Email Accessibility (A11y)
Why Accessibility for Emails?

- **Email Accessibility** is the creation of email content that is accessible, usable, and readable for all people including readers with disabilities.
- Removing barriers to reach the largest audience.
- Accessible emails can benefit everyone.
Email Platform vs. Email Client

Platform
• Exchange (Outlook)
• CSUN’s Broadcast Emails
• MailChimp, etc.

Client
• Mobile apps
• Web browser
• Desktop
Email Formats

Plain Text Format
- No structure but widely compatible

Rich Text Format
- Outlook
- Follow Word best practices

HTML Format
- Follow web best practices
Creating Accessible Emails

Accessibility Tips

• Attachments
  • Flyers
  • Other
• Images
  • Descriptions: alt text
• Text Readability
• Heading Styles
• Bulleted and Numbered Lists
• Descriptive Links
• White Space
Image Flyers

• Image files (gif, jpg, png) are not accessible

• Images are fine to use and share as long as the content is presented in an accessible format too
Avoid Image-Only Emails

Creating email to send only an image of the event poster/flyer.

Two major drawbacks:

1. Text within an image will not be accessible to readers who have visual impairments and rely on screen readers or braille writers.
2. Readers or the email client may be blocking images.

Best practice

Provide all of the information contained in the image as text in the email (plus alt text for the image).
Food Drive For The Homeless

It’s never a bad time to help those who are in need.

Drop by at
12345 Angels City,
Los Angeles, CA 91234

We’re open daily from 9am to 5pm.
If you have questions, just call 123-456-7891 or email@donate.org
Visit World Vision Donation

Summit for gay Latino male collegians

Saturday, February 17, 2018
10AM to 4PM
USC University Park Campus,
Fertitta Hall 125 LL
Los Angeles, CA
PDF Flyers

- Unlike images, PDF files can be accessible
- PDF flyers/attachments to emails must be accessible
- Text equivalent to the PDF is not an acceptable alternative
Flyers: Image vs. PDF

Image: provide text equivalent

PDF: provide accessible PDF
Other Attachments

• Files attached to an email must also be accessible.
• Use a descriptive and distinct file name.
• Videos in emails must be captioned and audio described.

Unclear / Vague File Name
• 00123345667987.pdf
• Resume.pdf
• Reports.docx
• Excel_2019.xlsx

Descriptive File Name
• Accessible_Email_Infographics.pdf
• Nguyen_Van_Resume.pdf
• UDC_Captioning_2018.docx
• UDC_Budget_2019.xlsx

www.csun.edu/captioning
Visual Challenge

What’s the best way to make images accessible to everyone?
• **Alt Text** allows visually impaired or blind users who use text-to-speech assistive technologies (AT), such as screen readers, to understand the purpose of graphic images.

• Sighted users usually don’t see alt text unless they use AT, however, emails may show alt text instead of the image.
Alt Text Best Practices

- Describe the content and the purpose of the image clearly and concisely, in a phrase or a sentence or two.
- Keep alt text short: 200 characters or less.
- Images with text should include the words on the image.
- “Image of...”, “Photo of...” is not needed because screen readers and other AT announce that it’s an “image” or “graphic”.
- Use proper punctuation such as periods to indicate the end of the alt text.
- Don’t insert hyperlinks in alt text because they are not clickable and can’t create descriptive link text.
How to Describe Images?

- A stair chase leading up to an entryway is painted yellow with bold black text that reads "museums are now."

- A hand reaches out of a computer screen giving the hand gesture for stop. The screen reads ‘access denied!’

- On the left is the book cover for Haben The Deafblind Woman Who Conquered Harvard Law, and on the right is the quote: “In the Tigrinya language of Eritrea and Ethiopia, Haben means ‘pride.’”

- Michelle Obama claps and Barack waves.

- Student holds a diploma hardcover up in the air during CSUN commencement. Caption text "and together, as Matadors, we will move mountains."

More examples of How to Describe Images

- Document Learning Tools: Describing images
- How to Describe Images (Art, Chemistry, Diagrams, Flow Charts, Formatting & Layout, Graphs, Maps, Mathematics, Page Layout, Tables, Text-only images)
- Periodic Table of the Elements
- UDC Best Practices for Describing Images
Text Readability

• Text should be clear and easy to read

• Font size of 12 points or larger

• San-serif fonts are more suited to electronic formats  
  (Arial, Calibri, Verdana or Franklin Gothic Book)

• Avoid difficult fonts, fancy script, or decorative fonts with curly edges

• Ensure there is enough contrast between the foreground color and background color
People who have low vision or colorblind could encounter some difficulty distinguishing text color from a background color if the contrast is insufficient contrast ratio 1.5:1.

This example has a great color contrast ratio of 8.7:1. The contrast is sufficient for those who have color deficiencies.

- Download Colour Contrast Analyser onto your computer (PC/Mac) to ensure accessible contrast or use an online contrast checker from WebAIM.
- WCAG Level AA requires a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1 for regular sized text (12 or 14 pt. font) and 3:1 for large text (18 pt. font).
- Coblis Color Blindness Simulator
Headings

• Provide structure and make email accessible
• Easier to modify existing formatting
• Accessible to any assistive technology like screen readers
• Use a logical sequence. Do not skip heading levels, i.e., Heading 2 then Heading 4; headings should be in order.)
  • **Heading 1**: Document Title (one time only)
  • **Heading 2**: Major subsection titles
  • **Heading 3**: Further subsection titles, and so forth
  • **Normal**: Text or paragraph
Email Marketing Headings/Styles

**Mail Chimp:** Templates have heading levels 1-4 to organize the content in a hierarchical structure. Headings are located under the “styles tab” in WYSIWIG.

**Campaign Monitor:** There are heading levels 1 - 3. In addition, creators can choose from normal text, numbered or bulleted lists, and block quotes.

Refer to [Email Marketing Accessibility](#)
Academic Technology March 2023 Newsletter

To: Tipton, Kathryn

Academic Technology News

Digital Equity Day 2023 Coming Soon!
Join us for Digital Equity

Doctoral Student Equity Fellowship
Let your students know that

UDC Procurement Accessibility Course
Are you a frequent “CSUN"
Bulleted and Numbered Lists

• Use lists to organize information
• Use platform’s built-in functionality to create
  • Bulleted List (order of list items does not matter)
  • Numbered List (order of list items does matter)
Best Practices for Accessible Links

**DESCRIPTION**
- Link text must always properly describe the purpose of the link and tell a user where the link will take them.
- Do not use text such as “click here” or “read more,” nor web addresses (URLs).

**PRESENTATION**
- Each link on the page should be visually different from regular text on the website.
- Can be differentiated by color, bold, underline, or italics.
- Using color alone does not make it accessible.

**FUNCTIONALITY**
- Link functionality is about ensuring a link functions the way the user expects.
- Links must always enhance the accessibility of a webpage.
- Users must be able to access links using a mouse, keyboard, or speech recognition commands.

**LINKED IMAGES**
- A linked image is an image (with or without text) that is linked to another resource or webpage.
- Linked images need link descriptions as well as image descriptions (alt text).
- If the link description is different than the alt text, enter the link description in the HTML Title field.
- Visit [Linked Images](#) on the Best Practices for Accessible Images page for more information.
Best Practices for Links in Emails

- Use descriptive text, not a URL
- Use each link once
- Put each link at the end of the line of text
- Do not use URL shorteners (bit.ly, etc.)

13. ‘The DeafBlind community is an underserved community.’ Northeastern engineering students are designing more accessible doorbells- March 7, 2023
Source: Northeastern University

   a. ‘We need blind scientists.’ Northeastern professor tells United Nations about her ‘unseen advantage’ in inspirational speech- March 7, 2023
Source: Northeastern Global News
White Space

- Avoid excessive spaces, tabs, etc.
  - Screen readers may read “blank.”
- Use built-in formatting to create white space instead of repeating blank characters.
Check (Test) Email

On the web

Join us for the 4th Annual Student Success Celebration--April 27th, 2:30pm - 4pm

Subject: Join us for the 4th Annual Student Success Celebration--April 27th, 2:30pm - 4pm

Dear Colleagues,

CSUN staff, faculty, and students are invited to attend the 4th Annual Student Success Celebration. This event will be in person for the first time. Please help us spread the word.

Feel free to forward this invitation to your students and colleagues in your respective areas.
Accessibility Checker

Office 365 Outlook Client

Office 365 Outlook Web App
Create with Accessibility in Mind

Best Practices

Email communication programs

Making digital content accessible for everyone
How can we help you make a difference?

Universal Design Center Offers

- Online, self-paced training
- In-person training each semester
- Consultations
- Tools and Services