



Introduction to accessible communication



Liza Holmes (she/her)

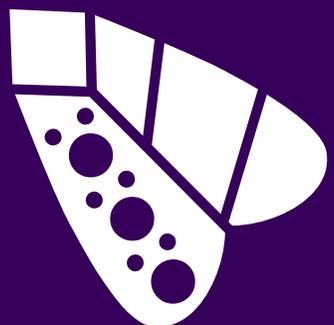
Assistant Director, Content Accessibility (Easy English)

Health and Community Services Directorate

ACT Government

March 2026

Acknowledgement of Country



The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians of the ACT.

We also recognise any other people or families with connection to the lands of the ACT and region.

We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Today's topics

Accessible communication

Writing

Images

Quick tips

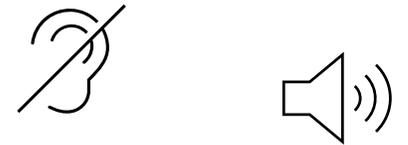
Accessible communication

Accessible communication and benefits

Accessible communication is designed for everyone to access and understand, regardless of disabilities or needs.

Everyone has the right to access information in a way that they can understand.

The more you make your content accessible, the more people can understand it, and the more people can enjoy your event!

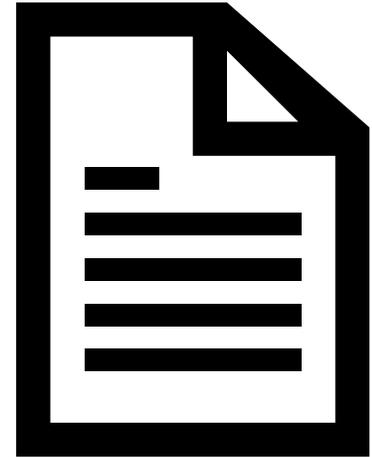


Writing

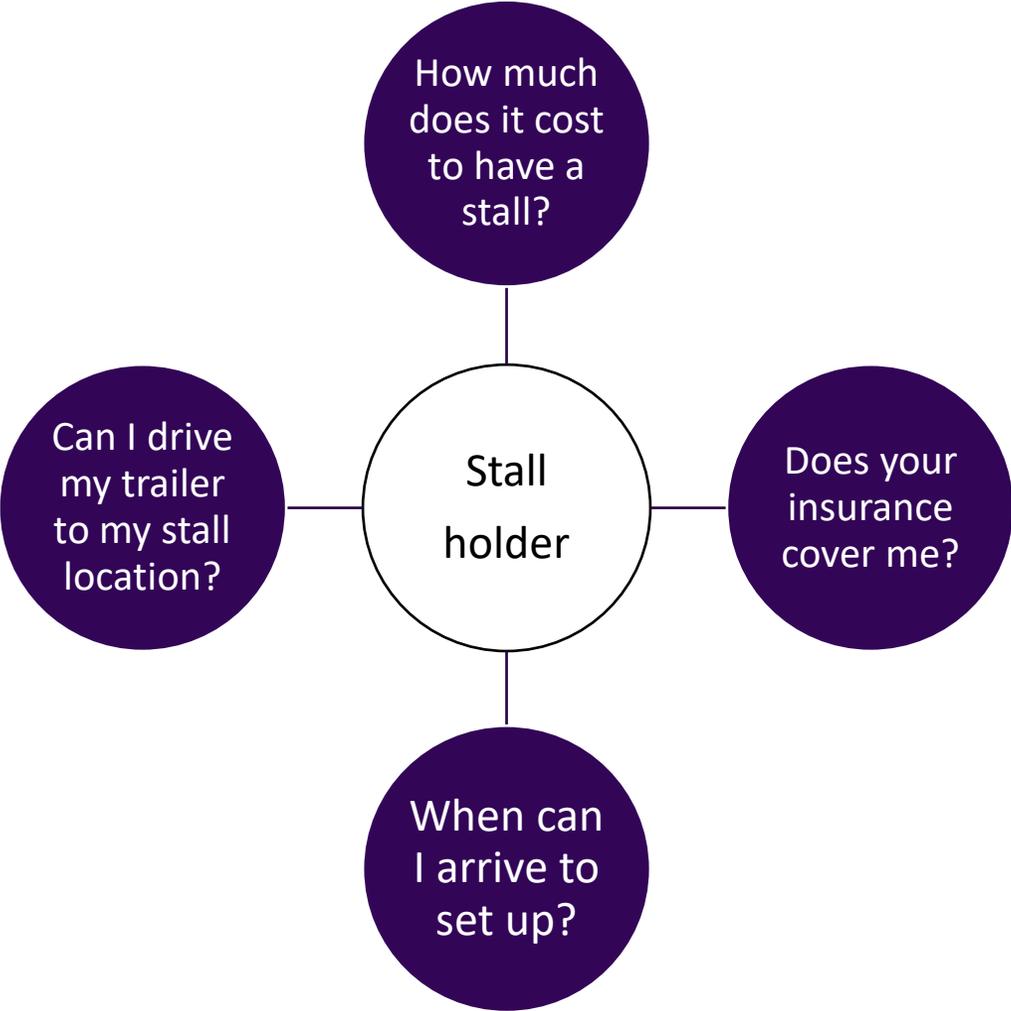
Writing – topics

Keep it simple and well structured.

1. Understand the needs of your users
2. Plan the structure
3. Use plain language



Writing – understand the needs your users



Writing - plan the structure

Put the most important information to the user first.

Consider the type of structure best suited to your content.

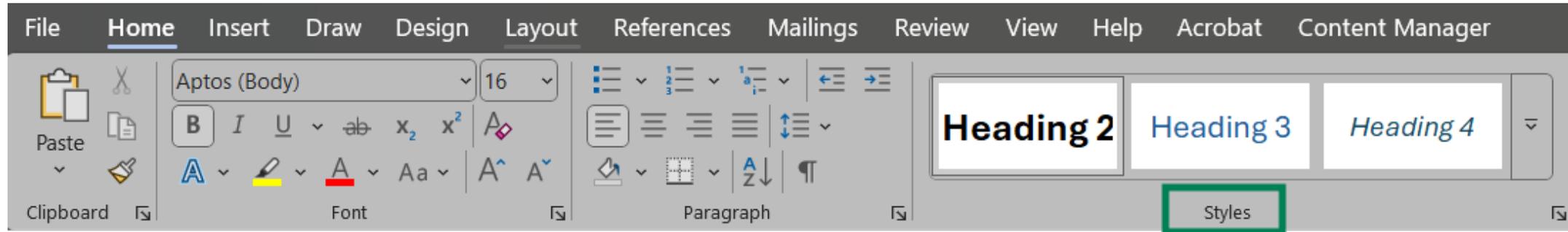
Hierarchical structure: group content into topics or connected ideas, prioritised by level of importance.

Sequential structure: present a sequence of steps or events. People will need to know or do things in order.

Narrative Structure: guide people from beginning to end. People will be interested in knowing the entire story.

Writing – plan the structure, use headings

Applying Styles and headings (Microsoft)



Example of headings:

Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

Reference: [Headings | Style Manual](#)

Writing – plan the structure, use headings, example

Plan your visit

Interactive map

Enlighten shuttle bus

Getting to Enlighten

Drop off zone

Accessible parking

Questacon carpark

National Portrait Gallery carpark

Writing – use plain language

Reading level – grade 7 (12 to 14 years old).

Sentence length – average of 15 words.

Use an active voice – Who is doing what (subject, verb, object).

Use everyday words

Instead of this	Try this
additional	more, extra
commence	start, begin
require	need, must

Writing – example

Accessibility guide

Overview

Over 11 days, the Enlighten Festival lights up Canberra with art, culture and creativity. It is a major event produced by the ACT Government, who are committed to reducing barriers to participation and delivering an event that is accessible and inclusive for all. A range of services are available to support your visit.

The Enlighten Festival is committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming experience for everyone. The National Triangle site offers step-free pathways, accessible facilities and a range of services to help you plan and enjoy your visit with confidence.

Writing – example in plain language

Accessibility guide

Overview

We want to put on an accessible and inclusive event for all to enjoy. You can check out the range of services available to support your visit to the Enlighten Festival.

Writing tools and tips

Writing – tools, Editor



Editor

Editor (Word)

- Home > Editor

Editor

Grammar	12
---------	----

Refinements

Clarity	11
Conciseness	4
Formality	6
Punctuation Conventions	6
Resume	2
Vocabulary	✓

Insights

Document stats



Readability Statistics

Counts	
Words	1,684
Characters	10,074
Paragraphs	143
Sentences	90

Averages	
Sentences per Paragraph	1.4
Words per Sentence	13.3
Characters per Word	5.0

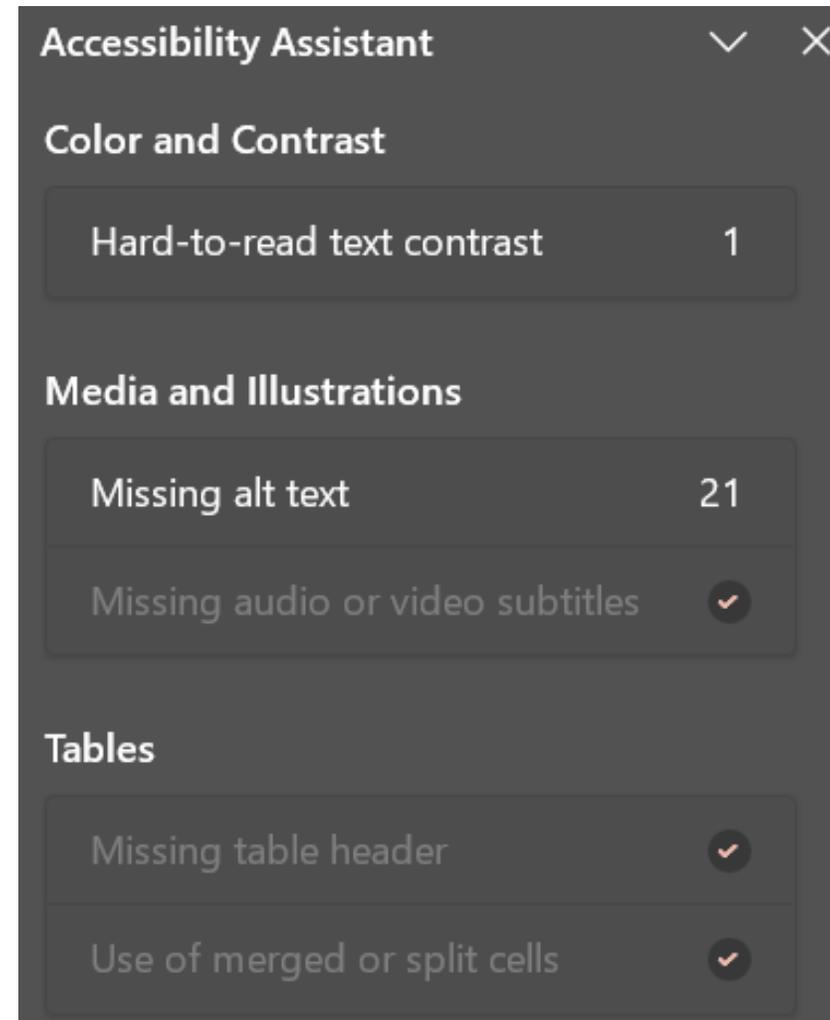
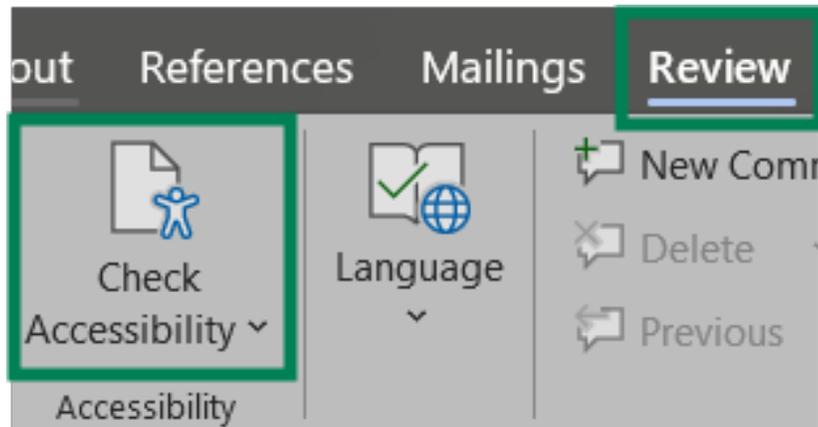
Readability	
Flesch Reading Ease	48.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	9.8
Passive Sentences	11.1%

OK

Writing – tools, Check Accessibility

Microsoft

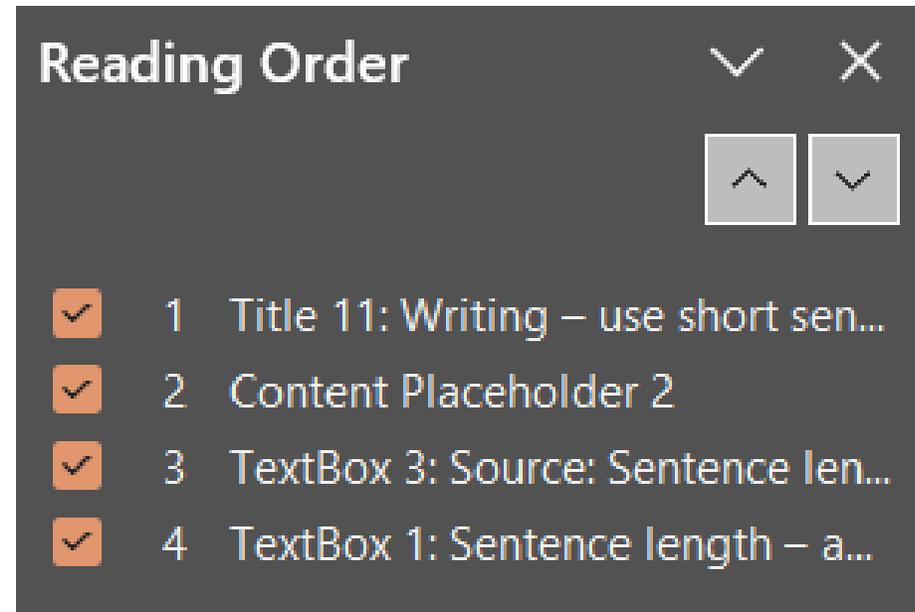
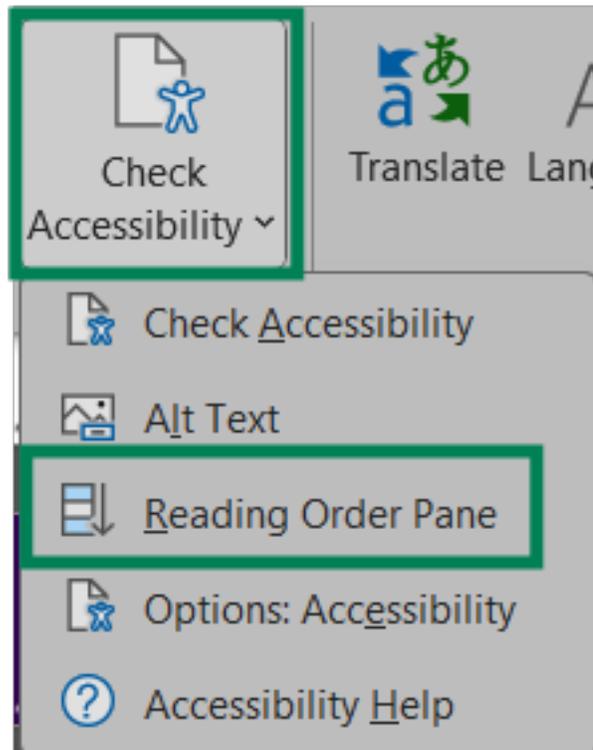
- Review > Check Accessibility



Writing – tools, Reading Order Pane

PowerPoint (Microsoft)

- Use Check Accessibility and check the Reading Order Pane.
- You can change the order and de-select items you don't want read out.



Writing tools – PDF reading order

Enlighten Festival Accessibility Guide



Over 11 days, the Enlighten Festival lights up Canberra with art, culture and creativity. It is a major event produced by the ACT Government, who are committed to reducing barriers to participation and delivering an event that is accessible and inclusive for all. A range of services are available to support your visit.

The Enlighten Festival is committed to providing an inclusive, welcoming experience for everyone. The National Triangle site offers step-free pathways, accessible facilities and a range of services to help you plan and enjoy your visit with confidence.

Key accessibility features include:

- Accessible parking, drop-off zones and a free accessible shuttle bus
- Accessible toilets, including a Changing Places facility
- Mobility hire, including wheelchairs and electric scooters (bookings required)
- Sensory Friendly Night with reduced sound and lighting (Monday 2 March)
- Free Audio Description Tours for visitors who are blind or have low vision on (Monday 2 and Saturday 7 March).

Visitors are encouraged to plan ahead using the interactive Enlighten Map and to contact the event team if they have specific access requirements.

Plan your visit

Enlighten is held in the National Triangle, Parkes, Canberra.

The National Triangle features sealed paths, accessible toilets, and accessible parking. Viewing areas and facilities are designed to support an inclusive experience for all visitors.

6

Enlighten Festival Accessibility Guide

1



2 Over 11 days, the Enlighten Festival lights up Canberra with art, culture and creativity. It is a major event produced by the ACT Government, who are committed to reducing barriers to participation and delivering an event that is accessible and inclusive for all. A range of services are available to support your visit.

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Plan your visit

7 Enlightenment is held in the National Triangle, Parkes, Canberra.

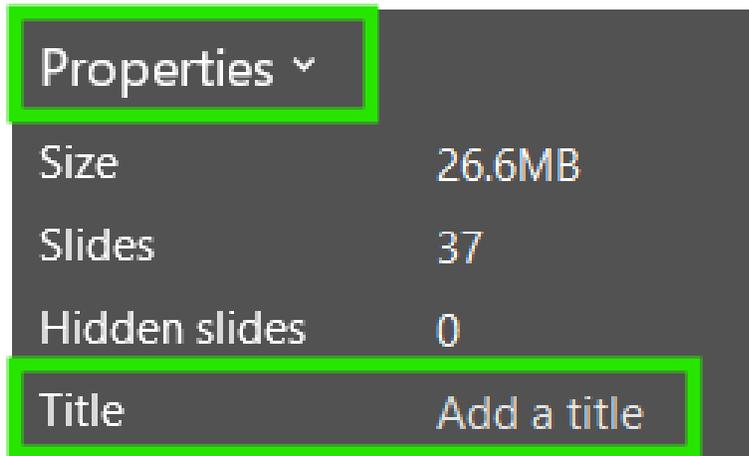
8 The National Triangle features sealed paths, accessible toilets, and accessible parking. Viewing areas and facilities are designed to support an inclusive experience for all visitors.

Writing tips – document information

Ensure document properties include a title before you publish.

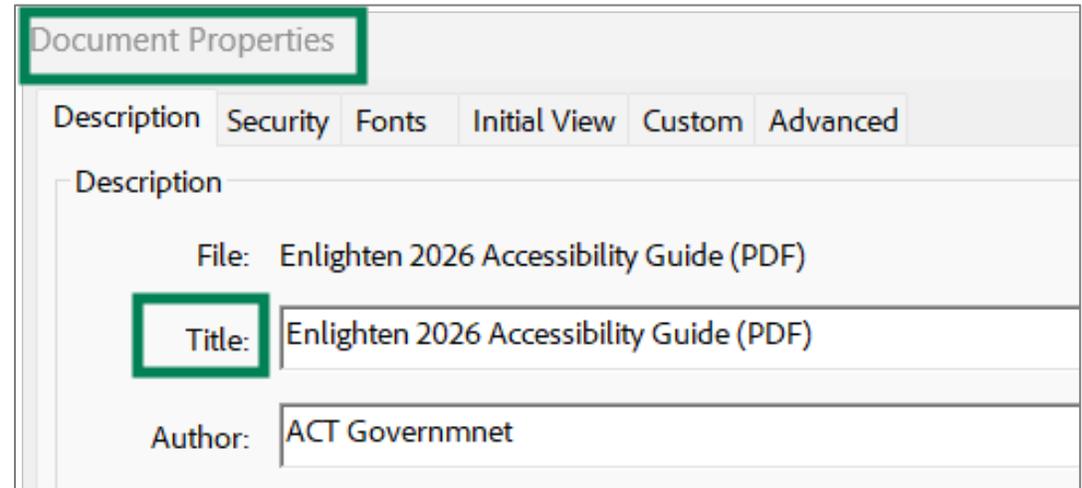
Microsoft

- File > Info > Properties > Title



PDF (need Adobe Pro)

- Side click > Document properties



Writing – document types and tips

Word

Screen readers prefer a Word document over PDF.

Focus on making your Word document accessible before converting to PDF.

PDF

A scanned PDF is not accessible to assistive technology.

You need the Adobe Pro version to check accessibility.

You can have different types of documents to meet users' needs.

Writing – document types, example

ACT Disability strategy

ACT Disability Strategy 2024–2033 and First Action Plan 2024–26 [PDF 3.4 MB]



ACT Disability Strategy 2024–2033 and First Action Plan 2024–26 [Word 791 kB]



ACT Disability Strategy - Easy English [PDF 3.5 MB]



ACT Disability Strategy - Plain English [PDF 133 kB]



ACT Disability Strategy - Plain English [Word 82 kB]



ACT Disability Reference Group - Video launch



Images

Images – alt text

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

1.1 – Text Alternative

Provide text alternatives for any non-text content. E.g.

- Images, photos, illustrations
- Graphics, charts
- Videos

The text is changed into other forms people need, such as large print, braille and speech.

Images – alt text, tips



- Write a short description.
- Describe the main image, not every visual detail.
- Include legend information for charts and graphs.
- Avoid phrases like “image of” or “chart showing” — screen readers already announce this information.

Images – alt text, example

Adding alt text (Microsoft)

You side click the image and choose 'View Alt Text'. Then put the text in the Alt Text pane.



Example of alt text

Text says National Multicultural Festival, 6 to 8 February 2026, Canberra CBD. Includes people smiling and performing in colourful cultural outfits.

Images – alt text, tables, example

What we offer – example 1

Service	Available
Toilets	
Food stalls	
Changing places facility	
Auslan interpreters	
Accessible toilets	

Key

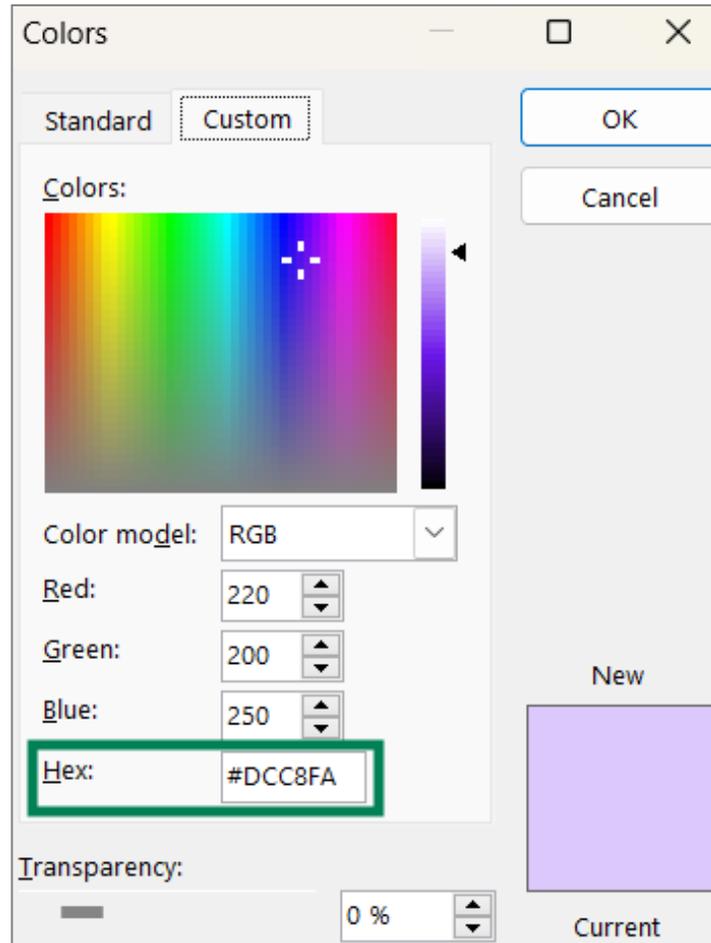
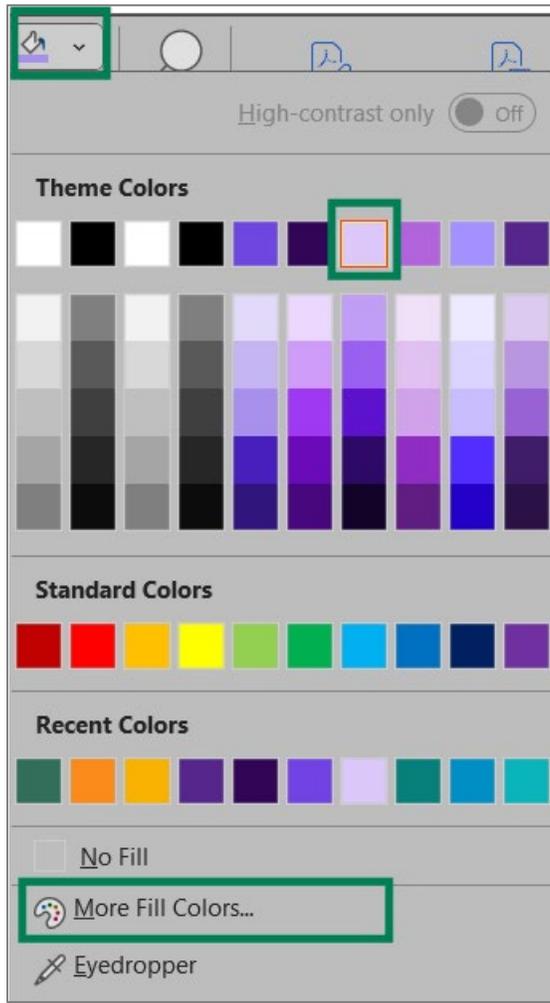
No	Limited	Yes
		

What we offer – example 2

Service	Available
Toilets	
Food stalls	
Changing places facility	
Auslan interpreters	
Accessible toilets	

Images – colour contrast check

You need the Hex value of the background and foreground.



WebAIM: Contrast Checker

Images – colour contrast example

ACT Government

Hex value: #DCC8FA

Contrast Checker

[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > Contrast Checker

Foreground

Hex Value
#DCC8FA

Color Picker Alpha
1

Lightness

Background

Hex Value
#FFFFFF

Color Picker

Lightness

Contrast Ratio
1.53:1

[permalink](#)

Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Fail**
WCAG AAA: **Fail**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

ACT Government

Hex value: #56268C

Contrast Checker

[Home](#) > [Resources](#) > Contrast Checker

Foreground

Hex Value
#56268C

Color Picker Alpha
1

Lightness

Background

Hex Value
#FFFFFF

Color Picker

Lightness

Contrast Ratio
10.23:1

[permalink](#)

Normal Text

WCAG AA: **Pass**
WCAG AAA: **Pass**

The five boxing wizards jump quickly.

Images – colour contrast example, icons



Example 1 - fail



Example 2 - pass



Example 3 - fail

Quick tips

Quick tips – events

- Include an accessibility guide.
- When people register, ask about their reasonable adjustments.
- Have multiple ways people can contact you if they need help.
- If multiple speakers, like a panel, say your name before you speak.



Quick tips - multiple formats for main information

Don't assume people will look in one place for information.

For accessibility, include your main information in different formats. Such as:

- website
- social channels
- email newsletters
- signage
- on-site volunteers.



Main information is the date, time and location of your event.

Quick tips - links

Link informative text

Links like 'click here' or 'read more' don't give the user any information about where the link is taking them.

Write this

Find out more about our [upcoming events on our Eventbrite page](#).

Not this

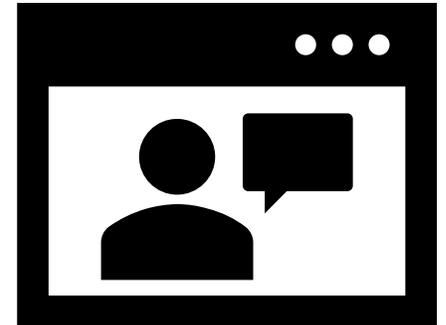
[Click here](#) to find out about our upcoming meetups.

Quick tips - videos

You need captions and a transcript.

- Captions are in black and white.
- Check accuracy of captions and transcript.

Include an Auslan interpreter for better accessibility.



Progress not perfection

Thank you for listening

I will be able to answer questions during the panel session.

Links – shared after the conference

Australian Government Style Manual

- <https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/>

You can search for topics.

References in presentation:

- User research and content
- Types of structure
- Headings
- Sentence length
- Plain language and word choice
- Active voice
- Alt text, captions and titles for images
- Links

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines

- <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/#text-alternatives>
- <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG22/#time-based-media>

WebAIM: Contrast Checker

- <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>

University of Melbourne | PDF Accessibility

- <https://www.unimelb.edu.au/accessibility/techniques/applications/pdf>