



BBS Accessible Communication Guide

BBS is committed to making communications inclusive and accessible to blind and partially sighted people. Accessible communication is used to describe information that is clear, easy to understand and that can be made available in multiple formats so that all users have equal access. There are many ways that media and communications can be made accessible for blind and partially sighted people. The following guidance can be used to support clubs and organisations to be inclusive in their messaging and engage more people with sight loss in sport and physical activity.

Language

It is important to consider the language and tone you use when communicating with or about people with disabilities. Where possible, always put the person before the impairment.

Terms we use:

- Person with a condition or visual impairment
- People with a visual impairment
- People with VI
- People with sight loss
- People who are blind or partially sighted
- VI-inclusive

Terms we avoid:

- The blind

- Blind people
- Blind and visually impaired people
- Avoid negative language e.g. 'suffers from'

Common phrases:

Everyone is different, but most are comfortable with words or phrases used to describe daily living.

- For example, people who are blind or partially sighted will not be offended by someone saying, 'nice to see you' or 'we are looking for volunteers'.
- Common phrases that may associate impairments with negative things should be avoided, especially when used metaphorically. For example: "The blind leading the blind".

Digital Communications

Social Media:

Most social media platforms are designed to be inclusive, with some being more accessible to people who are blind or partially sighted than others. You should check accessibility settings/best practices for each channel and keep up to date with the latest features. Here is a list of general guidelines to follow to make sure you are being inclusive:

- Write in plain language: Avoid jargon, slang, or technical terms.
- Don't overuse caps: Writing in caps can be difficult to read and is often misinterpreted by screen readers.
- Use camel case for hashtags. Capitalise the first letter of each word to make hashtags more legible and screen reader-friendly.

- Put hashtags and mentions at the end: Be mindful of how hashtags or mentions can disrupt copy.
- Use descriptive call-to-actions: Avoid 'click here.' Try 'sign up', 'Try it for free', or 'follow the link to subscribe'.
- Limit emoji use: Emojis are read aloud by assistive tech. If you use the clapping hands emoji between every word for emphasis, screen reader users will hear "clapping hands" after each word. This is true for any emoji. This will be distracting, annoying, and disorienting. The message you're trying to emphasize will likely be lost. Before using any emoji, look up how it translates to text.
- Use alternative text: Provide descriptions for images and videos. When no alt-text fields are available, give a description in your caption. They are often formatted: Image description: [description in brackets].

Website Accessibility:

When promoting your organisation or activity sessions, it is important to consider where you are directing people for additional information. Some website designs can make it difficult for people with sight loss to access content if they use assistive technology.

Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 defines how to make Web content more accessible to people with disabilities. There are three levels of compliance: A (lowest), AA, and AAA (highest).

Below are a few key points to consider when making website content accessible for people who are blind and partially sighted:

- Choose a content management system that supports accessibility.
- Use headings to organise the structure of your content.
- Include alt text for images.

- Include audio captions or transcripts for videos.
- Use colours with good contrast.
- Ensure the text size is large enough and in an easy-to-read font.
- Avoid flashing content.
- Give links unique and descriptive names.
- Design forms for accessibility.
- Ensure that all content can be accessed with the keyboard alone.
- Consider adding an accessibility toolbar to your website.
- Invest in screen reader/accessibility testing.

Writing Alt Text:

Alternative text, also known as alt text, is used within HTML code to describe the contents of an image and is read aloud when it is identified by a screen reader.

Alt text is an important component of web accessibility and can also help to improve search engine optimisation (SEO). Websites, social media, emails, newsletters, word documents and PDF files can all use alt text. As a rule, you should always include descriptive text whenever you use a picture/image in your digital communications.

Tips for writing alt-text:

- Keep it simple: Descriptions don't need to be longer than a sentence or two. Don't include 'image of' or 'photograph of'.
- Convey the content: A good tip is to write alt text as if you are describing the image to a friend over the phone.
- Be specific: Include elements such as colour if they are necessary for understanding the image.
- Share humour: Descriptive text doesn't have to be overly formal and should try to communicate what is amusing.
- Include text: If the image has text, include it in the description or write 'more information in post/below.'

- Don't forget about alt text: If the platform doesn't support alt text, give a description in the action.
- Decorative Pictures: Logos and decorative images don't require detailed descriptions and can be left as 'Decorative Image.'

Marketing Materials:

It is important to ensure all marketing materials used to promote your event, sessions and organisation are simple and clear. Involve relevant experts from the planning stages. Do not assume that external designers are aware of accessible design. Make sure you use suppliers with experience in producing quality materials in accessible formats.

Points to consider:

- Language
- Font size and style
- Document layout
- QR codes or digital formats
- Use of images
- Colour choice and contrast
- Size of document

Inclusive imagery:

Images are a powerful tool for letting people know they are welcome and valued in your sport or community. Using inclusive images can reinforce positive views of self-worth and potential and combat negative stereotypes. Not every image needs to highlight disability but be careful not to exclude people with biased imagery. Include photographs of people of various ethnicities and genders, as well as different ages, body types, abilities and religions. Here are some general guidelines for being inclusive in your imagery:

- Use relevant images that reflect the diversity of your audience.

- Use images of real people, ideally your employees, members or participants.
- Avoid clichés and stereotypes.
- Incorporate inclusive images into your daily marketing and communication efforts. Not just as a one-off or to promote a specific campaign.
- It's important to be aware of child protection and safeguarding issues when taking photos of or filming children and vulnerable people. Always obtain permission before distributing images and be mindful of content. For example name tags, logos and graphics on clothing. More information and guidance on Safeguarding can be found here. Go to:
<https://britishblindsport.org.uk/safeguarding/>

Document format:

Text and font:

- Use clear and sans-serif typefaces, such as Opens Sans or Tahoma.
- Ensure paragraph text is a minimum size of 14, for easy readability. Headings and subtitles can be larger.
- Headings can be **bold** or underlined but avoid the use of *italics*
- Do not bold, underline, italic or capitalise words in the middle of sentences for emphasis.

Document layout:

- Document should be left aligned where possible.
- Ensure text is unjustified (i.e. the edges of the lines are not all in line but vary depending on the length of words.) Justified text creates uneven spacing between words, which can make it difficult to read.
- Utilise Styles on Word when possible, (i.e. Titles, Headings, Subtitles) this makes navigation easier for those using screen readers.

- Use Page Break to move your cursor down to the next page, do not repeatedly press enter.
- Try to limit the use of tables in a document where possible.
- If using a table, create them in Excel first and import into your document. Excel is more accessible for screen readers than a basic Word table.
- If creating an Excel document, try to refrain from using different tabs as these do not show up on screen readers.

Artwork:

- Always make sure colour contrast is clear.
- Keep writing horizontal, not put on an angle, to ensure legibility.
- Avoid putting writing over images (unless it is high contrast).

Accessible formats:

- Accessible PDF documents (PDF Accessibility Wizard)
- Accessible Word/Plain Text documents
- Audio files
- Easy Read
- Large print
- Braille and Moon
- Telephone
- Digital (e-newsletters, email, social media etc.)

Plain Text:

Including a plain text document alongside a PDF ensures that information can be accessed by people with sight loss. Plain Text documents are created using Word (or equivalent). Keep the design very simple (more so than the PDF) to ensure optimum legibility and readability. Note, simply converting a word document to PDF does not ensure accessibility. Screen readers will only read the PDF as an image and won't be able to access the text.

Marketing to people with sight loss

There is no one size fits all approach when it comes to marketing and communications. For example, many older people with sight loss still see technology as a barrier. Make sure that you have multiple options for participants to contact you such as a telephone number, postal or email address.

The key is to tailor content to your audience and communicate through a range of channels in accessible formats to reach as many people as possible. This doesn't mean that you need to be on every social media platform or post multiple times every day. Focusing on a few key channels, being consistent with your messaging and being accessible to your audience will have similar, if not better, results.

Other channels to consider:

Networking opportunities:

Join forces with other organisations or clubs to host events and campaigns to increase your reach. Try partnering with National governing bodies of sport (NGBs), sight loss organisations, local clubs, VI Schools and charities to cross-promote activities and build mutually beneficial relationships.

Disability publications:

There are several disability-related magazines and trade publications. These are read by people with disabilities and those that work closely with them: Able Magazine, Disability Horizons, and Disability News Service.

Radio and podcasts:

Many people with visual impairments get their news from radio programmes. You could consider targeting the following stations and programmes as part of your media strategy: Talking News Federation (TFN), the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) radio station, 'In Touch' BBC Radio 4.

Summary

Being more accessible doesn't mean that you have to sacrifice good design. By using accessible design, you will be able to reach the widest possible audience and ensure that anyone who is interested can access more information and get involved.

It is important to note that while British Blind Sport focuses on how organisations and clubs can be inclusive to blind and partially sighted people, you should consider your audience and how different groups access information. People frequently have several impairments or conditions, therefore the more inclusive our communications are, the more people we can reach and engage in sports and physical activity.

Key points:

- Consider your audience: be as inclusive as you can be and reach out to organisations, experts and or volunteers who can help.
- Make accessibility a priority: train all staff, not just communication officers, and include it as a requirement for each project.
- Plan ahead: allow time and budget for producing alternative formats.
- Be mindful of language: Not everyone identifies as having a disability. Avoid negative language that can make people feel unwelcome, pitted or offended. Always write in plain English and design communications to be as easy to read as possible.
- Test your campaigns: Make sure that your communications are tested by people from different groups for usability and accessibility.

Useful resources

Inclusive Communication Guides:

- CharityComms Accessible Communication resource:
<https://www.charitycomms.org.uk/accessible-communications-a-starting-point-for-fostering-more-inclusive-comms>
- Activity Alliance Inclusive Communication Guide:
<https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources/60-inclusive-communications-guide>
- Activity Alliance Inclusive Communication Factsheets:
<https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/how-we-help/resources/7067-inclusive-communications-factsheets>
- UK government guidance on inclusive communication:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication>

Web Accessibility Guidance and Testing

- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1:
<https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/>
- The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Images and Alt Text Tutorial: <https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/images/>
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Accessibility Initiative provides a comprehensive list of web-based accessibility testing tools: www.w3.org/WAI/
- RNIB offers a wide range of web accessibility consultancy and training services: www.rnib.org.uk/rnib-business/website-and-apps

Social Media Accessibility Information and Tools

- RNIB Guide to Accessible Social Media:
<https://www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/assistive-aids-and-technology/everyday-tech/navigation-and-communication/guide-to-accessible-social-media/>

Accessible Documents

- Microsoft Accessibility Checker: Microsoft has a built-in accessibility tool available in Outlook, Excel, and Word. Microsoft has built-in accessibility tools available in Outlook, Excel, and Word. Microsoft's Inclusive Design Manual also offers videos and downloadable booklets on inclusive design topics.
<https://www.microsoft.com/design/inclusive/>
- UCLA Helpful Document Accessibility Resources:
<https://dcp.ucla.edu/helpful-document-accessibility-resources>

Accessible Design

- Vox Product Accessibility Guidelines for designers, editors and more: <http://accessibility.voxmedia.com/>