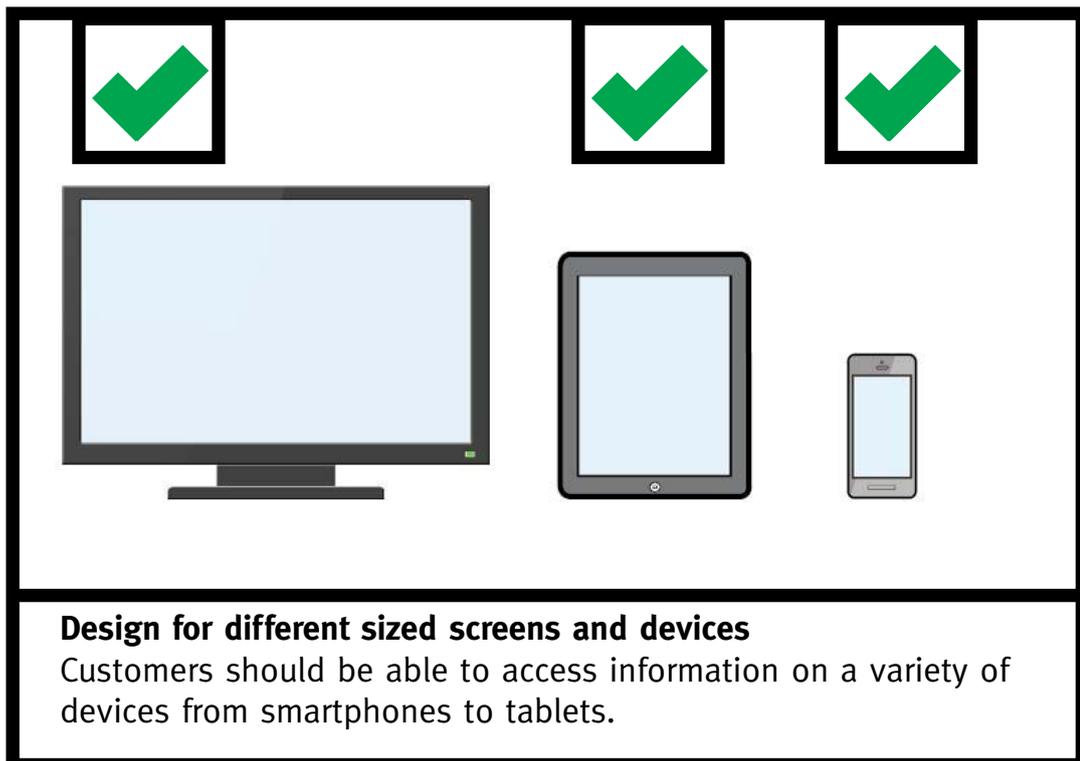| **Learn more**	For further information on searches, see page 29.

Do not cause pop-ups or other windows to appear

Allow your customers to stay focused on the goal of their visit by:

- Avoiding the use of pop-ups. Most modern browsers will try and block them. Pop-ups typically look and feel unprofessional.

- Avoiding any form of advertising that gets in the way of the customer completing their goal.

If possible, appropriate web content should be usable on a variety of devices

Web content and applications should be usable by the widest variety of browsers, devices and assistive technologies by using fluid design and relative widths. (Note: Talk to your web designer about 'responsive websites').

Design for different sized screens and devices
Customers should be able to access information on a variety of devices from smartphones to tablets.

Learn more

CEUD provides information on navigational aids, available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].

For further information on page structure see section 2.2 in CEUD's 'Universal Design Guidance for Online Public Services' (2012).

Forms

Forms must be properly structured and optimised to support the customer in completing the form without errors.

Guidelines for the design of forms are as follows:

- Give the form a clear title. Identify who the form is for and its purpose at the start.

- Give instructions in bullet points on the first page.

- Ensure all terms and conditions are clearly explained in plain English.

- Avoid any 'hidden extras'. Do not present customers with additional charges towards the end of the transaction.

- If a customer's search query results in no hits, suggest some helpful alternatives.

- Divide the form into clear and logical sections with informative headings and clear numbering.

- Avoid unnecessary or repeated questions.

- Make it clear which fields are mandatory and must be completed.

- Make sure your customers have enough space for providing answers.

- Where possible, use boxes rather than lines for answers.

- Create a clear path through the form.

  - Avoid multi-column forms unless absolutely necessary.

  - Avoid creating a 'jagged' misaligned appearance.

- Make sure 'tick boxes' are clearly linked to the answer.

- Ensure that 'tick box' borders and answer lines are solid and at least one point wide.

- Many customers move between form fields with the tab key. Use the form layout and if necessary use the tab index attribute in HTML to support this.

- Make the 'next' or 'submit' button obvious and distinctive. This is particularly important where it is provided near competing buttons such as 'back'.

- Use the simplest way of presenting options for ease of use:

  - It is recommended that for less than seven options, 'tick box' options should be provided.

  - For more than seven options, a drop down menu is recommended.

Name: ✕
E-mail:
Phone [Mobile]:

Date of Birth ☐ ☐ ☐

Name: ✓
E-mail:
Phone [Mobile]:

                  dd   mm   yyyy
Date of Birth ☐ ☐ ☐
(e.g. 01-01-1991)

Provide an easy to use layout for your questions and answer spaces
Avoid a 'jagged' misaligned appearance. Create a clear path through the form and provide guidance that will help customers complete the form without making mistakes.

✕

○ Carlow   ○ Kilkenny
○ Cavan   ○ Laois
○ Clare   ○ Leitrim
○ Cork   ○ Limerick
○ Donegal   ○ Longford
○ Dublin   ○ Louth
◉ Galway   ○ Mayo
○ Kerry   ○ Meath
○ Kildare   ○ Monaghan

✓

| Galway | ▲ ▼ |

Carlow
Cavan
Clare
Cork
Donegal
Dublin
Galway
Kerry

When there are more than seven options, a drop down menu is recommended

Error messages

If the customer is required to complete a form online, the form should be validated when the customer has completed the form. This is to make sure that the correct information has been provided before it is submitted. If an error in the form is identified, then there is a three step process to correct the error:

1. **Make the customer aware that there is an error in an obvious and easy to understand way**

There are a number of ways that you can make the customer aware of the error:

- Use a JavaScript alert box to inform the customer of the error.
- Provide the error message on the web page itself.
- Provide the error message as the first item on a new page or focus should be set directly to it.
- Highlight the error. This should be identified using both colour and a symbol (such as a "*"). Errors should not be identified using colour alone.

2. **Indicate the location of errors on the form itself**

If only one error has occurred, it may be more helpful to display the message and set focus to a point immediately before the area on the form where the error was made.

If several errors have occurred, the incorrect information should typically be displayed together. It is helpful to inform the customer on the number of errors that were found.

3. **Allow the customer to resubmit and revalidate the form.**

Login Details

Guidance should be provided before the password input.

For example, a reminder should be provided that the password is lowercase and consists of six letters with no spaces. This guidance should be provided before the space to fill in the customer's login details.

Errors should not be identified using colour alone
An error when filling out a form should be identified using both colour and a symbol (such as a " * ").

Guidance should be provided before the password input

Time-out Messages

Provide enough time to allow the customer to read, digest and respond to the information

You can account for this by identifying timed actions. For example, when making a booking the customer is informed "you have 15 minutes to complete this form". It is recommended that the option of additional time should be provided for timed actions.

Ideally avoid time-outs and time limitations

- Where there are time limitations and time-outs, ensure that it is possible to request more time.

- If a time-out occurs try to ensure that users can restart the process without losing the data they have entered.

CAPTCHAs

Where possible, avoid the use of CAPTCHAs

However where anti-spam measures must be adopted in forms, use World Wide Web Consortium techniques to allow CAPTCHAs to be accessible. This typically requires providing the CAPTCHA test in more than one format (for example, visual and auditory versions) and providing a text alternative that describes these formats.

Learn more	CEUD provides guidance on form development, available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].
	CEUD provides guidance on preventing errors and assisting recovery from errors, available from their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].
	W3C provides 'inaccessibility of CAPTCHA: alternatives to visual turing tests on the web' available from their website: [http://www.w3.org/TR/turingtest/].

Searching is one of the main ways customers find content on the web. The majority of traffic to your site typically starts with a search on a web search engine (such as Google). Customers arriving on your site from a search engine are unlikely to have seen any other pages on your website; so it's important that they can quickly figure out where they are and where they can go next.

Your site should support customers in finding their way to the most relevant content on your site by:

- Using webmaster tools to make sure the site is indexed by search engines.

- Checking web analytics and webmaster tools to see how you can improve your visibility for web searches.

- Making sure that metadata titles and descriptions are good.

<table>
<tr><td>Learn more</td><td>For further information on metadata content, please see page 16.</td></tr>
</table>

Provide an easy to use on-site search

When customers are trying to find particular content on your site (and if the location of this content is not easy to find), they will typically use your on-site search. The following guidance will help make on-site searches easier to use:

- The on-site search should look and work like the web search engines that customers are most familiar with (for example, Google).

- The search results should be ranked by relevance. There should be no duplicate results.

- The search results page should identify the term searched for and the number of matches found.

- The search should allow for misspelled words or variations in spellings, particularly for important search terms.

Provide a basic search option

Most customers only use the basic search option and dislike having to choose between different search types. It is therefore recommended that the default search on your site should be a simple search. If you offer an advanced search option, ensure it does not complicate the basic search option.

Multimedia, Images and Colour

Key guidance when using multimedia is as follows:

Use your design to enhance information, not distract from it

Use features such as animation and video to add to your content, rather than to distract from it.

Ensure multimedia is inclusive

Ensure multimedia does not exclude information from those who cannot see, hear or play it.

- Provide a link to download players.

- For embedded multimedia, supply a link to a standalone version.

- Provide controls to skip, pause or stop the presentation.

- Offer different download sizes. Information on the file size should be included on the page.

- Provide captions for multimedia, so that it can be understood by all your customers regardless of the volume the multimedia is played at. This is an important consideration as one in six of the population have hearing loss.[2]

- Where captions are not provided, provide transcripts for the multimedia. This can be provided either on the same page or as a link to a transcript on a different page.
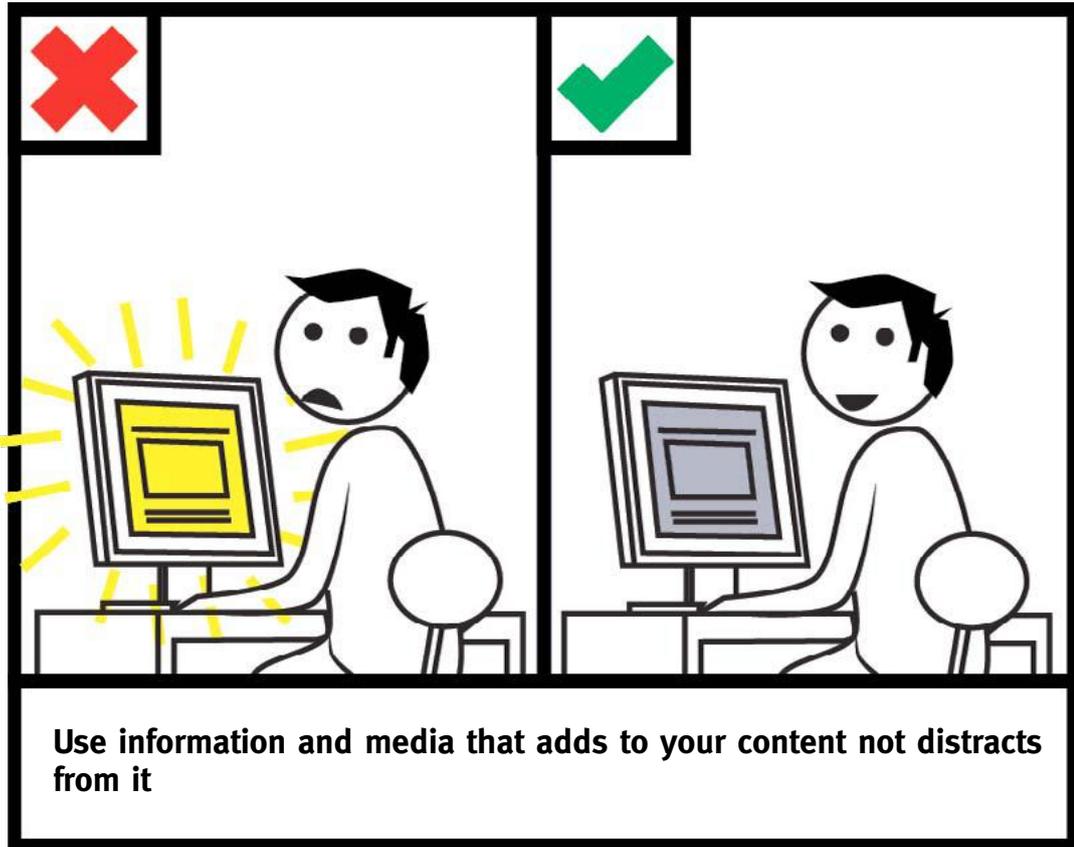
Learn more	For further information on captions and subtitling, see page 58.

Avoid content that flashes more than three times per second

High flash content may cause seizures among some customers.

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2   Listen up! guide. Available from:
     [http://www.visitengland.com/access].

Use information and media that adds to your content not distracts from it

Images

This area of accessibility is broad, but some key guidance when using images includes:

- When uploading an image or graph, supply the same information through Alt text.

- Avoid text within images.

For further information on Alt text, see page 8.

Colour

Create good contrast between text and background

The contrast between the text and the background affects how easy it is to read information.

Key guidance on colour contrast is as follows:

- Make sure there is strong contrast between the text and the background colour.

- If using white text, make sure the background colour is dark enough to provide sufficient contrast. Contrast is best when using very dark colours together with very light colours.

- Avoid combining yellow & blue, and green & red as these are difficult for people with colour blindness to distinguish.

- Pale text on a dark background typically makes text look smaller, so you may need to increase the size and weight of the text to make easier to read.

- Avoid placing text in front of an image or patterned background, as this makes it more difficult to read.

Tips

Print your page in greyscale. This will help identify if you have sufficient contrast.

Tools

Use a contrast analyser to ensure there is enough contrast between the foreground and background colours. 'Colour Contrast Analyser 2.2', available from: [www.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser].

Avoid using light-coloured text and a light background (low contrast)

Avoid placing text in front of a patterned background

Make sure there is strong contrast between the text and the background colour

Increasing the weight or size of light text on a dark background can increase its legibility

Accessibility

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 covers a wide range of recommendations for making web content more accessible.

According to the W3C, content on a web page or web applications (including text, images, forms and sounds) should be:

- **Perceivable:** usable regardless of a customer's ability to see, hear or touch.

- **Operable:** usable forms, controls and navigation.

- **Understandable:** content and interfaces are clear and easy to understand.

- **Robust:** content can be used reliably by a wide range of devices.

It is important that accessibility is an on-going commitment. While a site may comply with WCAG 2.0 at its launch, those standards also need to be maintained as new content and features are added.

Design considerations which help improve accessibility include:

- Using clear labels for navigation and important buttons.

- Using clear and simple language.

- Ensuring that information does not rely solely on colour.

- Providing accessible documents.

- Providing Alt text, transcripts, subtitles or captions for video and audio content. A good summary may be provided to identify what the video / audio is about.

- Providing information in different ways.

  For example, offer your customer the option of having information in formats such as large print, Braille or 'easy to read'.

  'Easy to read' is designed to be both easier to read and understand. It is of specific benefit for people with intellectual difficulties but may also benefit younger readers and people with very low literacy levels. Typically, 'easy to read' content is supported by images that help explain the text.

- Evaluating the accessibility of a website. When developing or redesigning a site, evaluating accessibility early and during the development process can identify accessibility problems when it is easier to address them.

Tools

W3C provides a list of web accessibility evaluation tools, available on their website: [http://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/complete].

Learn more

Eureka! The National Children's Museum provides 'The Eureka Story' guide for children with communication or sensory difficulties to familiarise themselves with what a visit may entail, available from their website: [www.eureka.org.uk/visit-us/disabledvisitors].

CEUD provides guidance on web accessibility for developers, designers and content creators/editors, available on their website: [http://www.universaldesign.ie/web].

W3C provides 'Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0', available on their website: [http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/].

Designing / Developing Usable Websites Checklist

Website navigation
☐ All website navigation should be fully accessible through the keyboard.
☐ Be consistent with your navigation layout.
☐ The navigation bar should be easy to identify and distinguish from the rest of the content.
☐ Navigation bars should provide feedback to identify where the customer is on the website.
☐ Provide enough time to allow the customer to read, digest and respond to information.
☐ Make webpages appear and operate in predictable ways, which are intuitive to use.
☐ Web content and applications should be usable by the widest variety of browsers, devices and assistive technologies.
☐ Avoid the use of pop-ups.

Designing / Developing Usable Websites Checklist

Forms

☐ Give the form a clear title.

☐ Provide clear instructions at the start of the form.

☐ Provide questions in a logical order.

☐ Group similar questions together under a useful heading.

☐ Avoid unnecessary or repeated questions.

☐ Make it clear which fields are mandatory.

☐ Make numbering as simple as possible.

☐ Make it clear where answers should be provided.

☐ Make it easy to navigate through the form.

☐ Make it easy for customers to select options.

☐ Make the 'next' or 'submit' button obvious and distinctive.

Designing / Developing Usable Websites Checklist

Error messages

☐ Make the customer aware that there is an error in an obvious and easy to understand way.

☐ Indicate the number and location of errors on the form.

☐ Allow the customer to resubmit and revalidate the form.

Log in details

☐ Guidance / reminders should be provided before the login area.

Time-out messages

☐ Ideally avoid time-out messages and time limitations.

CAPTCHAs

☐ Where possible, avoid the use of CAPTCHAs.

☐ Provide CAPTCHAs in more than one format (for example, visual and auditory versions).

Search

☐ Provide an easy to use on-site search.

☐ Provide suggestions and alternative options in search results.

Designing / Developing Usable Websites Checklist

Multimedia

- [ ] Use your design to enhance information, not distract from it.
- [ ] Provide controls to skip, pause or stop the presentation.
- [ ] Offer different download sizes.
- [ ] Avoid flash content that flashes more than three times per second.
- [ ] Provide captions for multimedia.
- [ ] Where captions are not provided, provide transcripts.

Images

- [ ] Provide Alt text to convey the same information as your image or graph.
- [ ] Avoid text within images.

Colour

- [ ] Create good colour contrast between text and background.
- [ ] Carefully consider colour combinations.
- [ ] Increase the size or weight of a light coloured font on a dark background.

3.4 Mobile Web Content and Apps

This guidance is designed to improve your customers' experience when accessing web content from mobile devices. The following best practice guidelines have been developed by W3C to ensure web content is usable with mobile web devices:

- Customers should be able to access content on a range of devices, regardless of differences in presentation capabilities and methods of access.

- Only provide basic navigation at the top of the page.

- Make use of the mobile device's features and strengths to provide a better customer experience.

- Assign access keys to the most commonly used functions.

- Do not cause pop-ups or other windows to appear and do not change the current window without informing the customer.

- Divide pages into usable but limited sized sections.

- Make sure that the overall size of page is suitable to the memory capacity of the device.

- Do not use images that cannot be displayed by some devices. Avoid large or high resolution images except where important information would otherwise be lost.

- Make sure that information presented with colour is also available without colour.

- Ensure the text and background colour combinations provide good contrast.

- Do not use tables unless devices are known to support them.

- Send content in a format that is known to be supported by the majority of devices. Use style sheets to control layout and presentation, unless the device is known not to support them.

- Provide informative error messages and a means of navigating away from an error message back to useful information.

Learn more	W3C provides 'Mobile Accessibility: How WCAG 2.0 and Other W3C/ WAI Guidelines Apply to Mobile', available from their website: [http://www.w3.org/TR/mobile-accessibility-mapping/].

Apps for Smart Phones and Devices

All smart phones typically have built in accessibility features and functions, which provide a platform on which applications (apps) can be built.

If you develop an app for your customers, the content and interface options provided should follow the best practice guidelines developed by W3C including:

- Use cookies sparingly. Cookies are a common and effective means to store small amounts of information on your customer. These are typically used to personalise data and are commonly used to store a token representing customer identity in order to enable automatic sign in.

- Ensure the customer is informed about use of personal and device information.

- Allow the customer to control application behaviour that might not otherwise be apparent, such as access to the network and access to device data.

- Enable automatic sign in.

- Minimise application and data size.

- Make telephone numbers 'click-to-call'.

- Optimise the application's start up time. Customer experience is strongly influenced by the initial start-up time of an application.

Learn more	W3C provides 'How WCAG 2.0 and Other W3C/WAI Guidelines Apply to Mobile', available from their website: [http://www.w3.org/TR/mobile-accessibility-mapping/].
	For information on making iPhone applications accessible see: [http://developer.apple.com/library/ios/#documentation/UserExperience/Conceptual/iPhoneAccessibility/Making_Application_Accessible/Making_Application_Accessible.html].
	For information on making Android applications accessible see: [http://developer.android.com/guide/topics/ui/accessibility/apps.html].

Tools	For more information on testing for accessibility, see: [http://developer.android.com/tools/testing/testing_accessibility.html].

Mobile Web Content and Apps Checklist

- ☐ Customers should be able to access content on a range of devices, regardless of differences in presentation capabilities and methods of access.

- ☐ Assign access keys to the most commonly used functions.

- ☐ Do not cause pop-ups or other windows to appear.

- ☐ Divide pages into usable but limited sized sections.

- ☐ Make sure that the overall size of page is suitable to the memory capacity of the device. For apps - minimise application and data size.

- ☐ Where possible avoid large or high resolution images.

- ☐ Make sure that information presented with colour is also available without colour.

- ☐ Ensure there is good contrast between text and background colour combinations.

- ☐ Send content in a format that is known to be supported by the majority of devices.

- ☐ Provide informative error messages and a means of navigating away from an error message back to useful information.

3.5 Email and Newsletter Guidance

Key guidance for communicating with your customer using email and newsletters is as follows:

Write for the web

People interact with text differently online than they do in print.

Learn more For further information see writing for the web on page 4.

Choose a font colour that will provide good contrast

Simple black and white emails are sufficient for most email conversations, though some people prefer to send replies in a different colour text. Where applicable, choose a font colour that will provide a good contrast, like dark blue or dark green.

Choose a format

You can choose to write your emails, automated email notifications or newsletters in plain text, rich text, or HTML. However, best practice is to provide an option to choose between plain text and HTML.

Plain text email is suitable for most simple, routine correspondence. The advantages of plain text is as follows:

- It is compatible with all email systems.
- It uses the least amount of processing power and storage space.
- It is compatible with all assistive technologies.

However, the limitations of plain text are that you cannot apply document structure and the links are limited to full URLs, which are not very user friendly.

Rich text allows you to add formatting to your text. You can make text bold, add underlines, and insert links. Rich text does not allow you to add 'semantic structure,' such as headings, which helps customers using screen readers in navigating through long, complicated documents.

HTML email is recommended as the most accessible email format, as it allows you to add formatting and structure to your message. Emails created in HTML can effectively include anything which may be included in a standard web page.

Provide alternative (Alt) text for images and graphics

When images are unavailable (for example, if the device isn't capable of displaying the image or if the customer has visual impairment), equivalent information must be supplied. Alt text should be provided to convey the same meaning as the image. It should be provided for all images.

All attachments should be accessible

Learn more	For further information see page 47 on accessible documents.

Use a clear and descriptive subject line on your email

This helps the customer to quickly understand the content of the email.

Use clear and descriptive file names for any attachments

This makes it easier to identify the content of individual files.

Inform the customer if a document is attached

The body text of an email should mention if a document is attached in different formats.

Inform your customer of when they might expect a response

Providing the customer with information on the expected response time will help improve their customer experience by providing better communication.

Newsletters

Electronic newsletters are often a combination of a HTML email, that a person receives in their inbox, which then links to a 'microsite' with further information.

Ensure the newsletters follow the guidance above for;

- Writing good web content: see page 4.
- Emails: see page 43.
- Designing and developing usable websites: see page 20.

Email and Newsletter Checklist

☐ Choose a font colour that will provide good contrast.

☐ Choose a suitable email format. Best practice is to provide an option to choose between plain text and HTML.

☐ Provide alternative (Alt) text for images and graphics.

☐ All attachments should be accessible.

☐ Use a clear and descriptive subject line on your email.

☐ Use clear and descriptive file names for any attachments.

☐ Inform the customer if a document is attached.

☐ Inform your customer of when they might expect a response.

3.6 Accessible Documents and Brochures

Accessibility of off-line documents

Many businesses and organisations use their website as the main channel for publishing and sharing documents and information. It is important to ensure people know what they are downloading and that the content is usable and accessible. This similarly applies to documents and brochures emailed to customers.

When publishing documents to the web, consider the format, which is the easiest to read. Documents such as Microsoft Word and PDFs can be made accessible. However, this does not happen automatically, and care should be taken to ensure that accessibility is considered in all stages of the document's development.

To start with, all downloadable documents should have a summary provided in HTML, as well as details on the document's format and file size.

How to Make Accessible Documents

To make a document accessible does not require specific software, it simply requires you to take into account certain considerations (like font size and colour contrast) when developing your document. This will make documents easier to read and understand by all your customers - particularly customers who use assistive technologies like screen reader software.

The following guidance is provided to help make documents easier to use, access and understand:

Give documents a structure using heading styles

A good heading structure is probably the most important accessibility consideration in most Microsoft Word documents.

Many people do not use true heading styles in Microsoft Word. For example, when creating a heading, they simply change the font, increase the font size, and make it bold. The problem with this is that screen readers navigate through the headings function and don't recognise the body text as a heading. So essentially it doesn't recognise any structure in the text. In Microsoft Word, the correct way to provide structure is to use 'Word styles' found under the 'Home' tab.

Use pre-set bullet points, numbering and tables

Use pre-set formats such as bullet points, numbering and tables to format and structure your document. This structure will then be carried over into other formats such as PDF, making it easier to navigate.

Provide a table of contents for longer documents

For documents over 10 pages provide a table of contents. This will make specific information easier to find. Additionally using the previously mentioned heading styles makes creating a table of contents far easier.

Provide alternative (Alt) text

When images are unavailable (for example, if the device isn't capable of displaying the image or if the customer has visual impairment), equivalent information must be supplied. Alt text should serve the same purpose and convey the same meaning as the image. It should be provided for all images.

Learn more For further information on Alt text, see page 8.

Fill out document properties

Fill out document properties (author, title, subject and keywords). A link should also be provided back to the website in the comments field if there isn't a link in the body of the document.

Save or export to PDF

Save or export your document to PDF. Do this by using the 'Save As' option and selecting 'PDF' in the 'Save as type' drop down section. Do not use the print-to-PDF function.

Turn on accessibility features

Ensure accessibility features such as tagging are turned on when saving.

Check accessibility

If possible, use PDF editing software that supports accessibility to check the accessibility of your PDF file.

Tools Word 2010 includes an accessibility checker that allows you to check for accessibility problems. To run the accessibility checker, select File › Info › Check for Issues › Check Accessibility.

In long documents provide information in chapters or sections

For very long documents and reports, consider breaking the document into chapters or sections. This allows customers to download and read only the relevant sections.

Learn more

Adobe provides guidance on 'preparing Microsoft Word documents to create accessible PDF files', available on their website: [http://blogs.adobe.com/accessibility/files/accessibility/assets/WordToPDFReferenceCard_v1.pdf].

W3C provides PDF techniques for WCAG 2.0, available on their website: [http://www.w3.org/WAI/GL/WCAG20-TECHS/pdf.html].

Accessible Documents and Brochures Checklist

☐ Give the documents a structure using heading styles.

☐ Use pre-set bullet points, numbering and tables.

☐ Provide a table of contents for long documents (over 10 pages).

☐ Provide Alt text to convey the same content as images.

☐ Fill out the document properties, providing the author and contact details for further information.

☐ Save or export your document to PDF. Do not print-to-PDF.

☐ Turn on accessibility features.

☐ Check the accessibility of your document.

☐ For long documents allow the customer to download sections or chapters of the document.

3.7 SMS Based Communication

There are two general types of SMS (text) services used by tourism suppliers:

- General alerting service: where a company sends out a general message to a group of customers.

- Direct text communication: involves direct contact between two people on a specific issue. For example, between customer support and a customer.

General Guidelines for SMS (texting)

State times that SMS service is available

Where direct text communication is available, clearly state the times that this service is available; for example, between 9.00am and 6.00pm.

Do not use text speak language

Other than in specific contexts (for example if targeting teenagers), 'text speak' language should not be used. Use plain English.

Learn more	The Plain English Campaign provides plain English guidelines in their 'How to' guide, available from their website: [www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf].

Limit all SMS messages to 160 characters

Keep sentences short.

Use an identifier at the start of all SMS

This will assist customers in recognising your number.

Where applicable state whether a reply will cost the customer money and if so how much

If appropriate, include whether a reply is expected or not

- If a reply is expected from the customer, include a prompt in the SMS such as "Please reply".

- Where immediate response is not intended, send an automatic reply to each SMS received to acknowledge it and provide further information, for example: "Thank you for your enquiry. We will be in contact with you shortly".

If the SMS received from a customer is not clear, seek clarification.

For example, "do you wish to make an appointment for 2.00pm on the 12 July?"

Alternatively use options to obtain information. For example, "Sorry do you mean **1**- you wish to make an appointment for 2.00pm on the 12 July?, **2** - you wish to cancel your appointment or **3** - you want to make a new appointment? Please reply with **1,2** or **3**."

If no reply is received after 30 minutes contact the customer again using the previous message and adding a time that you expect a reply by. For example, "Sorry Mrs Smith, do you mean **1**- you wish to make an appointment for 2.00pm on the 12 July?, **2** - you wish to cancel your appointment or **3** - you want to make a new appointment? Please reply with **1,2** or **3** before 6.00pm".

If no further response is received - close the conversation.

When over, finish the conversation

When you have finished the conversation, always end the SMS with a closing phrase. For example, "No need to reply".

Do not put sensitive information in a SMS

SMS texts should not include or seek confidential information. For example, bank account numbers.

Inform your customer of when they might expect a response

❌

> Mr. Smith, ur conf. rm booking hs bn confmd for 10.00am-1.00 pm on the 11/03/2014. Plz call (01)2981234 for fthr info.

✔

> ‹Ann's Hotel›   Mr Smith, your conference room booking has been confirmed for 10.00am -1.00pm on the 11/03/2014. Please call (01)2981234 or email ann@hotel.ie for further details. ‹Do Not Reply›

Do not use text language
Communicate clearly with your customer by using an identifier at the start of all texts and include whether a reply is expected. Do not use text language.

SMS Based Communication Checklist

☐ State the times that SMS service is available.

☐ Do not use text speak.

☐ Limit all texts to 160 characters.

☐ Use an identifier at the start of all SMS.

☐ Where applicable, state whether a reply will cost the customer money (and how much).

☐ If appropriate, include whether a reply is expected or not.

☐ If the SMS from a customer is unclear, seek clarification.

☐ When over, finish the conversation.

☐ Do not put sensitive information in a SMS.

☐ Inform your customer of when they might expect a response.

3.8 Social Media Guidance

Twitter

Twitter is an information network made up of 140-character messages called Tweets. It's an easy way to discover the latest news related to subjects you are interested in.

Know your audience and engage in the conversation

But remember that Twitter is a way to engage with customers, not to sell them products or services.

Create a tone that suits your brand

You know who your customers are, what they like and what they are interested in. Make sure your content and tone suit your brand and your customers.

For General Account Information

Provide contact information

Provide your contact number in your bio line. If you don't have a number, put a link to your 'contact us' form.

If you don't have a 'contact us' form, put an email link to someone who can provide help for customers with questions.

For Photos, Video, and Audio

Put prefixes before tweets that have photos, videos, or audio

This allows customer's using screen readers to know what to expect before it's read out loud. For example:

- Photos: [PIC]
- Videos: [VIDEO]
- Audio: [AUDIO]

Provide access to the full caption or transcript for a photo, video or audio

Provide a link back to your website that hosts a copy of the photo / video / audio with a full caption or transcript.

Your tweet should act as a descriptive caption so it has context for the item

Add a link back to your website for full accessibility.

For Composing Tweets

Try to place any hashtags or @mentions at the end of the tweet

This allows a screen reader to voice the main content of the tweet more clearly in the beginning, and saving the service-specific speak for the end (the parts that sound confusing).

Avoid using unfamiliar acronyms

If possible, avoid using unfamiliar acronyms that would sound strange if read by a screen reader. If space allows, try to spell out the acronyms instead or use a different way to convey the information.

Capitalise the first letters of compound words for hashtags

Use "CamelCase" for multiple words for hashtags. That is, use capital letters for the first letters of compound words (two or more words joined together). For example, use #TourismAdventures not #tourismadventures.

Learn more	Twitter provides guidance on 'getting started with Twitter', available from their website: [https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585-twitter-101-getting-started-with-twitter#].

Facebook Posts

Provide different ways for customers to get further information

Put your website address in the 'about' section of your page to provide an easy way of getting further information.

Provide a phone number, an online 'contact us' form, or general contact email address for further information.

Spell out acronyms when writing status updates

Don't get carried away with abbreviations or text messaging shortcuts in your status updates. You have plenty of space for your status updates, so spell out acronyms. It is recommended that in the first instance you should spell out the full name followed by the acronym in brackets. For example, the Visitor Information Centre (VIC).

For Photos, Video, Audio

Provide Alt text for photos

The best way for you to ensure that photos are accessible to everyone is to include Alt text. Alt text allow you to briefly describe the photo to ensure that customer's who are unable to see the image have an Alt text description of it.

Provide access to the full caption or transcripts for a photo, video or audio

Provide a link back to your website that hosts a copy of the photo / video / audio with a full caption or transcript.

After posting a photo, video or audio, immediately post a comment that directs the customer to the full caption or transcript.

Provide the option of viewing videos with captions

If you have a YouTube channel, upload your video to your channel and make sure you enable closed-captions (you'll want to upload your own transcript to make sure the captions are accurate or edit the automatic transcript). Then post a link to your YouTube video as your status update, rather than uploading the video into Facebook. This will ensure that customers will be taken to your accessible version on YouTube.

YouTube

All videos should have closed captioning (subtitles)

Closed captioning means that the captions are not visible until activated by the viewer.

YouTube has a feature that automatically captions videos in less than 10 minutes. Though YouTube has the ability to create captions based on your audio file, it is recommended that you edit these or have your own written transcript for better accuracy.

If you upload a text transcript, let YouTube sync it up. Then you can review and edit the captioning to ensure caption timing matches the video. Once your YouTube video has captions, you may wish to download the captions and use an editor to tidy them up.

Tools for creating or editing captions

If you wish to create captions for your video, or you would like to edit your existing YouTube captions, there are a number of free tools that can help:

- **Overstream:** a popular web-based captioning tool. Available from: http://www.overstream.net/
- **MAGpie:** a free Windows application from the National Center for Accessible Media. Available from: http://ncam.wgbh.org/invent_build/web_multimedia/tools-guidelines/magpie

Learn more	YouTube provides a tutorial for creating captions, available from their website: [https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2734796?hl=en-GB].

Social Media Guidance Checklist

Twitter
☐ Do not use Twitter as a channel to sell products and services.
☐ Create a tone that suits your brand.
☐ Provide contact information in your bio line.
☐ Put prefixes before tweets that have photos, videos or audio.
☐ Provide access to the full caption or transcript for a photo, audio or video.
☐ Try to place any hashtags or @mentions at the end of the tweet.
☐ Avoid unfamiliar acronyms.
☐ Capitalise the first letters of compound words for hashtags.

Social Media Guidance Checklist

Facebook
☐ Provide different ways for customers to get further information.
☐ Spell out acronyms.
☐ Provide captions for photos.
☐ Provide access to the full caption or transcript for a photo, video or audio.

YouTube
☐ All videos should have closed captioning.

VisitEngland™

NDA
Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

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The Universal Design Toolkit for Customer Engagement was developed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Authority, in partnership with Fáilte Ireland. It was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders involved in the tourism industry.

The Toolkit is based on the specifications contained in the Irish Standard (I.S.) 373:2013 'Universal Design for customer engagement in tourism services', published by the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI).