



Accessibility Checklist: Accessible Communications



Communicating with voters is a critically important function of an elections office. According to EAC-funded research, **Disability, the Voting Process, and the Digital Divide**, election offices are the most reliable and most trusted sources of election information. Voters look to their local election officials for election dates, times, polling locations, and other election-related information. It is important for this information to be accessible to all voters, including voters with disabilities.

Election offices are required to provide effective communications to people with communication disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This is meant to ensure that people with disabilities (including but not limited to vision, hearing, or communication disabilities) can receive information from covered organizations, including election offices. This guide will cover several strategies for delivering accessible communications for electronic documents, in-person communications, videos and virtual meetings, and social media posts. When communicating with voters, it is important to use plain language and consider the length, complexity, and purpose of the communication.

Plain Language



According to PlainLanguage.gov, Plain Language is writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.



Electronic Documents

An electronic document is any written document that uses text to share information. Electronic documents may include emails, websites, or files, including Word and PDF documents. Here are some key features to consider when creating electronic documents:

Font

- Use a strong color contrast (such as black text on a white background).
- Avoid using backgrounds with patterns.
- Choose a sans-serif font (such as Calibri or Helvetica) that is clear and easy to read.
- Use a font size that is at least 12 points for standard text.

Layout

- Structure content in a layout that is easily read from left to right.
- Limit the use of multiple text columns.
- If possible, avoid using text boxes, layout tables, and data tables.
- Use built-in heading styles, such as Title, Heading 1, Heading 2, etc. This allows screen readers to recognize and properly read the document
- Organize content into bulleted or numbered lists, using built-in styles.

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Content

- When using images that convey information, provide alternative text (ALT text) descriptions that describe and explain the purpose of the image.
- Use digital signatures instead of handwritten signatures. (when permitted)
- Ensure that PDF documents are **tagged and structured** per the above guidelines.
- Remember that PDFs of scanned documents (image only) are not accessible unless they have been specifically made accessible, such as by setting the reading order, adding tags, and including ALT text.
- If a document cannot be made accessible, provide an equivalent text version of the inaccessible document via accessible HTML, an alternative file format, or within the body of an email.
- Use built-in accessibility and screen reading tools to ensure that the audio version of a document is reading correctly and in the proper order.



In-Person Conversations and Meetings

When sharing information with the public in-person, whether in a one-on-one conversation, on the telephone, or in a public meeting, it is important to consider how to make those interactions as accessible as possible. Here are some factors to consider when communicating in-person:

Face-to-Face Interactions

- Talk to the person with a disability in a normal tone of voice (not shouting).
- Directly address the individual with a disability, not their attendant or the person accompanying them, if such an individual is present.
- When applicable, provide auxiliary aids and services to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities (such as TTY text telephones).

In-Person Meetings

- For instructions and checklists on how to ensure a meeting location is physical accessible refer to the [Accessible In-Person Voting](#).
- Include a notice in the event invitation regarding what accommodations will be made available during the meeting. These may include:
 - Assistive listening devices
 - Captions
 - Large print
 - ASL interpreter
 - Advance copy of meeting materials
- If available, provide speakers and presenters with microphones.
- Ensure that any visual presentations meet the guidelines listed under Electronic Documents.

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Signage

- Use clear directional signage to guide attendees to the meeting location.
- Clearly identify the specific location or meeting room.
- Visual displays should be large print and at a visible height.
- Provide audio instructions if possible.

Videos and Virtual Meetings

- Captions are required for information provided by speech or sound. Consider live translation solutions such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) to caption your conference call or webinar.
- At registration ask attendees if they need an ASL interpreter.
- Include descriptions of visual content in speaker narration (for example speakers should describe their appearance).
- Provide audio descriptions for information provided through graphics and pictures.
- Provide transcripts with videos and after meetings.
- Make sure the media player controls (pause, play, stop, fast forward, rewind) are keyboard accessible.
- Make sure chat and response functions are accessible.



Social Media

Election officials are sharing more and more voting information on social media. The social media platforms used by election officials vary significantly, with some platforms focusing on text posts, while others emphasize images or videos. Here are some things to consider when providing election information through social media platforms:

Text

- Ensure that all text uses plain language.
- When sharing documents, make sure that any electronic documents meet the guidelines listed above.
- Limit the use of emojis. If an emoji is repeated in a post, a screen reader will read the audio description of each emoji individually, check the description to ensure it reflects the intention behind its use.

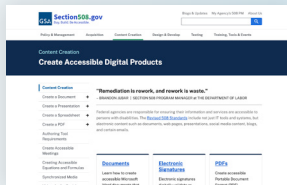
Images

- Add alternative text (ALT text) to every image to describe the appearance or information communicated by the image.
- If ALT text is not available through the platform, add a detailed description of the image in the post text.
- Consider including a caption for the image in the text of the post.

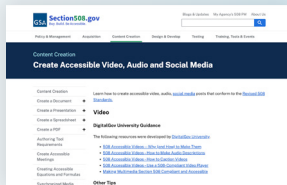
Videos

- Ensure that captions are turned on for your video and that the caption text is accurate.
- Provide a text transcript of the video, including image descriptions.
- Include visual descriptions within the video as part of the script. For example, use a narrator to describe the key features of a scene, including the number of people present or any key objects on screen.

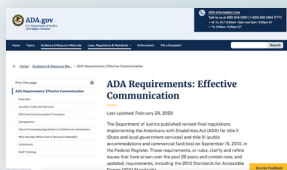
Additional Resources



Visit www.section508.gov/create for “how-to” guides, training videos, and a checklist on creating accessible electronic documents.



Review this **Video, Audio and Social** guidance for more information.



<https://www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication/>



<https://www.fcc.gov/general/trs-state-and-territories>