

# Hampshire Futures

*Inspiring ambition, supporting success*



## Ten Top Tips

How to make Hampshire Futures' information accessible to everyone

Hampshire Futures centres provide a range of information in printed formats: flyers, leaflets and posters, for example.

These guidelines provide 'ten top tips' for centre managers and their staff, to ensure that this information is easily accessible for everyone, including people with

- visual impairments
- learning difficulties
- memory or concentration difficulties
- specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- literacy or language difficulties

1. **Aim for a good contrast between print and paper**, such as black type on white or cream paper. If coloured paper is used, make sure that the background colour is pale, such as pastel blue or pale green. If the print colour is not black, make sure that it is as dark as possible, for example dark brown or navy blue. Red, yellow or orange often do not provide sufficient contrast to be seen easily.

Avoid all pale shades on coloured background, for example avoid grey print on pale blue paper.

White type on black or another dark coloured paper (reversal of type) can work well, provided font size is relatively large. Avoid glossy paper as this reflects light and reduces readability.

2. **Choose an appropriate font style and size**. There are hundreds of font styles to choose from, but they generally fall into one of two groups. 'Serif' fonts have small cross strokes at the end of strokes. Times New Roman and Garamond are serif fonts. 'Sans serif' fonts do not have these strokes ('sans' is French for 'without'). People generally find sans serif fonts easier to read. The complex shapes of serif characters can cause confusion because the 'ticks' and 'tails' can obscure the shapes of the letters and make the shape of the word more difficult to identify.

Arial, Comic Sans, Gill sans, Verdana, Trebuchet and Tahoma are all examples of sans serif fonts.

Another factor to consider is the letters that rise above and below the text. These are known as ascenders and descenders. Fonts with a clear distinction between ordinary height letters (e.g. a,c,e,m,n,o,r,u,w,x) and those with ascenders and descenders (e.g. p, b, d, g, h) is helpful. This is because we use the letters that rise above and below the text as sub-conscious navigation guides. Verdana has relatively short ascenders / descenders compared to comic sans and trebuchet.

Type size is often the biggest influence on legibility. Generally, text should be produced as a minimum equivalent Ariel font size 12. Most materials are easier to read if a larger font size is chosen

3. **Avoid italics and underlining as this makes text harder to read.** They cut through descenders and interfere with the shape of the word. Generally, using italics will reduce readability by 30%.

The use of bold type can be used as emphasis, although don't overuse this feature as this can be counterproductive.

4. **Avoid justified or centred text.** Justified text is harder to read because the spacing between words is varied to give the flush left and right margins. Centred text may look good when included as part of a graphic design. But if you want people to read what you have written then don't use it. It is the most difficult of all layouts to read and most people give up after only a few lines. It takes time to pick up the start of a new line from the end of the one above.

5. **Avoid capital letters.** These are harder to read than lower case letters. A word or two in capitals as a heading should not present serious difficulties but capitals should be avoided for continuous text as they are confusing to read. This is because there are no ascenders or descenders. They also give the impression that you are shouting at the reader.

6. **Avoid text over a patterned background, or superimposed over images, or around illustrations.** It is much harder to read and can be confusing.

7. **Aim for an uncluttered layout without too much information.** Avoid narrow line spacing, narrow margins, or dense text. Leave larger spaces between sections than between paragraphs. Lots of white space encourages reading and accessibility.

8. **Use bullet point summaries rather than dense text or lengthy paragraphs.** Break up large amounts of information into smaller blocks by using subheadings. Use short sentences and paragraphs. Layout should be clear, simple, and logical. Overall tip – simplify, simplify, simplify.

9. **Use visual images to attract attention, give interest and illustrate information.**

10. **Ensure materials are available in alternative formats;** large print, electronic format for example, and make sure you say this on the front or at the back of any document.