

# Introduction to the guidance



Guidance ■

This section is an introduction to the guidance. It tells you how we wrote the guidance and what is in it. It also tells you why it is important to make information easy for people with learning disabilities.



# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. Why did we write the guidance?** This guidance is for people who want to start making their information easier for people with learning disabilities. Easy information helps people with learning disabilities to make choices and get their rights. Organisations must make their information easier. If they do not they could be breaking the law.



**2. How did we write the guidance?** We talked to self advocacy groups and other people who make information. They told us their ideas about the best ways to make information easier. We read books and articles about making information. People with learning disabilities worked on the project in lots of different ways.

**Using symbols**

People with learning disabilities can use symbols to communicate, to be more independent and to help them understand text. There are a number of things that you should think about when preparing easy information that uses symbols.

**Computer based information**

This section covers ways to make your information accessible so that people can use it in different ways. There are many different ways that you can give people information on computers. Words and pictures, video clips, symbols and audio are just some of the ways that people choose how they want to see, hear or read your information to suit them best.

**Important things to think about**

There are some important things to bear in mind when you are preparing to give information to people with learning disabilities. It is a good idea to read this section before you start to do either of the other two sections below. This section gives you some basic ideas to think about.

**Audio**

Many people, including people with learning disabilities, cannot read, or find reading hard. Many have a visual impairment. Perhaps they have difficulty seeing, or perhaps they have difficulty seeing things. This means that recordings on audio tapes or CDs play an important part in making information easier for people.

### Easy summary

The key points covered in this section are:

1. Make a recording that is easy to understand. Work with people who know what you want in your recording. Make it short and include only the key information. Use the best recording equipment you can. Make your recording in a quiet room, where you will not be interrupted.
2. Use interesting voices. You can use more than one voice on your recording. You can include the voices of people with learning disabilities and people from different parts of the country. They should sound clear, interesting and not speak too quickly.
3. Make a recording that is easy to use. You can use words or music to show people where they are in the tape or CD. Label your tape or CD carefully, with pictures and symbols for people who can't read. You can have labels in braille or Moon for people with visual impairments.
4. Match audio with written information. If you make written information for people with learning disabilities you should offer an audio version as well. When you write the words, make sure they will be easy to understand when they are read out loud. You need to do this before you make your recording.

You can help your listeners follow the recording in a booklet by saying the page numbers and letting them know when they need to turn the page. Give them plenty of time to do this. You can let them know when they get to a new section, when they get to the back page and when the recording ends.<sup>1,2,4,7</sup>

You can use a short piece of music, or other sound to show people where they are. You will need to explain how the music or sounds are used.<sup>1</sup> You will need to make sure you do not use music that has a copyright. That means it cannot be copied unless the person who owns it agrees.<sup>1</sup>

It is very important to label your recording carefully. You need to say who the recording is from, what is on it and how long it lasts.<sup>4</sup> You need to put labels on the box and on the tape or CD itself. Label which side 1 and 2. If the cassette is in a series, put which number it is. You will need to include a picture, symbol or logo as well as words, for people who cannot read. You might need to have a braille or Moon label for people with visual impairments.<sup>1,4</sup>

**4 Match audio with written information**

Audio recordings are often made to go with written information. If written information is made for people with learning disabilities they should always be given the chance to have a recording too.<sup>1</sup> Even if people cannot read, they often want to want to look at the written information and pictures and hear the recording at the same time.<sup>1,4,7</sup>

It is important to work on making the words easy before you record them. See the guidance section on 'Words and language' for more information about this topic. When writing the words, bear in mind that they will be taped. When words are read out loud, it helps to check they are easy to understand, especially if they are read by people with learning disabilities. So you need to practise reading them out loud and make the recording before the words are printed, in case you need to make any changes.<sup>1</sup>

You need to think about how far to match the words exactly. If there is detailed contact information at the beginning of a recording, this could put people off. You might want to put it at the end instead. Or you might want to leave out names and addresses and say that people can get them from the booklet.<sup>1</sup>

**3. What is in the guidance?** The guidance has 12 sections, as well as this introduction. Each section is about a different topic. Read or listen to the introduction first. Then the section called 'Important things to think about'.

Each section of guidance starts with an easy summary. This is so people with learning disabilities and other organisations can use the guidance together to make easy information. The easy summary has pictures and there is a recording of it.

After the easy summary, each guidance section has a longer part with more information about the topic. Many people with learning disabilities will need support to use the longer part of the guidance.



**4. What does it mean to have a learning disability?** Many people with learning disabilities have not had the chance to learn to read or write. Some people with learning disabilities also find it hard to understand new, or difficult information. They often have no choice or control over their lives. Services don't always ask people what they want, or communicate in easy ways.



**5. People with learning disabilities have different needs.** All people are different. They might have a physical impairment, such as difficulty using their hands or walking. They can belong to different Black and minority ethnic groups. Because people have different needs, they will also need their information in lots of different ways.



**6. Lots of people with learning disabilities also have a hearing impairment or visual impairment.** This means they are deaf or have difficulty hearing things. Or they are blind or have difficulty seeing things. You need to make sure your information is easy for them too.

**7. People with learning disabilities often need support to use information.** There are lots of ways that families, staff and supporters can help people use information. But there may be times when there is no-one around to help. Also, some people with learning disabilities want to deal with their own information, especially if it is about something private.

# 1

## Why did we write the guidance?

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### Who the guidance is for

This guidance is for anyone who wants to make their information easier, or accessible for people with learning disabilities. Lots of people are starting to realise they need to make their information suitable for this audience. They want to know more about how to do this. But many people will be new to the idea of making information accessible. It is important not only to people in health and social services, but to people in all different sorts of organisations, like financial, leisure and housing services.<sup>1</sup>

### Why easy information is important

The law says that service providers should make their information easier for people with learning disabilities. The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) says that service providers should think about how to make communication easier. Service providers who do not make what the Act calls ‘reasonable adjustments’ could be taken to court by people with learning disabilities and other disabled people.<sup>2</sup>

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Organisations can benefit in other ways from making information easier for people with learning disabilities. Making your information easier can be better for all the people you want to reach. Readers prefer plain language.<sup>5</sup> Making easy information can save you time and money too. Staff can spend a lot of time sorting out mistakes when information is not clear.<sup>3</sup> Making easier information can be good for the public image of an organisation.<sup>4</sup>

People with learning disabilities need information about every area of life. Being able to access information is an important part of playing a full part in society. Information helps people to make choices and to get their rights. Groups of people with learning disabilities are campaigning for easy to understand information. They need access to the same information as everyone else. Don't miss them out.<sup>6</sup>

# **2**

## **How did we write the guidance?**

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This guidance is based on what we found out in the Information for All research project. The project was funded by the Department of Health as part of the Learning Disabilities Research Initiative and finished in February 2004. The project team included:

- Chris Mears a self advocate who was employed as Information Worker on the project;
- Jackie Rodgers, Ruth Townsley, Liz Folkes and Beth Tarleton, who are researchers at the Norah Fry Research Centre;
- Marilyn Baker, the project secretary;
- Gill Levy and Laura Waite, from the RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind) Multiple Disability Services;
- Syson Namaganda, from the Black Health Agency, who co-authored the section on information for people with learning disabilities from Black and minority ethnic groups;

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- Jane Jones and Sue Thurman who co-authored the section on ‘Information for people who have high individual communication needs’.
  - A group of people with learning disabilities also helped with the project in different ways. This included making information about the project easy to understand and helping with the interviews (see below).

We collected all the material we could about making information easier. We talked to 30 organisations that make information. These included several organisations led by people with learning disabilities. All the organisations that shared their knowledge and experience are listed at the end of this introduction. When the information in the guidance comes from these interviews, there is a small number 1 just above it, like this<sup>1</sup>.

We also read lots of books and articles about making information easier. When the information in the guidance comes from a book or article, there is another small number just above it, like this<sup>32</sup>. You can find the book or article it came from by looking at the list at the end of each section of guidance.

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We tested drafts of the guidance with different people and organisations, including self advocacy organisations. We made changes based on what they said.

We hope we have saved people time, by collecting this information together. We know that everyone is still learning about the best ways to do this kind of work. We will not have managed to get together every possible bit of information. But we hope it will be a useful starting point. People might need to use other resources to help with their work. Some suggestions are listed at the end of each section. People might also want to get training to help them do this work better. Some self-advocacy organisations offer training in making information easier for people with learning disabilities. We know that sometimes a lack of time and money means that people cannot always do everything just as they would like. But we hope everyone will do their best to make their information easier.

# **3** What is in the guidance?

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The guidance is made up of this introduction and 12 other sections. The first section is ‘Important things to think about’. This gives you some questions to think about before you begin making information aimed at people with learning disabilities. You need to read this before you read any other section of the guidance.

There is a section called ‘Working together’. This section gives you ideas for working together with people with learning disabilities to make and test easy information.

The other sections are:

- Information for people with learning disabilities and visual impairments
- Information for people with learning disabilities from Black and minority ethnic groups
- Information for people who have high individual communication needs (people who need information provided in ways that are individual to them)

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- Words and language
  - Design and layout
  - Using pictures
  - Using symbols
  - Audio
  - Video
  - Computer based information

We hope that everyone who is making easy information will be working together with people with learning disabilities to do the work. So, we have started each section of guidance with a summary, which we hope will be easier for people with learning disabilities to use. This section has pictures and is also recorded on CD, to make it easier for people who find reading difficult.

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After the easy summary, there is a longer, more detailed section aimed at a more general audience. Many people with learning disabilities will need help to use this section. At the end of each section, there is a list of resources and a list of all the books and articles that we used to write the guidance.

# **4** What does it mean to have a learning disability?

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There are about 1.4 million people with learning disabilities (also called people with learning difficulties) in the UK.<sup>7</sup>

People with learning disabilities are likely to find it hard to understand new, or difficult, information. Some people might also find it hard to learn new skills or to do things on their own (like catch a bus) without support.<sup>7</sup> Out of every 100 people with learning disabilities, about 50 are likely to find it really hard to understand information and to communicate with other people.<sup>8</sup>

Many people with learning disabilities have not had the chance to learn to read or write. This means they will probably find it difficult to understand printed information such as a train ticket or the instructions to the bottle of medicine.<sup>9</sup> Many people with learning disabilities also find it hard to use computers.<sup>2</sup>

People with learning disabilities often have no choice or control over aspects of their lives. This can be because services and professionals don't ask them what they want, or communicate with them in a way that is easy to understand. This means that people get left out of decisions and discussions about their lives, or about the wider world.<sup>7</sup>

# **5 People with learning disabilities have different needs**

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It's important to remember that people with learning disabilities are people first. Different people have different needs. Some people with learning disabilities will belong to different Black and minority ethnic groups. Many people with learning disabilities will also have a physical impairment. For example, your audience of people with learning disabilities might include:

- People who have a visual impairment and find it difficult to see printed text or pictures on a page.
- People who are deaf or use British Sign Language as their first language.
- People who cannot see text, pictures or moving images.
- People who don't understand the concept of colour, or number.
- People who have a physical impairment that makes it difficult to hold a printed document or use a computer.<sup>10</sup>

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There are lots of different aids and equipment to help people to read, or use information. But people with learning disabilities are not always given them.

Whatever their individual needs, **all** people with learning disabilities need easy information to help them make choices and take control over their lives.<sup>7</sup> The guidance sections that follow tell you more about the different ways you can make your information easier to understand. This might be by using easy words and language, putting information onto audio tape or CD, or making a video. These different ways of presenting information are called formats.

Because people with learning disabilities will have a broad range of needs, they will also need a broad range of formats. As an information provider, this means you should try to think about how you can use a variety of formats to get your message across.<sup>11</sup> Talk to people with learning disabilities to find out what formats they prefer.<sup>10</sup> Some people may find it useful to have their information on video format, others might prefer large, clear print and photographs.<sup>12</sup> You will also need to tell people if a range of formats is available.<sup>13</sup>

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It is important to think about whether you are making information for individual people, or a group of people.<sup>12</sup> If you are making information for an individual then it will be easier to find out more about their own specific information needs and what formats they prefer. If you are making information for a local, small or well-defined group of people with learning disabilities you can also find out what formats they like best.

It is harder to find out about the needs of larger groups, or when your audience is not a local one. But it will help if you work together with people with learning disabilities to make and test the information you produce. See the guidance section on ‘Working together with your audience’ for more information about this topic.

# **6 Lots of people with learning disabilities also have a hearing impairment or visual impairment**

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Lots of people will have a hearing or visual impairment as well as a learning disability. 3 out of 10 people with learning disabilities have a visual impairment and 4 out of 10 have a hearing impairment.<sup>14</sup> Some people will have a visual impairment **and** a hearing impairment.

People with a hearing impairment have difficulty hearing things. They may also refer to themselves as being d/Deaf or hard of hearing. People who identify themselves as being Deaf (with a capital letter) are members of the Deaf community and adopt British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language (along with other cultural elements).

People with a visual impairment have difficulty seeing things and may refer to themselves as blind or partially sighted.

Many people with learning disabilities don't know they have a hearing or visual impairment. Because they have always seen or heard like that they do not realise anything is wrong. Different people have different types of hearing impairment or visual impairment. Most people can see, or hear, something. Only a few people can see nothing at all, or hear nothing at all.<sup>15</sup>

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Very few people with learning disabilities and visual impairments have learned to read by touch, using braille or Moon. Most people are dependent on audio versions of written or visual material.<sup>15</sup>

Very few people with learning disabilities and hearing impairments have been given the opportunity to develop BSL as their first language. However, many people use signing systems such as Makaton and Signalong to help them express themselves better and understand what other people are saying. Many people with learning disabilities and hearing impairments will need pictures, symbols or video to help them understand information.

It is very important to remember that many people with learning disabilities also have a visual or hearing impairment. You need to make sure that your information is easy for them too. Having easy information helps people with hearing and visual impairments to make decisions and take control of their lives.

# **7 People with learning disabilities often need support to use information**

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Family, staff and supporters often play a key role in helping people with learning disabilities to access and act upon the information they receive.<sup>16</sup> Even when information is provided in easy formats, many people prefer to share it with someone they know, who can explain difficult ideas, or help them to follow things up.<sup>17</sup>

People with visual and hearing impairments often need others to interpret the world to them. This is also true of some people with learning disabilities who do not have English as their first language. They may be dependent on one or two people to read to them, or to translate or interpret information for them.<sup>15</sup> But there may be times when there is no-one around to help them.

Often a person with learning disabilities may rely on their mum or dad, or another close relative, to help them with information. Family members may have very different hopes, expectations and values from their son or daughter.<sup>15</sup> It is important to bear this in mind if you are providing information to people with learning disabilities. People may not realise that something is personal or confidential until someone reads it to them. This can be embarrassing.

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They may prefer to read, see or hear private information by themselves, or with a supporter who is not a family member.<sup>15</sup> And some people may prefer to manage as much information as possible without help.

It's important that supporters understand their role in helping people with learning disabilities to access information.<sup>11</sup> Family, staff and supporters need to be aware of what easy information exists on different topics. They also need to make sure it is stored and displayed in a place where people with learning disabilities can find it.<sup>16</sup>

### **Supporting people with visual impairments to access information**

There are many ways that supporters can help people with visual impairments access information more easily. These include:

- Make sure that everyone has an eye test with an optometrist or optician every 2 years. More often if the optometrist or optician recommends it.

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- Help people to get the right glasses if they need them.
  - Some people might need other aids such as magnifiers. Low vision clinics can help with these.
  - Think about where people are using information. Quiet places are usually better. Make sure people have enough light to see the information.
  - Make sure that your information is clear, large and bold, with a good contrast between the page/screen and text. See the guidance section on ‘Design and layout’ for more information about this topic.

For more information about how to support people with visual impairments access information see the guidance section on ‘Information for people with learning disabilities who have visual impairments’.

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## **Supporting people with hearing impairments to access information**

- Make sure that people have their ears checked regularly. Even ears blocked with wax can make it hard for someone to hear speech.
- If the person has a hearing aid then make sure it is fitted correctly. Check that the battery is working and that the hearing aid is switched on.
- If possible, move to a quiet area that is carpeted and has soft furnishings like curtains and cushions. This will help the sounds seem less ‘tinny’ and hollow.
- Make sure the room is well lit so that the person can see you, in particular your face.
- People need different amounts of time to take in information. It helps to break up information into chunks. It is also important to take plenty of breaks.

# Thanks

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- Bristol and South Gloucestershire People First
- Bristol City Council, Equalities Unit
- British Institute of Learning Disabilities
- Brook Advisory Service
- Cambridge Speaking Up
- Central Office for Information (Wendy Gregory)
- Centre for Health Information Quality  
[www.nfht.org/chiq](http://www.nfht.org/chiq)
- CHANGE (North)
- Community Living

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- Cornwall People First
  - Disability Rights Commission
  - Filton College
  - Fiveways Resource Centre
  - Information Transfer
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  - Makaton
  - Mencap Accessibility Unit
  - Mencap: Total communication
  - Mental Health Media
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  - People First (Self Advocacy, London)
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- Real Time
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  - The Making Connections Unit, Learning Service, Glasgow Caledonian University
  - Transactive Project
  - Widget Software
  - Working with words
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[www.ssni.org.uk/resources/salford.htm](http://www.ssni.org.uk/resources/salford.htm)

This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)



# Important things to think about



Guidance ■

There are some important things to think about when you start planning to get information to people with learning disabilities. It is a good idea to read this section before you look at the guidance on any one sort of information. This section gives you some questions you can think about.



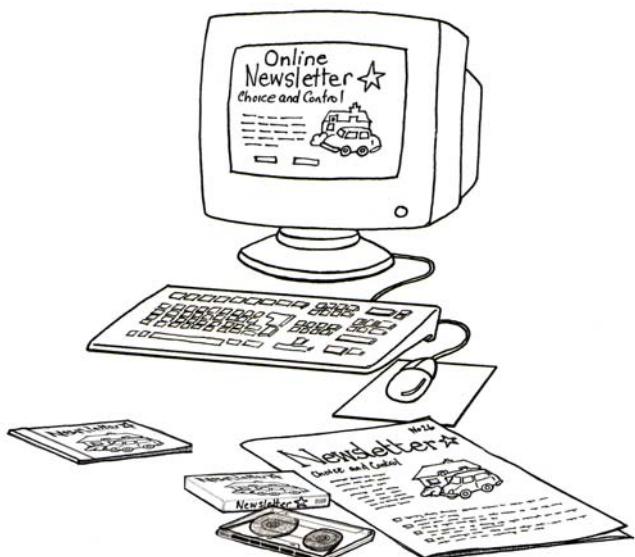
# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. What is your information for?** Be clear about why you are making your information. Start with the information that people with learning disabilities most want to know. Make sure your information is correct and up to date.



**2. How will you get your information to people?** Think about all the different ways you might get your message to people. For example, you could use a meeting, a newsletter or a video. Then you can work out which way is best for the people the information is for.



**3. How can you make your information easier to understand?** Find out as much as you can about the people your information is for. Then you can make sure your information suits them. Guidance can help you, but you still need to work together with people with learning disabilities.

# 1

## What is your information for?

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You need to be very clear about why you are making your information. You should say what it is about, what it includes and who it is aimed at.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> For many people the main point of making information easier is so people with learning disabilities can make changes in their lives.<sup>1, 5</sup>

Some subjects are especially important.<sup>1, 7</sup> For example, easier information might help people to get their rights, get payments or services, or have a say on things that are important to them. You might also want to work on topics where there is no easy information.<sup>3, 6, 7</sup> The ideas for topics can come from people with learning disabilities themselves.<sup>8</sup> It is important to answer the questions that people really want answered.<sup>2</sup>

Your information needs to be up to date. Show when it was made and when it needs to be updated. It should have current contact details such as phone numbers and websites. You can check these by ringing people up or going to the websites.<sup>1, 2, 9, 10, 11</sup> Your information should be reliable. Make sure what you say is correct. This is especially important if it is about the law.

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Say if other people have different views from those in your information.<sup>2, 9</sup> People should be able to check where the information came from and who made it. They should be able to check who gave the money to make it.<sup>2, 9</sup>

## **2 How will you get your information to people?**

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You should think about all the possible ways of sharing your information. Then you can decide which are the best ways for your information and your audience (the people it is for).<sup>21, 3, 4, 6</sup> You can be creative about how you do this.

You might think about all sorts of ideas.<sup>1, 13</sup> You might think about meetings, workshops, drama productions, radio, television, newspapers and magazines, audio tapes or CDs, videos, computer based information, and booklets and leaflets.<sup>1, 6, 13</sup> Remember many people find written information hard to use.<sup>1, 12</sup>

People may need support to use information, whatever ways you use to get it to them. Supporters might use your information to help a person with learning disabilities get the information they need.<sup>1, 14</sup> Face to face communication is a good way of getting information across. You can use this along with other ways.<sup>1, 15, 16</sup>

If you use more than one way of getting your message to people, make sure they match. Let people know about any other information that is available to go with the information they are using.<sup>1, 2, 9</sup>

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Use the same sort of design and layout and label everything carefully. If you show any logos, put them on each piece of information. Make sure organisations are happy with how you use their logo.<sup>1, 9</sup> Let people know if the information is available in other languages.<sup>1, 2</sup>

The quality of your information is important.<sup>1</sup> This means it needs to look and sound good so people will want to use it.<sup>1</sup> Make the best quality information you can afford and get the best value for money that you can.<sup>1, 11</sup>

Make careful plans about how you will work. Think about the time that you will need to do the work and how you will get the money to do it. Think how you will involve other people, including people with learning disabilities. From the start, think about how you will get your message to the audience you want to reach. For example, how you will get your leaflet to people and how you will let them know about it.

You can find out about the places your audience might go, like libraries, cinemas, community and health centres. Then you can work out how to make your information available to people there.<sup>3, 4, 17</sup>

# 3

## How can you make your information easier to understand?

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Find out as much as you can about your audience. Then you can make your information right for them. It is harder to get information right if it is for a large audience. But you still need to find out as much as you can about what works best for everyone.<sup>1, 19</sup>

The best way to share information in ways that your audience will understand, is to work in partnership with that audience. Guidance can help, but you still need to check that it is right for them.<sup>1, 2, 4, 8, 11, 20</sup>

Make your information as short and easy as possible. Stick to the key messages.<sup>1, 3</sup> If you have a lot of information to get to people you can do it in chunks. Then there will not be too much information to take in at once.<sup>1, 11</sup> You can put your information in a clear order, so it is easier to follow and makes sense to the person using it.<sup>1, 3</sup>

If there are things you are unsure about, get help. Work in partnership with other organisations and people. You will all learn from the experience.<sup>1, 4, 21</sup>

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You should give people the chance to tell you what is good and not so good about your information.<sup>9, 20, 22</sup> You can think about what went well and what did not work so well. You can make changes and learn for the next time you make easy information.<sup>1</sup> You can share your experiences with other people who are working to make information easier to understand.<sup>13</sup>

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# Working together with your audience



Guidance ■

Working together with your audience is an essential part of making easy information. Your audience is the group of people you are making the information for. You need to know as much about your audience as you can, to make information that is right for them.



# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. Things to think about before you start.** You can work together with your audience to **make** the information. And you can work together with your audience to **test** the information. This will mean the information is easier to understand, and more likely to make a positive difference to people's lives.



**2. Making information with your audience.** Making information together means working together with people with learning disabilities at every stage. People can be involved right from the start, so the ideas for topics come from them.

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**3. Testing information.** Testing information with your audience is a good way to find out if your information is easy. It will also tell you how it could make a difference to people's lives. People can test the information at the rough draft stage. And they can help to test the final draft of the information before it is published, or goes public. There are lots of different ways to test your information. You will need to think about what questions to ask. Then you will need to decide how to ask these questions.



# **1 Things to think about before you start**

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Working together with your audience will help make information easier to understand, and more likely to make a difference to people's lives. It will help you to make sure the information is right for them.<sup>2</sup>

## **Involve people right from the start**

People can, and should, be involved right from the start, so that ideas for topics come from them. They can help you to work out what the aims of the information should be.<sup>3</sup> And they can help to persuade others that working together is important.

Before you start to make your information, be clear about who it is for, and what you want it to do.<sup>4</sup>

The aims of your information could be things like:

- Tell people something new.
- Give people ideas about things to do.
- Help people make changes in their lives.

- 
- Give people enjoyment.<sup>2</sup>

Working together will help you meet your aims better. So, if the aim of your information is to tell people something new, then working together will help you find out the **best** way to say the new things. Or if the aim is to give people ideas about things to do, then working together will help make sure that the ideas are the **right** ones for your audience.<sup>1</sup>

### **Working together can take time**

In order to work well together, it is important to build up a relationship with people with learning disabilities. This can take time.<sup>1</sup>

It can take days, weeks, or even months, to get to know each other before you all feel ready to work together. This can be very difficult (or even impossible) to do when you are working to tight timescales.<sup>1</sup>

If you really do not have the time to get to know people yourself, then it might be better to work with others who do. A lot of people around the UK have spent years working with people with learning disabilities and have good relationships with groups and individuals.

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Several organisations of people with learning disabilities make information easier to understand on a paid basis. They can work with you. Or they can take your information away and make it easier. See [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk) for more details of people who can help you.<sup>1</sup>

### **Working together costs money**

It costs money to work together with people with learning disabilities. You will need to think about:

- How much you will pay people who are working with you.
- What support people might need to do the work. Do they need transport? A support worker? Easy information in different formats (e.g. on tape, in large print)? Interpreters?

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## **Think about who to work with**

You will need to think carefully about who to work with. It can be hard to find people who really represent your target audience. You probably already know some people with learning disabilities in your area who get asked to work on information again and again.

This is usually because they have developed a lot of skills in giving advice. It is very helpful to have input from people who are information experts. But it is also good to try to find people who really represent members of your target audience. These will probably be people who are not experienced at looking at easy information and saying what they think. If you can, it's good to work together with both expert and new information users.<sup>1</sup>

Making sure your information is right for your audience also means paying attention to gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality. You should always try to work together with a range of people: women, men, younger people, older people and people from different Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups and where possible, with gay and lesbian people.

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At the very least, you should make sure your information does not just reflect the experiences of white, heterosexual people. People will ignore information if it doesn't reflect their lives too.<sup>1</sup>

### **Listen to people's views and be willing to change things**

Working together with people with learning disabilities means listening to people's ideas, and accepting criticism of your information. If your information confuses or upsets people, you should be willing to make big changes or to start again.

You will also need to decide how to deal with suggestions that are unusual, or might cost a lot of money. You will need to be clear with people about the sort of changes that you can make. And how much money you have to make the information.<sup>1</sup>

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There might be different views about how your information should be. Your audience might say one thing. Your client, illustrator, or designer, might say another. You should try to stick to the aims of the project. It also helps to remember that your main aim is to make your information as easy to understand as possible for your audience.<sup>1</sup>

## **Good things about working together**

Hopefully, you and your information will get a lot of benefit from working together with people with learning disabilities. So it's only fair that they get something out of the experience too.<sup>1</sup>

Paying people for the work they do is a good start. But people with learning disabilities who have worked with information providers over a long period of time have talked about other rewards too. These include things like:

- Learning more about the topic.
- Better reading skills.

- 
- Learning new computer programs.
  - Learning other information production skills, like camera and audio skills.
  - Getting more confident about their rights and in speaking up for themselves.<sup>1,7</sup>

### **Agree how to work together**

It's a good idea to draw up a plan for working together so that everyone knows what is happening and when.<sup>8</sup>

At the end of the process, you should tell people what will happen next. You should also tell people how you have used their thoughts and ideas.<sup>5</sup>

You should put some money aside to make sure the people who have worked with you get a free copy of the final product. And if there is a launch event, make sure you invite them.

# **2 Making information with your audience**

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Making information with your audience means working together with people with learning disabilities during the production process.

There are lots of different ways to work together to make information. Exactly how you work with people will depend on:

- The needs and wishes of the people you are working with.
- The type of information you are making.

There is no clear evidence about what works best in terms of making information with your audience. But the information providers we spoke to seemed to follow these 4 basic principles:

## **1. Talk to your audience at an early stage**

Ask for their ideas and experiences on the topic that the information is about. Find out what types of information are best for them.

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This is particularly helpful if you are making information for a specific group of people, for example who live in one area.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Test the information with your audience at the rough draft stage**

This might be at the stage where you have a draft set of words, pictures, script or a rough tape or video.

For example, if you have some rough words, you can go through these with people, sentence by sentence. Ask people what they think the words are saying. Some people might say what words are hard. Others might put the sentences in their own words instead.

If you don't have rough pictures at this stage, you could ask people for their ideas for pictures to go with the words. If the artist is available, and can draw rough pictures quickly, it can be fun for him or her to draw people's ideas straight away. Then you can check out if the image is what they had in mind.<sup>1</sup>

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If you already have rough pictures at this stage, then you can check them out with people by asking them what they think the pictures are about, or what is happening. If you are working on a tape or video, you could ask people to say what it is about, or what is happening.

What do they remember after the tape is switched off?

Their answers will help you to see if the messages are easy to understand, or not.<sup>1</sup>

### **3. If possible, find practical ways for people to be more involved in making the information**

This might be writing or typing up the words, drawing pictures, taking photos, doing design work, doing camera work or audio work, doing interviews, being actors or presenters.<sup>1</sup>

### **4. Test the final draft of your information before it goes public**

This means working with your target audience to check that the information says what it is meant to. Sometimes this stage is called piloting or testing out your information. The next section tells you more about how to do this.

# 3 Testing information

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Testing is about more than just asking people for feedback. It is a formal way to check out whether your information is doing what it is meant to.<sup>2</sup>

You can test your information to find out if it is easy to understand. And you can test it to find out what difference it makes to people's lives.<sup>4</sup>

Testing covers both **piloting** your information, and **evaluating** it.

**Piloting** is what you do before the information is published. Piloting is a good way to check that your information is easy to understand. It can also help you find out what difference your information might make to your audience. After you have piloted your information, you will probably want to make some changes to it before it is published.<sup>6</sup>

**Evaluating** is what you do after the information has been published. Evaluating can test the impact of your information over time. It can help you to measure any changes in what people know, do or think as a result of your information.<sup>6</sup>

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Testing information involves finding out about changes. It is helpful to think about this in terms of **before** and **after**. So your testing design needs to allow you to compare what your audience knew, did, or thought **before** they got your information, with what they knew, did or thought **after** they got it.<sup>6</sup>

A **before** and **after** design can be quite hard to do, and expensive too. Most people only do testing that finds out about what their audience know, do and think **after** they get easy information. The trouble with this is that lots of people find it hard to remember what they knew, did or thought even a few hours ago. Also, some people might say your leaflet has helped them because they want to please you. Using a **before** and **after** design will help you to be more certain about whether your information has really made a difference.<sup>6</sup>

There are 4 main ways to pilot or evaluate your information. These are:

- Interviewing or talking to a group of people.
- Interviewing or talking to one person.

- 
- Sending out a questionnaire to lots of people and waiting for them to reply to you.
  - Going through a questionnaire with one or more people in person and writing down their replies there and then.<sup>6</sup>

There is a lot of information about how to do interviews and questionnaires. A good, short book to read is ‘Writing leaflets for patients: guidelines for producing written information’ by Jenny Secker and Rachel Pollard (1995). See the Reference section at the end of the guidance.

Before you decide what method to use, you will need to think about the sorts of questions you want to ask. Think back to the aims of your information. What do you want to find out about the effect that your information is having on your audience?

You will probably want to ask questions that ask about **how easy** your information is for your target audience, and **what difference** it makes to them.<sup>1</sup>

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Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Is the information too long, too short, or just right?
- Is the information easy to understand? What is hard? What would make it easier?
- Has the information told people anything they didn't already know?
- Has the information given people any ideas about things to do?
- Has the information made people do something differently?
- Has it made them think differently about anything?
- Do people use the information on their own, or in a group?
- What support do people get to use the information?

- 
- If they don't get support, can they still use the information?

When you have finished testing, you will probably have a lot of information about what people think. It is important to tell people who took part in testing what you found out. And you should tell them what changes you made to your information as a result.<sup>5</sup>

# Resource section

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The booklet called ‘Writing Leaflets for Patients: Guidelines for Producing Written Information’ has a very useful section on how to test information. See the reference section number 6 for more information.

\*\*\*\*\*  
You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on: [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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# Information for people with learning disabilities who have visual impairments



Guidance ■

Lots of people with learning disabilities have visual impairments. People with visual impairments are blind or have difficulty seeing things. Most ways to help people with learning disabilities who have visual impairments don't cost much money. Planning things in advance helps to keep the cost down.



# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



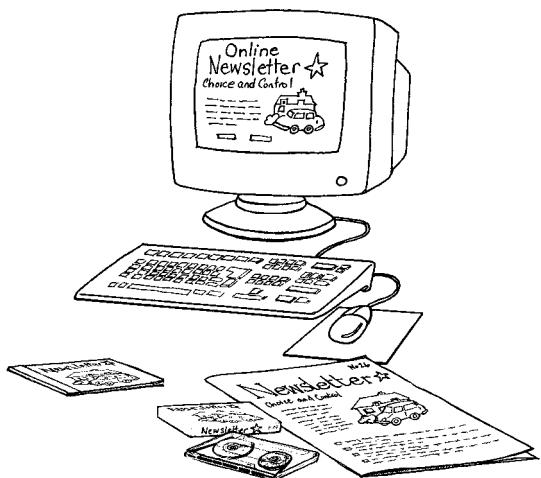
**1. People with visual impairments see things in different ways.** Only a few people with visual impairments can see nothing at all. Lots of people need help to see better.



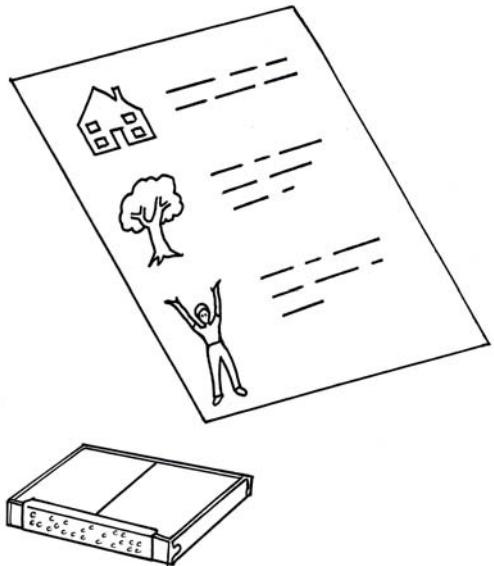
**2. Different people with visual impairments have different needs.** They will want information in different formats. Many people with visual impairments can read large print if it is written clearly and boldly. Lots of people with visual impairments want information on tape or CD. Some people need more than one format.



**3. Plan in advance and ask people what they need.** Think right from the start about how you make your information easier for people with visual impairments. This is easier and cheaper than doing it later.



**4. Think about the formats you use.** The way you present your information can help visually impaired people see and understand things better. This includes the design and layout of written information. It includes the way you use pictures and photographs. It also includes making your websites and CD Roms easy to use.



**5. Lots of visually impaired people want their information on audio.** You can make it easier for people to listen to tapes, CDs and videos and remember what they hear. You should label audio information so visually impaired people know what it contains.

**6. Supporters can help people with visual impairments to access information.** There are lots of easy ways to help people. Most of these cost nothing at all.

# 1

## People with visual impairments see things in different ways

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People with learning disabilities often have visual impairments.<sup>2</sup> They can't see well, even when they are wearing the right glasses or contact lenses.<sup>3</sup> Lots of them need help to see better. Out of every 10 people with learning disabilities, 3 people will have a visual impairment.<sup>4</sup>

Out of every 10 people with learning disabilities, 4 have hearing impairments.<sup>4</sup> Some people have both sight and hearing problems.<sup>1</sup>

Only a few people with visual impairments can see nothing at all. Most people can see something.<sup>5</sup> Some visually impaired people see the world as a blur - a bit like a fuzzy picture in pale colours. They might have to guess what they are seeing. Other people have 'tunnel vision', like looking through two toilet rolls. Older people sometimes can't see things in front of them but they can see things to the side. There are people who only see things on one side or the other.<sup>6</sup> Many people with visual impairments can't see colours well.<sup>7</sup>

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Lots of people don't know they have visual impairments. They haven't had an eye test recently.<sup>2</sup> Some people need to wear glasses, or have operations to help them see better.<sup>8</sup>

People often need help to get used to glasses.<sup>9</sup> They need support to have operations.<sup>10</sup>

Low vision clinics can recommend magnifying glasses or special equipment to help people see. These clinics are usually at eye hospitals. They show visually impaired people the best ways to read print. They may teach them what sort of lighting helps them best.<sup>11</sup> Clinics can teach people where to sit so lighting helps them.

Lots of people with visual impairments find reading tiring. They can only read a little at a time, even with a low vision aid or special equipment.<sup>11</sup>

## **2 Different people with visual impairments have different needs**

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Lots of people with visual impairments can read big print.<sup>12</sup> People who can't see clearly often get their friends or family to read to them and tell them about the pictures.<sup>12</sup> But some people with visual impairments can see some pictures.<sup>11</sup>

People read things in different ways. Many people want to read by themselves, especially private things. Lots of people with visual impairments like tapes or CDs.<sup>12</sup> Some people listen to tapes and look at the pictures at the same time.<sup>11</sup>

Lots of people with learning disabilities and visual impairments were not taught to read at school. Some adults have learned to read print when they got glasses or special equipment to help them.<sup>1</sup>

Some visually impaired people learned to read using braille or Moon.<sup>1</sup> People read braille and Moon by feeling bumps on special paper. Only a few people with learning disabilities read this way.<sup>1</sup> You need help to produce braille and Moon because they are written with machines. Braille and Moon can be produced from documents in Microsoft Word.<sup>1</sup>

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Braille is made up of dots.<sup>13</sup> You need a good sense of touch to learn to use braille.<sup>14</sup> Moon looks like ordinary letters so it is easier for people who can read to learn.<sup>14</sup> Braille and Moon take up more space than print. Documents can be very heavy to post or to carry.<sup>13</sup>

You can post documents free for visually impaired people on tape or disk, in braille and Moon. Ask RNIB (Royal National Institute of the Blind) how to send documents labelled 'Articles for the blind'. See the resource section at the end of this guidance for more information.

People with visual impairments need the formats that help them most.<sup>1</sup> They do not always want the same formats all the time. They may want one format for reading things, and another format to keep for reference.<sup>16</sup> For example, it is hard to find the right place on a tape when a meeting is going on.

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People often want to have short documents (like an agenda) in print or braille.<sup>16</sup> People often like longer documents (like minutes of meetings) on tape or CD.<sup>1</sup> They may want a summary of a long document (like minutes) instead.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes people will need a summary and a long document. Lots of visually impaired people use braille or Moon just for labelling things.<sup>1</sup>

Try to avoid using handwriting. Lots of people with visual impairments find it hard to read. If you have to write by hand, use a black felt tipped pen on white or pale paper and write in large letters.<sup>19</sup>

# 3

## Plan in advance and ask people what they need

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It is more difficult to make material accessible if you don't think about it until later. It might cost more money too.<sup>1</sup>

Before you start, try to find out as much as possible about your audience. Let your audience know they have a choice of formats.

Ask them what they need.<sup>1</sup> You don't want to pay for information to be put into braille if nobody can read it. Check that people want braille in English. Welsh braille is produced in Wales.<sup>1</sup> Braille is written at 2 different levels. If people don't know what level they read, get braille in Grade 1.<sup>13</sup>

Lots of visually impaired people will want audio. Some people will want pictures described to them, but other people won't.<sup>1, 12</sup>

Find out if you can make things accessible by yourself. You may need to get help. It may take time to get people to help you.<sup>1</sup> You may have to pay other people to help, like putting something into braille or copying lots of tapes for you.

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You may need money for this. But it shouldn't cost much.<sup>1</sup> You should budget for some visually impaired people to have more than one format.<sup>1</sup> You may need help to put documents into braille or Moon. Both formats can be produced from Microsoft Word.<sup>1</sup>

# **4** Think about the formats you use

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The way you present your information can help visually impaired people see and hear things better. This helps them to understand more.<sup>1</sup>

## **Design and layout**

Easy information for people with visual impairments should be printed clearly and boldly. The words and pictures should be laid out in a way that is easy to see, read and follow. See the guidance section on ‘Design and layout’ for more information about this topic.

You should use 14 point print or larger to help visually impaired people. You can ask people what print size they like. Arial is the best font for every day. But visually impaired people are all different. One font and one print size will not suit everyone.<sup>7</sup>

The print on the page should show up well. This is called contrast. The contrast between the text and the background is important. Lots of people with visual impairments find it easiest to see dark print on white paper.

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Avoid shiny paper. It is hard to read. Use paper that weighs over 90 gsm. Photocopying paper usually weighs a bit less than this.

## Pictures

The position of pictures on the page is important. You should not fit words around pictures.<sup>5</sup> Pictures should show important things clearly. Big pictures are easier to see than little ones. Simple clear outlines usually work best. It can be hard for people to see small cluttered drawings.<sup>1</sup> Try to avoid putting text over pictures or photographs. People with visual impairments can find this confusing.<sup>5</sup>

Using contrasting colours helps people with visual impairments to see things clearly against the background. It is hard for people to see things that blend into the background.<sup>6</sup>

Some people with visual impairments cannot tell things at the front of a picture from things at the back. Try to remember this when deciding which pictures to use.<sup>1</sup>

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Some people with visual impairments find photographs easier to see than pictures.<sup>1</sup> Symbols, funny pictures or diagrams can be confusing and hard to understand.<sup>1</sup> See the guidance section on ‘Using pictures’ for more information about this topic.

### **Computer based information**

There are different ways of reading information on a computer using Microsoft Word. You can change the font, print size and colour of the background of the screen. This can help some visually impaired people to read from the screen. You can do this on all computers.<sup>15</sup>

Some visually impaired people are helped by software that makes the letters big on the screen.<sup>15</sup> There may only be a few letters on the screen at a time. It is best to get training to learn this way of reading and writing.<sup>1</sup>

If you produce your text on a computer, you can give it to visually impaired people on a disk or CD ROM. Or you could email it to them. People with learning disabilities and visual impairments often like to read from a screen. Not everyone wants to print things for themselves.<sup>1</sup>

---

Reading from a screen means that people can decide to use the font, background or print size that helps them see best. They may need advice from RNIB if they want to produce braille or Moon from documents on computers. Some people will have access to a braille embosser (machine) so they can produce their own braille from email, disk or CD ROM.<sup>1</sup>

You can buy screen-readers for computers. Screen-readers read out the words on the screen. There are different screen-readers.<sup>15</sup> Screen-readers can be expensive. You should get advice on the most suitable one before buying anything.<sup>1</sup> You usually need training to get the best from a screen-reader.<sup>1</sup> JAWS is the most popular one with people with visual impairments now. JAWS can read text from Microsoft Windows format and accessible documents on the Internet.<sup>1</sup>

## Websites

It is important to design your website so visually impaired people can access it. People need to be able to adjust their text and colour settings on the browser to suit their needs.

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Other people will browse websites using large print software or screen-reader software. The ‘Resource section’ at the end of this guidance tells you where to get advice about designing websites for visually impaired people.

See the guidance section on ‘Computer based information’ for more information about this topic.

# 5

## Lots of visually impaired people want their information on audio

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People find it hard to listen to tapes if they can't see words and pictures. They may get tired or bored. You can make it easier for them to listen to tapes, CDs and videos and remember what they hear.<sup>1</sup>

It is a good idea to think very carefully about how you record the audio version.<sup>16</sup> Tapes should start with a short overview of what the information is about.<sup>1</sup> Sighted people often find this out by looking at the picture on the front of the information or the tape.<sup>1</sup>

Speed is important. People may not understand things if the reader goes too fast. You may need to read complicated things extra slowly.<sup>1</sup>

People with visual impairments often want someone to tell them about the pictures. But some people won't be interested.<sup>1</sup> It is important that people with visual impairments are told key messages from the pictures if they want this.

If you know your audience, you can ask them if they want to be told about pictures. If you don't know them, you need to decide what you are going to do.<sup>1</sup>

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If you can get the time and money you might decide to make 2 audio versions. You could do 1 version with someone describing the pictures. And you could have a second audio version with a person just reading the words.<sup>1</sup>

You might decide to tell people some things about the pictures. They might like to know if the person in the picture is a man or a woman, is black or white. They might identify with the pictures if they know the person in the picture uses a wheelchair, is young or is old.<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes pictures are used to explain things instead of words. You need to take great care to make sure your audio version tells people with visual impairments the important things that are not written in the text.<sup>1</sup>

If you decide to describe pictures, you should write down in advance the words to be read out.<sup>16</sup>

Try to tell people what is happening in the front of the picture. Having an understanding about what is going on in the background of the picture can help too. Things at the front of the picture are usually more important than things in the background.<sup>1</sup>

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But sometimes the background explains where something is happening. For example, you would want to know if the picture showed someone talking to a doctor. It might be important to know if they were at the doctor's surgery or in the person's home.<sup>1</sup>

The person reading on to the tape should describe the most important things in a picture. Sometimes the author of the material and the reader of the tape see the picture in different ways. So get the author to write down the key points in each picture. And then ask the author to listen to the tape.<sup>1</sup>

You need to describe pictures briefly and clearly. Read the text on the page and **then** describe the pictures on that page.<sup>1</sup>

It works best if you use the same words on the tape as in the text wherever possible. This helps people remember things. Keep it short! Lots of people get bored with too much detail.<sup>1</sup>

See the guidance section on 'Audio' for more information about this topic.

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## **Video**

You need to think about making your videos accessible to visually impaired people. You could have a narrator to explain what is happening in the video. You might not need a narrator if the video is about 2 or 3 people talking if they all sound different. But you need to introduce who is talking.<sup>17</sup>

Making videos in short sections helps people concentrate. It allows people to discuss each section separately if they want to.<sup>1</sup>

If you are separating sections with captions, read them out for visually impaired people. This helps people know what each section is about.<sup>17</sup>

Audio description is another way of making video accessible to visually impaired people. A narrator explains what is going on in the video. They speak when the people in the video are silent. The narrator's words are recorded on to the video after the video has been made. Audio description does not make the video longer. Audio described videos can be watched on an ordinary video receiver.<sup>18</sup>

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Lots of companies put audio description on to their films and videos. It is becoming more popular now. People can borrow audio described videos from RNIB to watch at home.<sup>17, 18</sup>

You can get advice on making videos accessible to visually impaired children and adults from the RNIB Broadcasting Unit. See the guidance section on ‘Video’ for more information about this topic.

### **Labelling audio and video information**

Books, tapes, CDs and videos from shops have words and pictures on their covers to tell you what to expect.<sup>1</sup>

You should also label audio and video information, so visually impaired people understand what it contains. You may need to get advice from the RNIB. Or a local organisation for blind and partially sighted people might help you.<sup>1</sup>

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It is important to label your audio or video recording carefully. You need to say who made the audio or video and how long it lasts. People find it helpful if you put labels on the box and on the tape, CD or video itself. You will need to include a picture or logo as well as words, for people who cannot read.<sup>1</sup>

Some people like the printed information, audio and video to all look the same. You could produce them in the same colour. Putting the same pictures on the boxes helps people link audio and video with the print.<sup>1</sup>

Some people with visual impairments cannot see print, logos or pictures. They need things labelled in braille or Moon.<sup>1</sup>

# 6

## Supporters can help people with visual impairments to access information

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There are many practical ways to help people with visual impairments access information. Most of these cost nothing at all. People with learning disabilities need this help. They have a right to it.

### Eye tests

Everyone should have an eye test with an optometrist or optician every 2 years or more often if the optometrist or optician says so. People with learning disabilities can find eye tests scary. They may need some preparation and support before, during and after the test itself.

### Glasses

Supporters should help people to get the right glasses if they need them. Glasses need to be fitted by an optician or optometrist. People may not wear glasses that are uncomfortable or don't fit properly. Supporters need to know what glasses are for. Are they for near or for distance? Wearing the right glasses will help people see better.

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## **Magnifiers or low vision aids**

Some people might need other aids for reading or leisure such as magnifiers. Low vision clinics can help with these.

## **Eye operations**

Some people with learning disabilities need eye operations to improve their sight. These days many operations are done on a day patient basis. People may go home on the same day as their operation. Other people spend just one or two night in hospital.

## **Environment and position**

Think about where people are using information. Quiet places are usually better. Make sure people have enough light to see the information. Most people with visual impairments also find glare (from glass, mirrors or shiny surfaces) painful. People also need to be in the right physical position to make the best use of information. This might mean sitting very close to objects, or making sure someone's wheelchair is 'parked' in the way that suits them best.

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You might need to get some more advice from a rehabilitation worker for visually impaired people. See the 'Resource section' for more information.

## Prompts

People may find it easier to interpret what they are seeing if they know or are told what to expect. Some people with learning disabilities and visual impairments may need to be told clearly what is expected of them, and reminded to do things. They may need tactile or tape-recorded time-tables. Buildings with minor adaptations, such as markers placed underfoot or on doors remind people of routes. Labels on doors - either visual or tactile, or different door handles to denote different rooms - all help people to remember where they are.

There are lots of other practical ways to help people with visual impairments access information. See the RNIB Focus Factsheets on 'Understanding and using sight: issues for work with people with severe disabilities'<sup>6</sup> and 'Access to eye care for people with learning difficulties'<sup>8</sup> for more advice and information.

# Resource section

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**The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)** has lots of resources to help you make information easier for people with learning disabilities who have visual impairments.

**Address:**

Royal National Institute of the Blind  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE

**RNIB telephone helpline:** 0845 766 9999

**RNIB email helpline:** [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

**RNIB website:** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://rnib.org.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

RNIB advice and information about **accessible website design:** <http://rnib.org.uk/wac>

RNIB advice and information about **accessible information:** [rnib.org.uk/seeitright](http://rnib.org.uk/seeitright) or email Hugh Huddy, Best Practice Officer for Accessible Information:

**Email:** [infoaccess@rnib.org.uk](mailto:infoaccess@rnib.org.uk)

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Advice and information for **adults with learning disabilities and their supporters** is available from:

### **RNIB Multiple Disability Services**

#### **London Office:**

Gill Levy  
RNIB Multiple Disability Services  
Falcon Park  
Neasden Lane  
London  
NW10 1TB

**Telephone:** 020 8348 3533

**Email:** [Gill.Levy@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Gill.Levy@rnib.org.uk)

#### **Liverpool Office:**

Laura Waite  
RNIB Multiple Disability Services  
The Gateway Centre  
71 London Road  
Liverpool L3 8HY

**Telephone:** 0151 298 3236

**Email:** [Laura.Waite@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Laura.Waite@rnib.org.uk)

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**Rehabilitation workers** are people who give advice to people with visual impairments or people with both visual and hearing impairments, and their supporters or family. They usually work for social services or a local voluntary organisation such as RNIB. They teach people skills, like how to move around safely. And they give advice about how to make it easier for people to see, or hear, at home or at work. They can give advice about how best to help people see or hear easy information. Contact the **RNIB helpline** for more details.

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**RNIB Information Services** has a service for people with learning disabilities. It is called the Multiple Disability Team. They also have a training officer who gives training and advice to supporters working with people with learning disabilities and people who have both visual and hearing impairments. Contact Chris Smith, Administrative Officer, for more information:

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**Address:**

**RNIB**

58-72 John Bright Street  
Birmingham  
B1 1BN

**Telephone:** 0121 665 4243

**Email:** Chris.smith@rnib.org.uk

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\*\*\*\*\*  
Advice and information about **transcription into braille, tape and large print** is available from:

**Address:**

**RNIB Transcription Centre Northwest**

67 High Street  
Tarporley  
Cheshire  
CW6 0DP

**Telephone:** 01829 732115

**Email:** tarporley@rnib.org.uk

Advice and information about transcription and production of over 25 copies of documents in braille, tape, Moon and large print is available from:

**RNIB**

PO Box 173  
Peterborough  
PE2 6WS

**Telephone:** 0845 702 3153

**Email:** [cservices@rnib.org.uk](mailto:cservices@rnib.org.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*  
Advice and information about **screen-readers, large print software and computer equipment** is available from RNIB Hi Tech Officers:

**Telephone:** 020 7388 1266

**Email:** [Paul.Porter@rnib.org.uk](mailto:Paul.Porter@rnib.org.uk)

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Advice and information about **posting documents free for visually impaired people**: RNIB can supply you with sticky labels saying 'Articles for the Blind'. These can be used to send accessible material free of charge to visually impaired people with learning difficulties. Contact the **RNIB helpline** for more information.



Registered Charity Number: 226227

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)



# Information for people with learning disabilities from Black and minority ethnic groups



Guidance ■

We need to make sure information is available to people with learning disabilities from Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. We need to make sure they have power in their lives.



# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. People from BME groups are different from each other.** They have led different lives. They are different ages. Some people know the English language very well and others do not. Some people can read and write. Others cannot. People have very different lifestyles and ways of thinking. This means they have different ways of picking up and using information.



**2. Find out all you can about the people your information is for.** You can do research to find out what information people want and the best ways to get it to them. You can work with people from BME communities to make your information.



### **3. Make sure your information suits people from BME groups.**

You cannot just translate information into another language. You need to know and understand about people's culture, their religion and the things that are important to them. You need to use words and pictures that help people feel the information is right for them.



### **4. Make changes in your organisation.** Make sure that people have training on race and culture. Make sure people from BME groups play a big part in your information work. Employ people from the communities that your information is for. Support BME groups and organisations. Pay them for the work they do for your organisation.

# 1

## People from BME groups are different from each other

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People from BME communities are not all the same. They include people who have moved from various other countries, people who have been born here, people who have arrived recently and people whose families have lived here for a long time. This means people have very different ways of life, ways of thinking and ways of picking up and using information.<sup>1</sup>

Even within one community, the experiences of different generations and how they pick up information, is very different. For example, people vary in the type of education they have had and the language and images they are happy with. Older people might be shocked by information that appeals to younger people.<sup>1</sup>

Some people will know the English language very well. Others will not. Some people will be able to read and write. Other people might not. There are many different community languages. Deciding which community languages to use is sometimes difficult.<sup>1</sup> It is not enough to translate information into a person's mother tongue. A lot of people may not be able to read and write in their own community language.<sup>2, 3</sup>

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People from different BME communities have different cultures, sensitivities, values and taboos. People get their information in different ways and there are differences in how easy it is for people to get information. People trust different sources of information to be reliable.<sup>1, 4</sup>

## **2 Find out all you can about the people your information is for**

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You need to find out as much as you can about the ethnic community group your information is for, so you can make sure it meets their needs. You can find out what information the different ethnic communities want and what information they are not getting. You can work out the difficulties involved for yourself and the information user and plan ways to overcome them.<sup>1</sup>

One way to find out more is to do research. You can check the numbers of people from Black and ethnic minority groups who use your information and their ethnic background. You can begin by using more general records of the ethnic backgrounds of the people in the places your information needs to go. You can also gather information about communities most affected by a particular issue.<sup>1</sup> For example, mental health issues are important to recently arrived refugees and asylum seekers.<sup>1</sup> Find out where people from different ethnic groups live. Find out what languages people speak. Find out the barriers for access to information for people with learning disabilities from BME communities. This could be through interviewing people from BME communities with learning disabilities, their families, and people in the local community.<sup>1</sup>

---

You could also ask what people think about your information. To do this well, it is important to think about these things:

- First work with the community to develop trust and understanding.
- Make sure you ask the questions that are needed.
- Make sure you ask the right people.

You should not guess what people from minority ethnic communities want. Get in touch with people from these communities. Accept invitations to meet people or organisations in the community. You can also host events where people from these communities are made welcome.<sup>1, 4</sup>

Make sure that people from BME communities play a major role in the planning, development and delivery of your information. Create partnerships with community groups and health information service providers in order to build confidence and trust. You should work with people from BME communities from start to finish.

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You need to think about how to pay people for their time when you are finding the money to produce the information.<sup>1</sup>

You need to get feedback from the BME communities you are targeting, and make changes to the information produced from what people say. Make sure you have people from BME communities on working groups on the different topics covered by your information. They could also be on the advisory groups and on groups of people who trial the pictures used in the information.<sup>1</sup>

Community partnerships with people from BME communities are very important. They can help you to include local issues when providing information for a particular group. Going out to talk to people can be a good way of getting your information across.<sup>1</sup>

You can take part in events at BME community centres and cultural events, for example, having information stands or stalls at carnivals. Minority ethnic community groups can recommend how to get messages out to their communities. People can think of new ways to get information to those who need it.<sup>1</sup>

# 3

## Make sure your information suits people from BME groups

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To make sure your information suits people from BME groups, you need to know and understand about people's culture. For example, you need to think about people's religion and religious events, taboos, gender and the language they use. You need to make sure that the information will be relevant, useful and acceptable. You may need to change the examples, pictures and words used to make sure people are happy with them.<sup>1</sup>

Different cultures prefer different ways of getting information. People might think some sources of information are more reliable than others. For example, people from South Asian cultures often like to get information from people they know, who understand about the topic. They might not be happy with written information. They might feel unsure that the person who wrote it explained everything about the topic.<sup>1, 4, 6</sup>

You need to think carefully about when information will need to be kept private, for example, if it covers mental health, drug addiction, or serious health problems like cancer or HIV.<sup>1</sup>

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For instance, there have been problems when family members or friends have been asked to interpret, because this meant information was not kept private.<sup>1</sup>

It is very important to think carefully about the pictures and photographs that are used in information. The way people understand and use the information in pictures varies from one culture to another. It depends what people expect to see and what they are used to. You can improve the effectiveness of information by using pictures in ways that are familiar to the intended ethnic community group. Think about who is shown in the picture, the expression on their face, their dress colour, body language and the scene around them.<sup>4</sup>

Pictures and photographs can be used to clearly show which community the person belongs to. Decoration, jewellery, dress and colours can all mean something to people. It is important to get these right for the people your information is for. Check all pictures and photographs with the community before you use them. Small details can help people feel the information is right for their community.<sup>4</sup>

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Use positive images of different people and different cultures. These can help people to want to look at the information and feel it is aimed at them.<sup>1</sup> If you use a picture bank you need to check that people are happy with the pictures you choose.<sup>1</sup> See the guidance section on ‘Using pictures’ for more information about this topic.

You can also think about the voices and music you use. You could, for example, have ethnic music playing in tapes or videos to make it entertaining to listen to and then have interviews or discussions with people from different ethnic backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

There’s no point in producing leaflets and posters for people from BME communities if they don’t get to the people they are aimed at. You need to find out how people share information in those communities. Then you can use the same ways to get your information across.<sup>1</sup> Some groups are used to sharing information by talking about it. Others prefer to get information by looking at pictures or videos.<sup>1</sup> For example, videos can be a good way of getting some sorts of information about health to women from BME communities.<sup>7</sup>

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Remember that people from BME groups have not been treated fairly in this country. They have experienced racism. People will not want to use information if there are things about its appearance or content that reflect racism. People may be living in difficult circumstances that make it harder to access information. For example, they may have poor access to libraries or other places where people get information.<sup>1</sup>

Direct translation of information from English into BME community languages doesn't necessarily make sense.<sup>5</sup> Often people write using imagery and different words that do not translate.<sup>1</sup> When directly translated, one English word can be a full sentence in some languages.<sup>1</sup> There may not be enough space to produce information in several different languages and still include enough detail. You can end up with too many words and crowding in simple information like a leaflet or poster.<sup>1, 4</sup> You might need to think differently about how to provide the information. You might use a Help line with various languages. The publicity for this could just have the Help line number, and a short message in simple English showing opening times and the languages available.<sup>1</sup>

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If you do need to translate information into another language, you need to get this right. Translators and interpreters need to have proper training. Translation will not be very good if the interpreter does not know the English language very well or doesn't understand the importance of the information they are translating. There are some things that interpreters often get wrong if they are not trained.<sup>5</sup>

- Untrained interpreters might miss out all or part of a message.
- Untrained interpreters might add information, including things that the person speaking did not say.
- Untrained interpreters could make things too simple or explain them more than is needed.
- Untrained interpreters might swap the original words or ideas for their own.
- Untrained interpreters might put in their own questions instead of translating the ones that are asked.

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You can get better communication through interpreters for people with learning disabilities from BME communities, by doing these things:<sup>3, 4</sup>

- Set up a pool of community language and sign language interpreters. Get help from people who speak different languages when you are looking for the interpreters you want to work with. Make sure they will help build a good relationship between your organisation and the BME communities they will be working with.<sup>4</sup>
- Provide training and guidelines on working with interpreters.
- Use face to face communication to communicate wherever possible, rather than relying on printed information. Let people know that interpreters are available.
- Check what forms of sign language are used by deaf people who are from the BME communities you are working with.

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Check your information with a group of people from the ethnic minority community before you send it out. You do not have to use a large group, but find people who share the same culture, social background and level of reading confidence as the people the information is for. Find out whether the information you produce puts across your message. You could ask people to read one paragraph at a time and ask them to describe what they feel it is saying.<sup>1, 4</sup>

You also need to check if your information worked well after you have sent it out. Ask people in the ethnic minority community if they have ever seen the information. Ask for examples of the ways they used it. Check if the information was easy to understand by asking people if they can remember what it was about. See if the information made any difference to people's lives. Ask people to give you examples of any actions they took. If the information was about access to services, find out if there have been any changes in service use since the information went out.<sup>1, 4</sup>

# **4** Make changes in your organisation

---

You need to make sure that your organisation works in ways that make it easier for you to make good information for people from BME groups.

Provide training to staff around issues of Race and Culture. This will help information providers to understand how racism can affect people's take up of information within BME communities.

Make sure people from BME groups play a big part in your information work. People with learning disabilities from BME communities need to be employed to work with organisations providing information for people with learning disabilities. This is because they can identify with bad experiences in getting hold of information and they may know how to do things better.<sup>1</sup> Recruit more staff from BME communities – to reflect the communities you aim to provide information for.

Give workers the chance to spend time working with BME organisations. Encourage people from BME organisations to spend time working with you. This can improve cultural awareness and understanding of each other's work and ways of life.

---

Work to get the money you need to make good information for people with learning disabilities from BME groups.

When you try to get money to make information, explain to the funders how important it is to make information easier for as many people as possible. Pay BME community organisations and service providers for the work they do. This will help these organisations to grow stronger.

# **Resource section**

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**Black Health Agency** (BHA) provides culturally appropriate information resources, support services and health projects for Black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

**Address:**

Black Health Agency  
Zion Community Resource Centre  
339 Stretford Road, Hulme  
Manchester M15 4ZY

**Telephone:** 0161 226 9145

**Email:** info@blackhealthagency.org.uk

**Website:** [www.blackhealthagency.org.uk](http://www.blackhealthagency.org.uk)

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**African AIDS Helpline** makes information and advice available in: English, French, Portuguese, Swahili, Luganda and Shona.

**Helpline Telephone:** 0800 0967 500

**Fax:** 0161 226 9380

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**Email:** info@blackhealthagency.org.uk

**Website:** www.blackhealthagency.org.uk

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**Language Line** provides confidential, impartial and accurate telephone interpreting services in over 100 languages.

**Address:**

Language Line Limited  
Swallow House  
11-21 Northdown Street  
London N1 9BN

**Telephone:** 0845 310 9900 (local rate number)

**Telephone:** 020 7520 1430

**Text translation:** 020 7520 1425

**Fax:** 020 7520 1450

**Email:** sales@languageline.co.uk

**Website:** www.languageline.co.uk

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on: [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. This section was written by Syson Namaganda from the Black Health Agency with the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre (Telephone: 0117 923 8137). The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)



# Information for people who have high individual communication needs



Guidance ■

Some people with learning disabilities have high individual communication needs. This means they need information provided in ways that are individual to them. They need to get information through people who know them well. This section helps you to think about how that can be done.



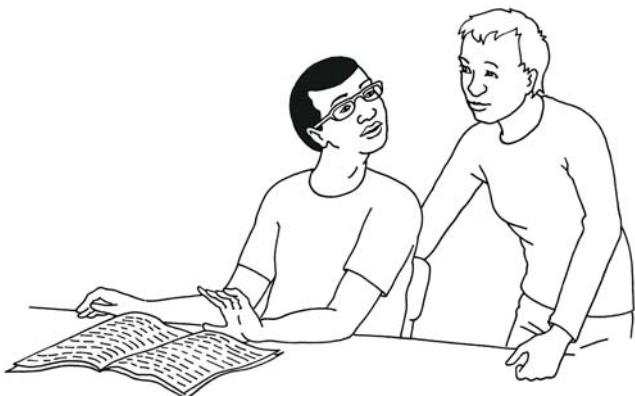
# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:

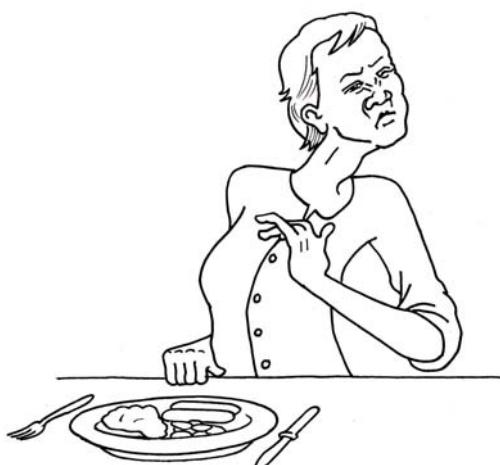
## 1. What is information?

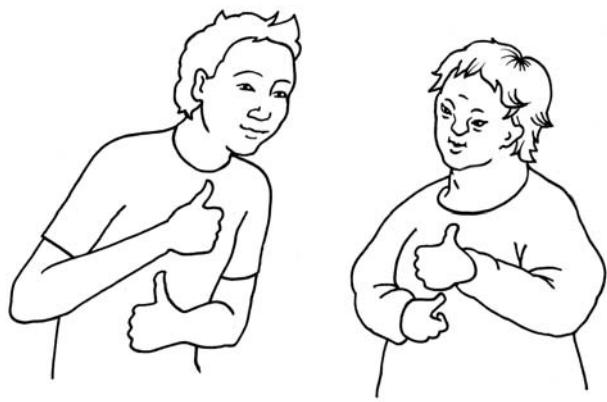
Information is letting someone know something or finding out something from them. Everyone gives and gets information in different ways. Everyone can use their body to communicate. Some people might use speech, writing, signs or symbols to share information.



## 2. What are high individual communication needs?

People with high individual communication needs may not understand or use speech, writing, signs and symbols. They may use sounds or their face or body to tell you something. They may point with their eyes. They communicate in their own way and depend on other people to work out what they are communicating.





**3. How to get and give information.** You should respect the person and how they give and get information. You should know them well and use their ways of communicating. You should give or get information that is important to that person's life.

**4. Questions you need to think about:**

- How does the person communicate best with other people?
- Where does the person communicate best?
- How has the person communicated in the past?
- Why does the person need to know the information?
- Who is the best person to give or find out the information?
- How should the information be given or got?

# 1 What is information?

---

Information is something we want to tell someone or something we want to find out from them, so that it can make a difference to their life.

There are many ways to give and receive information. Everyone can communicate information in informal ways. These include the use of body language, facial expressions, sounds, eye gaze or pointing. More formal methods include speech, writing and the use of signs and symbols. In formal methods, people use one thing to represent something else in a shared and consistent way. For example, a word represents an object, action or idea.

People with learning disabilities might find speaking, understanding language, reading or writing difficult. Some use signs and symbols. Others depend on other people interpreting their individual ways of communicating. Any information giving or receiving must respond to the individual. There is **no** one accessible way of giving and receiving information that will suit everyone. This is particularly true for people with high individual communication needs.

# **2**

## **What are high individual communication needs?**

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People with high individual communication needs all give and receive information in individual ways. They may use their body, facial expressions, sounds, eye gaze or pointing etc to give information to others. Some individuals might speak but not understand what other people say, others might not speak but understand much more. Some people with high individual communication needs might have high physical support needs. Some people with high individual communication needs might have sensory impairments or they might be on the autistic spectrum and not understand why they need to communicate.

People with high individual communication needs do not share a common system of communication. For example one person might nod their head when they are happy. Another might nod their head when they are sad.

Information providers cannot rely on people with high individual communication needs understanding any ‘formal’ communication. People with high individual communication needs often rely on others to interpret their wants and needs. No one should make assumptions about how an individual communicates.

# **3 How to get and give information**

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Everyone should value informal communication and should respect the person who communicates in this way.

Knowing the person is vital. Everyday interactions and relationships are key for giving and receiving information. You should value this process and recognise that it takes time, commitment and consistency. The communication process between an individual and those close to them is constantly evolving and developing. Any tools used such as communication passports or person centred plans should be living and constantly changing in relation to the person's changing life and views.

Recognise that people (staff, carers, workers, families) and their informal communication are the key resource. Some people instinctively match their communication style to the individual's. Other people need help to remember or develop these skills. Training can be helpful to show people the relevance of informal ways of giving and receiving information.

The information should match the needs of the person. It should be about things that impact on their everyday lives.

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For example, for some people the relevant information might be where their room is in a house, rather than the details of the tenancy agreement. People with high individual communication needs may only be able to ‘tell’ you what they think by their reactions in the actual situation eg spitting out food they don’t like.

Be clear as to why you or they need the information. Too much information can be as ineffective as none. **Do not present people with information that is not appropriate for them.**

You need to work with people’s specific needs and not make assumptions about what they can and can’t do. Expectations should be balanced with realism – you should work where the person is while supporting their communication to evolve and develop.

You should be clear about who else is needed to support an individual and hold the more detailed or abstract information on their behalf. For example, if going swimming is important to an individual and makes them happy, then they need to swim; someone else needs to know this and make sure it happens.

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It is much better if decisions made on a person's behalf are not based on one person's views. It is important to have a group agreeing on each person's needs and to establish their best interests. It should include people who know the person well, those with specialist skills (for example professionals such as speech and language therapists) and an independent view such as an advocate. There will always be times when there is a danger of personal or professional agendas influencing the discussions. Everyone involved should be open about their motivations to ensure the person's best interests are kept central to the decision making.

# 4

## Questions you need to think about

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To decide how to give or receive a piece of information, you will need to think about the following questions:

- **What are the person's preferred ways of receiving and giving information?** For example, touch, movements, sounds, smells, objects, experiences.
- **In what sort of environment do they communicate best?** For example a quiet room, a familiar place, at a particular time of day or with particular people.
- **What is their previous experience of giving or receiving information?**
- **Why do they need to know?** What level of information is appropriate/relevant for them and how will it improve their life?
- **What exactly do they need to know?**
- **When do they need to know?** As it happens? Before it happens? Can they anticipate things – if so for how long?

- 
- **Who is the best person to give or receive the information?**

All of these questions should be answered before the final question is considered. This question is:

- **How should the information be given or received?**  
What tools – if any – would support this sharing of information?

# Resource section

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This section of guidance was written with help from Jane Jones and Sue Thurman and is based on their extensive working knowledge.

Jane Jones retired from the management of the Somerset Speech and Language Therapy service for Adults with Learning Disabilities and the post of Chief Executive of Somerset Total Communication in 2000. She now works as a freelance consultant, specialist advisor to the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists and to the British Institute of Learning Disabilities, and co-chairs the communication sub-group of the Valuing People Task Force.

Sue Thurman works for Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust and leads a team of Speech and Language Therapists working with adults with learning disabilities in Nottingham. She is also an associate trainer for the British Institute of Learning Disabilities.

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## **Using Intensive Interaction and other interactive approaches to communicate and get to know people better**

Factsheet about intensive interaction at:

[www.bild.org.uk/factsheets/intensive\\_interaction.htm](http://www.bild.org.uk/factsheets/intensive_interaction.htm)

Nind M and Hewett D. A practical guide to Intensive Interaction. Kidderminster: BILD Publications; 2000.

Caldwell P A with Stevens P. Person to Person. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing; 1998.

Caldwell P A. You don't know what it's like. Brighton: Pavilion Publishing; 2000.

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## **Developing consensus about somebody's communication**

Grove N et al. See what I mean: guidelines for interpreting communication by people with severe and profound learning disabilities. Kidderminster: BILD/Mencap; 2000.

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## **Developing personal communication passports and other profiles**

**The CALL Centre** (Communication Aids for Language and Learning) provides specialist expertise in technology for children who have speech, communication and/or writing difficulties, in schools across Scotland.

The website provides details about how to use Communication Passports including an introductory paper and examples of passport templates.

[www.callcentrescotland.org.uk](http://www.callcentrescotland.org.uk)

A good practice guide can be purchased from the CALL Centre:

Millar S. Personal Communication Passports: Guidelines for Good Practice. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Call Centre; 2003.

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**Address:**

The Call Centre,  
University of Edinburgh  
Paterson's Land  
Holyrood Road  
Edinburgh  
EH8 8AQ

**Telephone:** 0131 651 6235/6236

**Fax:** 0131 651 6234

**Email:** call.centre@ed.ac.uk

**Acting Up** has developed an innovative communications' training package, Multimedia Profiling. Acting Up's Multimedia Profiling (MMP) supports people to exercise greater control over the planning of their lives and the support they need.

[www.actng-up.org.uk](http://www.actng-up.org.uk)

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**Address:**

Acting Up  
Unit 304  
203 –213 mare Street  
London  
E8 3QE

**Email:** Acting-up@btconnect.com

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**Developing communicative environments**

Ware J. Creating a responsive environment for people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. London: David Fulton Publishers Ltd; 1996.

Foundation for people with learning disabilities. Everyday lives (2000), everyday choices: for people with learning disabilities and high support needs. FPLD; 2000.

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## **PMLD Network**

The PMLD Network is a group of organisations — including charities, professionals and parents — who are working together to make things better for children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities and their families and carers.

The PMLD network:

- brings together people with profound and multiple learning disabilities, their parents and professionals
- acts as a forum for sharing good practice
- gives guidance for the development of local and national services
- offers support and information to parents and carers
- campaigns on issues relating to PMLD that are identified by members of the network

If you are interested in joining the PMLD Network and working with us to support children and adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities, visit our website at [www.pmldnetwork.org](http://www.pmldnetwork.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

Mencap has a National Officer for Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. You can contact Beverley Dawkins at the address below:

**Address:**

Mencap  
123 Golden Lane  
London  
EC1Y 0RT

**Email:** [beverley.dawkins@mencap.org.uk](mailto:beverley.dawkins@mencap.org.uk)

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

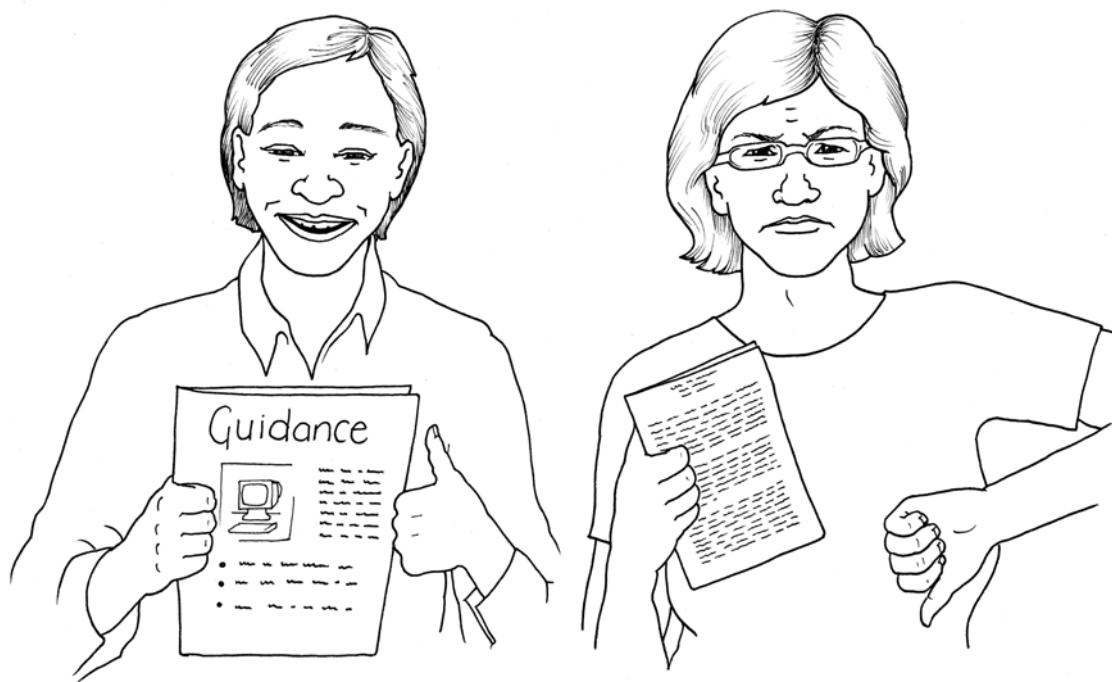


# Words and language



Guidance ■

It is important to think carefully about the words and language you use when making information for people with learning disabilities. You might be writing words for a booklet, website or for an audio tape or video. Writing clearly will make your information easier to understand. It will also get your message across to more people in a friendlier way.



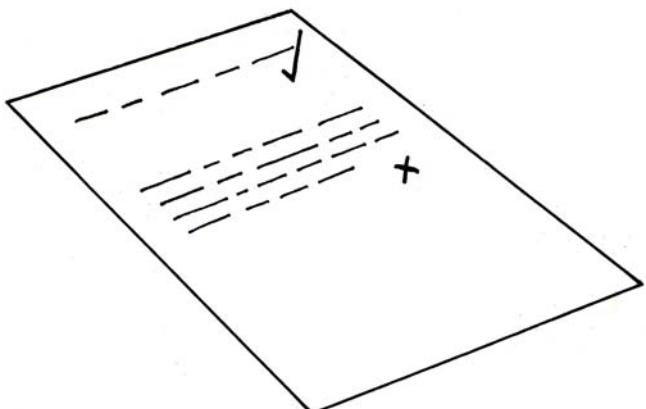
# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



- 1. Use easy words and talk to your reader.** There is almost always an easier way to say a long or difficult word. Using words that you use in everyday talk will make your information easier and more friendly.



- 2. Make your sentences plain, easy and short.** People find it easier to remember short sentences. Having just one idea in each sentence makes your information clearer. Doing this also helps to keep your sentences short.



**3. Give your information in clear chunks.** Information is easier to understand and to follow when it is presented in a series of chunks, or steps. Think about what you want to say first. Then put your ideas in the right order so they make sense to the people the information is for.



**4. Make sure your information is interesting, useful and up to date.** Information is easier to understand and remember when it is about things that people are interested in or need to know. Using real-life examples and quotes can help. It is also important to make sure your information is up to date. And to include contact details for further advice or help.

# 1

## Use easy words and talk to your reader

---

It is important to use easy, everyday words when making information for people with learning disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

There is almost always an easier way to say most hard words. The Plain English Campaign has a useful free booklet called ‘The A to Z of alternative words’. You can use it to search for other ways to say things. The booklet is also on their website [www.plainenglish.co.uk/A-Z.htm](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/A-Z.htm)<sup>3</sup>

It can also help if you write as if you were speaking to someone.<sup>4</sup>

Using words like ‘I’, ‘we’, and ‘you’ makes information seem easier to understand, and more friendly.<sup>3</sup>

A good test is to read your words out loud to check that they still make sense and are easy to say.<sup>1</sup> If you are writing words for an audio tape or video, it’s a good idea to make the tape first, before you finalise the written words. Reading the words onto tape or video often helps you to see mistakes or places where your words could be easier.

Don’t forget that you are writing for adults, about adult topics. It’s OK to use unusual words if they are really necessary and you explain what they mean.<sup>5</sup>

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You should try to match your words to the needs and knowledge of your audience. There will be some long or unusual words that people with learning disabilities will know, use and recognise. These might be words that people use at home, during the day, or at meetings. They might be words that are part of the shared language used by the self-advocacy movement. Working together with your audience to make your information is a good way to find out what words people are likely to understand best.<sup>5</sup>

Try not to use jargon words like acronyms or abbreviations. These are shortened forms of long words or phrases. For example, GP is an acronym for General Practitioner. But not everyone knows this. It is clearer to say ‘doctor’.<sup>6</sup>

If you really have to use jargon, then explain what it stands for. For example, ‘The Special Care Baby Unit, or SCBU for short, is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the hospital’.<sup>7</sup>

Be consistent and repeat words rather than using different words to say the same thing. If you use the word ‘coat’ in one sentence, don’t use ‘jacket’ or ‘anorak’ in the next.<sup>2</sup> Repeating words and phrases helps people to remember the information.<sup>1</sup>

# 2

## Make your sentences plain, easy and short

---

Keep your sentences short. Long sentences are difficult to remember. Try to write sentences of 15 words or less. You should never write sentences that are more than 40 words.<sup>8</sup>

Try to have just one idea in each sentence. This will make sentences easier to understand. It will help to keep them shorter too.<sup>2, 9, 10</sup>

It is OK to start sentences with joining words like ‘and’, ‘but’, ‘or’.<sup>3</sup>

Use easy punctuation. Avoid semicolons, colons, hyphens, or sentences broken up with too many commas.<sup>10</sup>

Titles and initials are easier to read if you take out the full stops between initials. For example: Ms T K Lock.<sup>11</sup>

Write in active sentences. The active form of the verb (e.g. ‘You can get the bus to the station’) is more positive than the passive form (e.g. ‘You will be taken by bus to the station’). Active sentences make the reader feel more involved and less like someone who has things done to them.<sup>12</sup>

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Active sentences are also clearer and can help to make ideas seem more concrete and real. Using personal pronouns (I, you, we, etc) will help you to avoid using a passive. It will also help your readers to see the meaning of a sentence. For example ‘You can buy a drink at the bar’ is easier to understand than ‘Drinks may be bought at the bar’.<sup>13</sup>

Write in positive sentences wherever you can. For example, say ‘You can give skimmed milk to babies over 6 months old’. This is better than ‘Do not give skimmed milk to babies under 6 months old’. Negatives can be hard to understand. Some people do not understand the concept of negativity at all and may read a negative sentence as a positive. This can obviously lead to a lot of frustration, confusion and disappointment.<sup>14</sup>

Do not use phrases that say one thing, but mean something else. You might have heard some of these well-used phrases: ‘Keep your eye on the ball.’ ‘At the end of the day.’ ‘Sick as a parrot.’ These phrases only make sense if you have heard them before and remember what they really mean.

---

Be clear and accurate when you use concepts that show quantity, size or time. Words like ‘few’, ‘quite’, ‘nearly’ and ‘some’ will mean different things to different people. For example, it is not clear to say ‘The fish should be quite fresh’. It is better to give an age limit and say something like: ‘The fish should be less than 3 days old’.<sup>16</sup>

Some people with learning disabilities will find the concept of number hard to understand.<sup>2</sup> Writing numbers as figures, rather than words, can help to make number concepts easier.<sup>7</sup>

More complex number concepts, such as percentages, can be very hard to understand for a lot of people. It is easier to talk about ‘1 out of 10 people’ rather than ‘10% of people’.<sup>17</sup>

People with learning disabilities say that they prefer times to be written in a 12 hour, rather than 24 hour clock.<sup>1</sup>

# **3 Give your information in clear chunks**

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Think carefully about what you want to say. Clear writing can only come from clear thinking.<sup>9</sup>

Planning is essential. Good organisation will help your readers follow what you are saying.<sup>4</sup>

Information is easier to understand when it is presented in a series of chunks, or steps. Each chunk should focus on one main idea. Ideas can then be built up bit by bit.<sup>18</sup>

Think about the right order of your information. You should organise your information in a way that makes sense. You will confuse your audience if you put an important concept at the end that they should know about at the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

Example (1) below is easier to understand than example (2) because the information is in the right order:

Example (1) ‘Fill the kettle with water. Then switch it on.’  
Example (2) ‘Switch on the kettle after filling it with water.’

It is easier to understand a sentence where familiar information (the context) goes first and new information goes second.<sup>21</sup>

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When you are using two sentences that are linked by ‘because’ or ‘if’, put the ‘because’ or ‘if’ clause first. For example it is better to say ‘If your wound starts to bleed, contact your doctor’, than ‘Contact your doctor if your wound starts to bleed’.<sup>7</sup>

You can use headings, bullet points, lists and sections to break up the text into chunks.<sup>19</sup>

Headings are good for highlighting the most important points.<sup>20</sup> Your headings will be most useful if you make them fit the information needs of your readers. One way of doing this is to describe what you want your readers to be able to do, or to know, when they have read that section of the information. For example, ‘Understanding Depression’ is a better heading than ‘Causes of Depression’, as it tells the reader what the information will help them to do.<sup>7</sup>

If you use bullet points or lists, try to write each new point as a complete sentence. Most people with learning disabilities will have forgotten the first sentence by the time they have got to the end, so the list becomes meaningless.<sup>5</sup>

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For example:

Don't say: You can:

- go to the cinema.
- stay at home.
- go shopping.

Do say: Here are some things you can do:

- You can go to the cinema.
- You can stay at home.
- Or, you can go shopping.

# **4 Make sure your information is interesting, useful and up to date**

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Think carefully about the content of your information. Use examples, quotes or stories to make your information relevant to your audience.<sup>22</sup>

If your information is relevant to your readers, it will be easier for them to understand and remember. Information is only interesting to people when they can see how it might be useful to them.<sup>21</sup> People sometimes ignore, or disagree with information that doesn't seem relevant to their lives.<sup>23</sup>

Many people with learning disabilities find it hard to make sense of information that is aimed at a general audience. They often have not done the same things as non disabled adults. Many people with learning disabilities have missed out on life experiences such as having paid work, learning to drive, having a long-term partner, getting married, having children, or even growing up in a family. This can affect the way they make sense of both written information and information from pictures.<sup>5</sup>

The experiences that people with learning disabilities may know best might include being treated differently, being bullied, or not having a job.<sup>24</sup>

---

It is important to produce material that reflects these experiences but gives people a way of understanding their own lives in a positive way. Using real life examples or quotations to illustrate key points can help.<sup>1</sup>

Making sure your information is right for your audience also means paying attention to gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality. You should always try to work together with people from different Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and where possible, people who are gay and lesbian. At the very least, you should make sure your information does not just reflect the experiences of white, heterosexual people. People will ignore information if it doesn't reflect their lives too.<sup>1</sup>

Don't forget to keep your information up to date. Things like phone numbers and addresses change.<sup>1</sup>

You should also think carefully about using examples that might go out of date quickly, like things in the news, current bands or famous people.<sup>1</sup>

And last of all, try to include a phone number or email address where readers can get more help or information.<sup>25</sup>

# Resource section

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**The Plain English Campaign** website has lots of useful, free information about easy words and language.

**Address:**

Plain English Campaign  
PO Box 3  
New Mills  
High Peak  
SK22 4QP

**Telephone:** 01663 744409

**Email:** info@plainenglish.co.uk

**Website:** [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

# References

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1. Evidence from Information for All interviews, 2003.
2. Rix J. Defining Best Practice Strategies for Basic Language Audio Tours Through the Needs of People with Down Syndrome. MA Dissertation. London: King's College, University of London; 2001.
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[www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)
4. City of Salford. Guidelines on producing information for the public. 1999.  
[www.ssin.org.uk/resources/salford.htm](http://www.ssin.org.uk/resources/salford.htm)
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12. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. Write First Time! Guidelines to Help You Produce Well Written Information. Stockport, England: Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Social Services Division; undated.
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[www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/guide](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/hsru/guide)

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  20. Health Promotion England. *What Makes a Good Leaflet?* 2002.  
[www.hpe.org.uk/leaflettest.htm](http://www.hpe.org.uk/leaflettest.htm)
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  22. National Information Forum. *How to Provide Information Well: A Good Practice Guide*. London: National Information Forum; 1996.
  23. Foltz A, Sullivan J. Limited literacy revisited: Implications for patient education. *Cancer Practice* 1999; **7**(3): 145-150

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24. Roeher Institute. Literacy and Labels: A Look at Literacy Policy and People with a Mental Handicap. York, Ontario, Canada: Roeher Institute; 1990.
  25. People First. A Guide to Giving Information to People with Learning Difficulties. London: People First; undated.

This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)



# Design and layout



Guidance ■

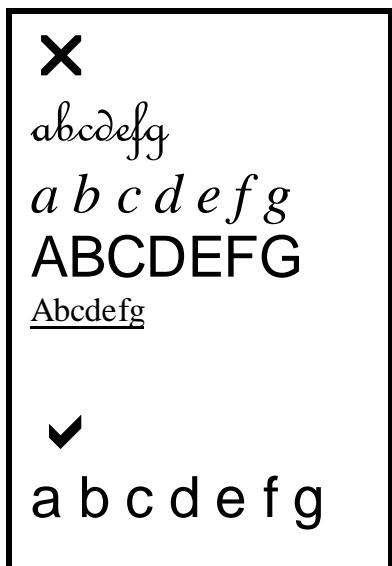
Paying attention to design and layout can make a big difference to how easy your information is for people with learning disabilities. Clear design and layout can really help to make information on paper, or on computers, easier to understand. And if your document looks good, more people will want to read it.



# Easy summary

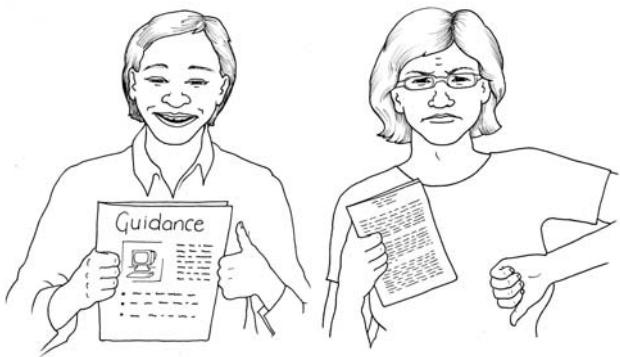
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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. Information should be easy to use.** Written information like booklets and newsletters should be easy for people to pick up and handle. People should be able to find their way around the information easily.

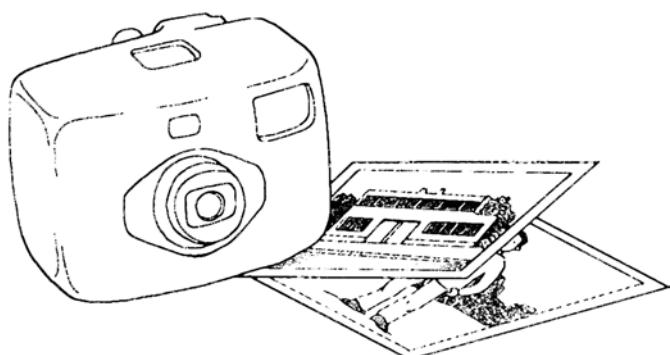
**2. Easy information should be printed clearly and boldly.** Use a typeface or font which is large and has big clear letters. Do not use shiny paper. Do not use italics, underlining or all capitals. They make text harder to read.



**3. Make your document easy to see, read and follow.** Use plenty of space around words and pictures. People can be confused when pages are crowded with lots of words, pictures and diagrams.



**4. Easy information should look good.** If a document looks inviting, then more people will want to pick it up, look at it and read it.



**5. Use pictures or photographs to get key messages across.** Pictures and photographs should be clear, bold and easy to see. They should help make sense of the words they go with.

# 1

## Information should be easy to use

---

Think about what your information is about and how it might be used.<sup>2</sup> Does it need to fit into an envelope, a bag, or someone's pocket?<sup>3</sup> Will the size and shape of the information make a difference to how people feel about it?<sup>1</sup>

A4 is a popular size for information for people with learning disabilities. It gives enough space to fit everything on like large print and pictures. And people find it easy to handle.<sup>1, 4</sup>

Think about how people will find their way around the information. You should make it easy for people to follow the key points and main ideas.<sup>1, 5</sup>

Use clear headings, sections and short paragraphs to break up the text.<sup>1, 6</sup> Short, clearly separated chunks of text help people to see where they are in the document and how much more they have left to read.<sup>1, 7</sup> See the guidance section on 'Words and language' for more information about this topic.

## **2 Easy information should be printed clearly and boldly**

---

Use a clear, ordinary typeface, or font. Sans serif typefaces are easier to read.<sup>8</sup> These are typefaces that do not have finishing strokes (serifs) at the end of stems, arms and tails of letters.

This is a sans serif typeface.

This is a serif typeface.

Good sans serif typefaces are Arial, Avant Garde, Futura and Helvetica Medium.<sup>9</sup> Try not to use light-weight, ornate or extra-bold typefaces like Gothic or Impact.<sup>1</sup>

To check that a typeface is clear, the letter ‘o’ should be almost round, and the numbers 3, 5 and 8 should be as clear as possible.<sup>9</sup> Try to avoid handwriting as people with learning disabilities and visual impairments find this very difficult to read.<sup>10</sup> Also try to avoid typefaces or fonts on the computer that look like handwriting.<sup>1</sup>

Numbers should be printed clearly as they can be easy to misread. Choose a typeface that has clear numbers as well as clear letters.<sup>11</sup> Numbers are easier to read if they are written in figures, not words e.g. 10, not ten.<sup>1</sup> Groups of numbers (like phone numbers) can be easier to read, or to follow with a finger, if they are in bold and have extra spaces between them.<sup>12</sup>

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Use the largest type size possible – at least 14. Many people with learning disabilities and visual impairments prefer larger type than this. If you can, try a type size of 16, 20 or even 24.<sup>1, 12</sup>

Do not split one word over two lines with a dash or hyphen.<sup>13</sup> Some people also find it easier if sentences are short, and better still are kept to one line. Many people with learning disabilities pause at the end of a line and treat the next line as a new sentence.<sup>14</sup>

If a sentence has to run onto a second line, try to break it after words like ‘and’ or ‘but’ so it is not read as two separate sentences. Or better still, make a new sentence.<sup>15</sup> Never let sentences run onto the next page.<sup>4</sup> People with visual impairments often prefer short sentences and people who listen to tapes can find it hard to listen to long sentences.<sup>1</sup>

Avoid using italics and underlining. They make text harder to read. **Bold** is better to make things stand out.<sup>2</sup>

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Avoid using all capitals. When text is in capitals it is harder to read as there is no shape to the separate words. Words in capitals and small letters (lower and upper case) are easier to read and recognise.<sup>1, 9</sup>

Use a ragged right margin rather than right justified text. This paragraph has a ragged right margin. The paragraph above has a right justified margin (not good). Right justified text is harder to read because of the uneven word and letter spacing. It also forces breaks in words which makes sentences difficult to follow.<sup>11, 16</sup>

Use a good quality paper with a matt finish. Glossy paper reflects too much light and makes the text hard to read. If the paper is too thin, type can show through from the other side of the page.<sup>1, 6</sup> People with learning disabilities and visual impairments can find this confusing.<sup>1</sup> For best results, paper thickness should be at least 90 grams per square metre (90gsm).<sup>4, 11</sup> This is slightly thicker than standard photocopy paper.

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People with visual impairments need good contrast between the type and the background or paper. The ink colour should be black, or as dark as possible.<sup>1, 6</sup> Black on white gives the highest contrast but can cause glare for some people.<sup>1, 9</sup> Off-white, cream or pale yellow backgrounds are good too. Avoid pale-coloured inks or printing on dark-coloured paper.<sup>16</sup>

The cheapest and quickest way of producing large print is by photocopying and enlarging standard print on white paper. It is important to check that the photocopying is clear and easy to read. To help people with visual impairments, the words should look black and crisp on the paper. You can also produce good quality large print with a computer.<sup>16</sup>

# 3

## Make your document easy to see, read and follow

---

People with learning disabilities often read documents very carefully from the beginning to the end. They may not feel confident to look at one page here and there, or to spot key messages on a crowded page.<sup>1</sup>

The layout of words and pictures on a page therefore needs to be very clear, straightforward and easy to follow. Text boxes and bubbles can be helpful to highlight key points. But use them carefully, as people can be confused when pages are crowded with lots of words and pictures.<sup>1</sup>

Use plenty of space between lines, columns and paragraphs, including a good margin.<sup>2</sup> Spacing helps people to read faster and to see the structure of the information as a whole.<sup>17</sup> It also makes the information seem less overwhelming. People often say that documents in large print look very long.<sup>1</sup>

Lines of type should not be too long. If lines are too long then people will lose their place.<sup>18</sup> The best line length is less than 60 letters and spaces.<sup>19</sup> People with visual impairments often prefer even shorter lines.<sup>1</sup>

---

Try to leave a good space between columns to separate them clearly.<sup>11</sup> If space is limited, put a line down the page between the columns.<sup>11</sup> People with visual impairments say this helps them keep their place.<sup>1, 11</sup>

Try to start all headings on the left hand side of the page. People with visual impairments find it hard to read headings in the centre of the page.<sup>1</sup>

Write straight across the page. Avoid text that goes up or down. It is hard for people with visual impairments to read single words on different lines.<sup>1</sup>

# **4** Easy information should look good

---

Plan your front page to get people's attention. A good-looking front page will encourage people to pick up the document in the first place.<sup>3</sup>

Colour can help information look more interesting. And people with learning disabilities say they like it.<sup>1, 4</sup> But think carefully about whether colour is really needed. It doesn't necessarily make a big difference to whether people find your information useful or not.<sup>20</sup>

Full colour (using 3 colours and black) can be expensive. Using 1 colour in different shades is a cheaper option and can sometimes work just as well.<sup>5</sup>

Colour coding is often used as a tool for breaking up information into sections.<sup>1</sup> But some people with learning difficulties find it hard to tell the difference between colours. Keep to a few, bold, primary colours that can be named easily.<sup>1, 21</sup>

Different colours can give out different messages. Think about what your information is saying and chose your colour with the main message in mind.<sup>1</sup>

---

Black and white can look good if the design and layout is clear. It is a cheaper option and means that materials can be photocopied, or printed from a standard desk-top printer.<sup>1</sup>

If you go for a colour document, make sure that you have a black and white version available for people who prefer it. For some people, good contrast is more important than colour.<sup>1</sup>

# **5 Use pictures or photographs to get key messages across**

---

Using pictures or photographs can make information easier to understand for many people with learning disabilities.

Pictures help people make more sense of the words. They can also make key messages easier to remember.<sup>22</sup>

Some people with learning disabilities will rely on pictures alone to make sense of a document. So it is important to include pictures that get a message across, not just pictures that look nice.<sup>1</sup>

Pictures should illustrate the main messages from the words they represent. Each picture should focus on just one main idea, or message.<sup>23</sup> It is important to make pictures as bold, clear and large as possible. Try not to include a lot of extra details, or background images.<sup>1, 24</sup>

Many people with learning disabilities prefer pictures to go next to the text on the left hand side rather than above or underneath.<sup>25, 26</sup> Do not wrap text around a picture, or run text over the top of a picture.

Putting pictures on the left, before the words, makes them seem more important. This is a good message to give out to a group of people who mostly find words hard.<sup>1</sup>

# Resource section

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**The Plain English Campaign** has a useful free guide called ‘Design and Layout’. You can download it from their website:

**Website:** [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

**The Basic Skills Agency** produces a free booklet called ‘Making Reading Easier’. Go to their website to order a paper copy, or read it on screen:

**Website:** [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

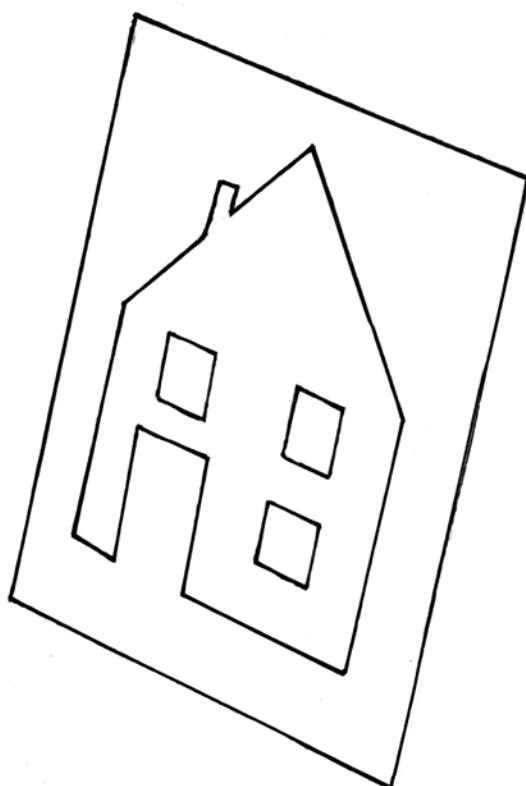


# Using pictures



Guidance ■

Pictures can make your information easier to understand for many people with learning disabilities. Pictures can help people make more sense of written information. They can be used to explain your most important points and to make your key messages easier to remember. There are many different sorts of pictures such as drawings, diagrams or photographs.



# Easy summary

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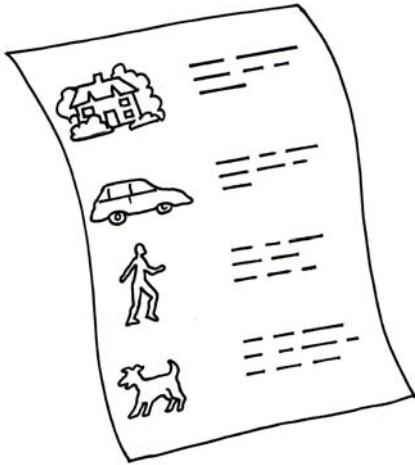
The key points covered in this section are:



**1. Pictures can make your information easier to understand.** They can help people make sense of words. Pictures can also help people remember what your information is about.



**2. Use different sorts of pictures.** Sometimes a drawing will make your message easier to understand, sometimes a photograph might be better. There are lots of important things to think about when deciding what sort of picture to use.



**3. Use one picture for each of your important points.** Make sure that your picture means the same as your words. Think about where you put your pictures. Pictures should be clear, simple and easy to see. Too much detail can make them harder to understand.



**4. Pictures can mean different things to people.** Everybody will have a slightly different way of understanding the same picture. Test your pictures out. Let people tell you what your picture means to them in their own words.

# 1

## Pictures can make your information easier to understand

---

Pictures can make somebody want to pick up your information and read on.<sup>2</sup> They can help people feel that the information is about them. But if people don't connect with the pictures they may not connect with the information.<sup>3</sup>

Pictures can help people remember what the information says.<sup>4</sup> They can give people who find reading hard extra help to understand written words.<sup>5, 6</sup> Pictures can help a reader remember what they have already read. They help the reader find their place and carry on.<sup>7</sup>

Pictures can reinforce important messages.<sup>8</sup>

Using pictures without words gives people the chance to talk about things in their own words.<sup>1</sup>

# **2**

## **Use different sorts of pictures**

---

There are many different sorts of pictures such as drawings, diagrams or photographs.

Sometimes a drawing will make your message easier to understand. Sometimes a photograph might be better. Many people with learning disabilities say they prefer photographs. There are lots of important things to think about when deciding what sort of picture to use.<sup>1</sup>

Photographs are good for showing people, places or things. For example, photographs can be useful for showing people where a meeting is going to be held and who will be there.<sup>9</sup>

Photographs are good for showing things happening such as people at work or catching a train.<sup>1</sup>

Photographs can help people identify with what the information is about. It can help them decide if the information will be useful to them.<sup>10</sup>

Photographs can have special meaning for people. They can remind them of a person or place. People recognise real places and real people faster.<sup>1</sup> Photographs can be taken by the audience themselves.<sup>11</sup>

---

Photographs can be very powerful in getting messages across. They can trigger strong feelings and emotions.<sup>1</sup> People with learning disabilities find it easier to identify emotions from a photograph with clues about the context (such as people looking sad at a funeral) than they do from a line drawing with no clues.<sup>12</sup>

Avoid showing things that go out of fashion quickly. Keep your photographs up to date.<sup>13</sup>

You will need to ask someone's permission to use their photograph in your information.<sup>1</sup>

Drawings are often better than photographs if you are trying to show a single concept. For example a photo of a cat eating from a bowl might mean many things. It might just mean 'cat', it might mean 'cat eating' or it might mean 'cat food'.<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes photographs contain too much information. With a drawing it is easier to include only the things that show your key message.

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Think about the message that the drawing gives about the people who are using the information. Many people with learning disabilities don't like cartoon type pictures or stickpeople as they can seem childish.<sup>10, 1</sup>

Different pictures work better for different messages. Don't be afraid to use a mixture of drawings, photographs or symbols. Work with the people who will be using your information to find the pictures that fit best with your message and your meaning.<sup>1</sup>

Pictures banks are collections of pictures that you can copy into documents. Details of some of these are given in the resource section. Picture banks are very useful but sometimes they may not have exactly the picture you need. Don't be afraid to use your own photographs and drawings or to use a scanner to include other pictures that you have found.<sup>1</sup>

Using coloured pictures can make your information look more attractive but it can also make things more expensive to produce.

# 3

## Use one picture for each of your important points

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Pictures are best used to support your most important points.<sup>13</sup>

Try to put a picture with the key words or use them to sum up a whole concept or idea. Finding the key words takes a lot of thought. It is important that you put across the most important points in your message.<sup>9</sup>

Use one picture for each of your important points.<sup>1</sup>

The pictures should be there to make your key messages easier to understand. Don't just use pictures because they look nice or they fill a space.<sup>13</sup>

Using pictures as metaphors can make things harder to understand. A metaphor might be showing a picture of a lightbulb to mean having an idea. Make sure your pictures mean the same to your audience as your words.<sup>16</sup>

---

The quality of your pictures is important. Make sure your picture is big enough to be seen clearly. If you use drawings make sure that the lines are bold enough to be seen clearly.<sup>4</sup>

People who find reading difficult often focus on the text and worry about not being able to read it. Some people ignore the picture because they think the text is more important. A lot of people with learning disabilities say they prefer it if pictures are at the side of the text rather than above or below the words.<sup>1, 13</sup>

Putting pictures on the left, before the words, makes the pictures seem more important.<sup>1, 13</sup>

Keep pictures as clear and simple as possible. Don't have too many details in your pictures. The picture should be detailed enough to be clear what it is about but too many details can be confusing.<sup>15</sup>

Avoid lots of background clutter. Removing details from the background and putting in a plain background can make the picture clearer. This can be done easily with digital photographs or scanned pictures.<sup>1</sup>

# **4 Pictures can mean different things to people**

---

It is important to think about whether the information is to be used alone or with support. The same picture can mean different things to different people. Everybody will have a slightly different way of understanding the same picture.<sup>1</sup>

Include different types of people and communities in your pictures. Look for pictures that represent your audience. If there aren't any, create some yourself.<sup>1, 15</sup>

Sometimes the images that make sense to people are not the most obvious representations. Test your pictures out. Let people tell you what your picture means to them in their own words.<sup>1</sup>

Don't be afraid to experiment. Be creative. Ask other people for ideas.<sup>1</sup>

# **Resources**

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**The CHANGE picture bank** contains over 500 images to help make information easier. You can photocopy the pictures and stick them on to your information or you can do it on your computer with the CD Rom. The picture bank works on both PC and Apple Mac. Due to demand CHANGE have recently introduced a license fee. CHANGE Picture Bank available from:

**Address:**

CHANGE  
Unity Business Centre, Units 19 & 20  
26 Roundhay Road  
Leeds  
LS7 1AB

**Telephone:** 0113 243 0202

**Website:** [www.changepeople.co.uk](http://www.changepeople.co.uk)

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**Access2Pictures** is a CD Rom and pack with over 800 pictures. Available from:

**Address:**

People First  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor,  
299 Kentish Town Road,  
London  
NW5 2TJ

**Telephone:** 0207 485 6660

**Email:** general@peoplefirst.k-web.co.uk

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**Useful book:** Wright, A (1993) 1000 pictures for teachers to copy. Published by Thomas Nelson, Nelson House, Mayfield Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 5PL

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‘Worth a thousand words’ is a **photosymbol set** containing over 1,500 photographs featuring models with learning disabilities. Available from:

**Address:**

RealVoice Media  
4 Greenway Business Centre  
Doncaster Road  
Southmead  
Bristol  
BS10 5PY

**Website:** [www.worthathousandwords.co.uk](http://www.worthathousandwords.co.uk)

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It is possible to download photos and pictures from the **internet** by using search engines such as **Google** ([www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk)) to do an image search. If you have Microsoft programmes such as Works or Office on your computer it is possible to insert images from **Clip Art**.

You will need to check the copyright of pictures you use.

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Some images can be viewed online but there is a cost to use them in your information, such as the **John Birdsall image library**:

**Website:** [www.johnbirdsall.co.uk](http://www.johnbirdsall.co.uk)

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on: [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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  16. Ross J, Pringle J. Hey, I can read that! Perspectives on plain language and people with developmental disabilities. Paper presented to Fourth Biennial Conference of the PLAIN Language Association, Toronto, Canada: PLAIN Language Association; 2002.

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

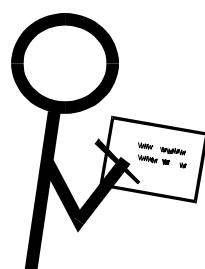
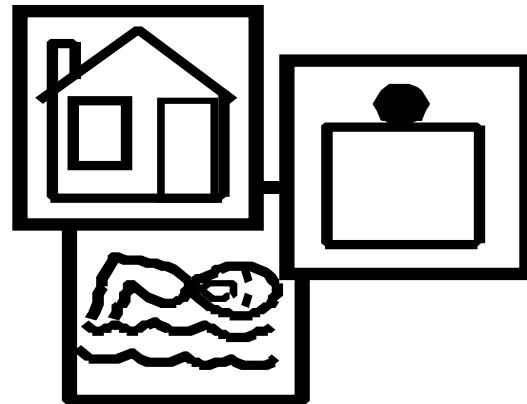
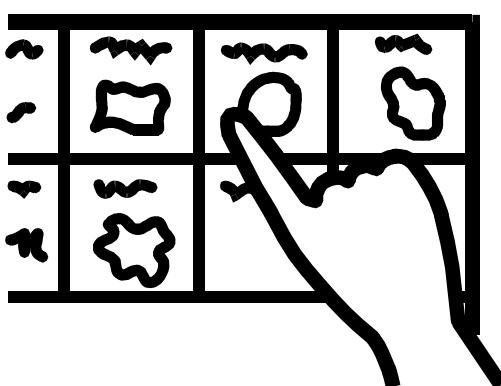


# Using symbols



Guidance ■

People with learning disabilities can use symbols to communicate, to be more independent and to help them understand text. There are a number of things that you should think about when preparing easy information that uses symbols.



# Easy summary

---

The key points covered in this section are:



cup



to

**1. What are symbols?** Symbols are simple line drawings that stand for words and ideas. You can look at some symbols and know straight away what they stand for. Others need to be learnt.



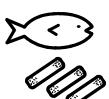
bread



milk



jam

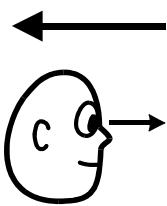


fish fingers



shampoo

**2. Why symbols are helpful.** People with learning disabilities use symbols in different ways. People with learning disabilities can use them to communicate with other people or to be more independent. Symbols can also help people with learning disabilities understand written information.



I

saw

a fish.

**3. Which symbols should be used?** Different people use different symbol systems. Choosing which system can be difficult. You should ask the people the information is for, which symbols to use.

**4. How symbols can be used.** Symbols are used to help understand the important words in a written or spoken message. Symbols should be big enough for people to see them easily. They should be used in simple sentences. There are different ways of laying out information which uses symbols. People who will use the information should decide which is the best layout for them.

# 1

## What are symbols?

---

A symbol is a simple line drawing that stands for words or ideas.

Example:



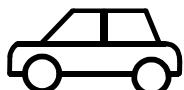
cup

This cup may not be like the one that you use at home but represents the idea of 'cup'.

Symbols generally fall into three categories:<sup>1, 2</sup>

Symbols that are easy to recognise;

Example:



car

Symbols that could be quite easily learned;

Example:



me

---

Symbols that are very abstract and could be difficult to learn.

Example:  to

Although many symbols are well known from everyday use symbols have no fixed meanings. The same symbols can mean different things to different people. Always check with the people that your information is for what they understand from the symbols.

# **2 Why symbols are helpful**

---

People with learning disabilities use symbols for a number of different purposes:

**Some people use them as their main way of communicating.**

Example: a person may have a book made up of pages of symbols that they point to.

What position I would like to be in:



in my wheelchair



sat at the table



lying on the floor



in a beanbag



lying on my bed

---

**They can help people to make choices.<sup>2, 3</sup>**

Example: a person might express their choice of drink in the pub:



cola

or



lager

**They can help people understand.<sup>1</sup>**

Example: a person might have a better understanding of where they are going that day if they were regularly shown a symbol that stands for the activity:



horseriding

## They can help people remember things.<sup>2</sup>

Example: a person could have a calendar that reminds them of significant events.

1 February	2	3  dentist	4	5	6	7
8  hospital app	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18  haircut	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28  Mums b'day

---

**They can help people be more independent.<sup>1</sup>**

Example: a person could have a shopping list of symbols so that they can go around the supermarket on their own.



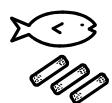
bread



milk



jam



fish fingers



shampoo

---

**They can support people whose first language is not English.<sup>4</sup>**

Example: a person could be shown a symbol with the word in both their first language and English.



**They can assist people with written information.<sup>1, 2, 5</sup>**

Example: signage in a building



Symbols provide an extra chance for you to get your message across.<sup>1, 3</sup>

Symbols can also remind supporters that they need to explain information. People who support individuals with learning disabilities will still need to help the individual to understand new information.

# **3 Which symbols should be used?**

---

You should choose symbols that meet an individual's need and preference.

There is no nationally agreed symbol system.<sup>6</sup> This is difficult when you want to use symbols to support information that is being given to a wide audience.<sup>2</sup> But it does allow flexibility for those involved in finding appropriate symbols to meet an individual's needs.

Try to use one of the more commonly used systems.<sup>6</sup> If your information is for local use try to find out what symbol system people with learning disabilities commonly use in your area. Some systems have been produced for local use.<sup>2, 1</sup>

Whatever symbol system you choose you should try to consider the following points:

Try to use symbols from one symbol system in a piece of information.<sup>2</sup>

Try to use symbols in the same way in different settings. Adopt a clear policy on using symbols that is in keeping with what is happening in your local area.<sup>2</sup>

---

Try to use symbols that are pictorial and show what they mean rather than abstract symbols.<sup>2</sup>

Use photographs where possible, especially when referring to a particular person or place. Digital cameras can be very useful for this.<sup>1, 7</sup> Photographs should be clear, close-up shots of the subject with minimal background clutter. See the guidance section on ‘Using pictures’ for more information about this topic.

If you have a choice of symbols for one concept you should ask people with learning disabilities which they think is best.<sup>1</sup>

If your symbol system does not include a word or idea that you want to use you should:

- Check your system’s wordlist and see if there is another symbol that would be suitable.
- Think about whether you could use another idea that may be easier for people to understand.
- Ask people with a learning disability to help you create a new symbol.<sup>1, 2</sup>

# 4 How symbols can be used

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## Getting started

You should get training on using symbols.<sup>1, 2</sup>

You can find information to help you on symbols websites.<sup>1</sup>

You should set up a user group to advise you on making your information easy to understand.

Many symbol systems now come in software packages. Individual symbols can also be imported as ‘pictures’ into common computer programmes such as Microsoft Word, Publisher and PowerPoint.<sup>1</sup> It is important to check that the symbol system is compatible with your PC. You will need to know the file name of the symbol you wish to include.

Try to ensure that the symbol package you use is easily available so that you can provide information at short notice.

## Sentence structure

Use simple plain English and follow the general good practice for easy information. (See the guidance section on ‘Words and language’ for more information about this topic.) Using symbols can help you do this.<sup>1</sup>

Avoid making sentence longer than one line.<sup>1</sup> Do not split sentences over 2 pages. Do not use abbreviations.

Each sentence or new idea should be placed on a separate line with a line break between.<sup>1, 3</sup>

It can be confusing to explain every word using a symbol. Use symbols to explain the information giving or ‘keywords’ in the sentence that could not be predicted. The keywords are the words that give us the message.

---

Example:



The man      drove the car      in the garage

1

2

3

Try to avoid sentences that contain more than three ‘keywords’.<sup>1</sup> Words such as ‘in’, ‘on’ and ‘under’ can be keywords when their use is not easily predicted. In this example the man is unlikely to have put the car ‘on’ or ‘under’ the garage.

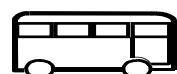
This is also true of verbs. In this example the verb ‘to drive’ can be predicted, as that is what people usually do with cars. If the man had ‘pushed’ the car into the garage then ‘pushed’ would have been a keyword as the reader would be unlikely to predict this.

---

**Try to put the main message of the sentence first.<sup>1</sup>**

Symbols can have a different meaning depending on the context so ensure that each symbol is relevant to the concept. <sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

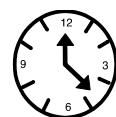
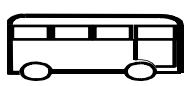
Example:



Our comfortable      prompt      bus service.....

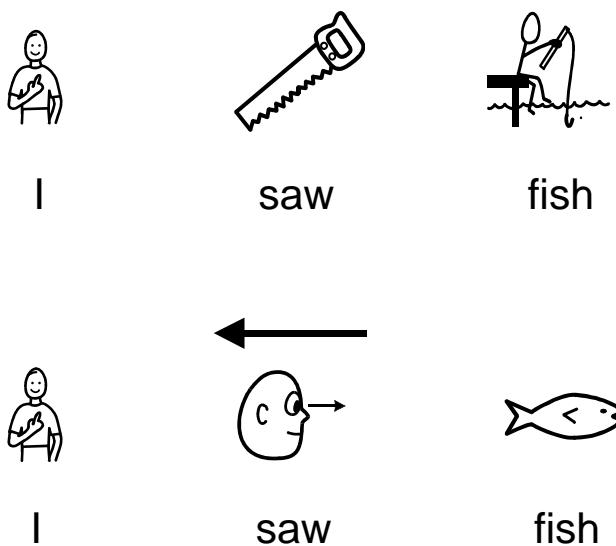
Individuals trying to decipher this message would have difficulty understanding the adjectives ‘comfortable’ and ‘prompt’ without knowing what they refer to.

The sentence is better written as:



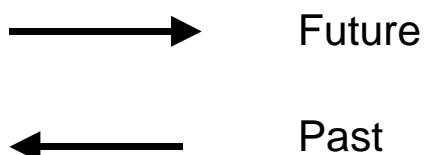
Our bus service is comfortable and prompt.....

**Symbols can have a different meaning depending on the context so ensure that each symbol is relevant to the concept.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>**



All of the symbols sets have similar conventions for past tenses. Refer to the symbol provider's guidance on grammatical structure of their symbols. The use of plurals and tense may vary.

One method of distinguishing tense is by placing an arrow above the symbol.<sup>4</sup>



---

## Avoid using pronouns. Replace them with the noun.<sup>4</sup>

Example:

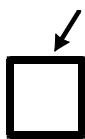
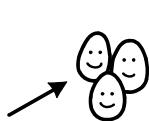
You should write:



Su	M	T	<u>W</u>
Th	F	Sa	

Your rubbish will be picked up by the refuse collectors on Wednesday.

You should not write:



Su	M	T	<u>W</u>
Th	F	Sa	

They will collect      it      on Wednesday

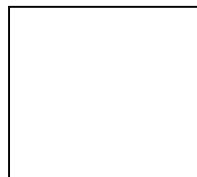
It can be useful to look at the symbols without the text to ensure you have included all the keywords in your message.<sup>1, 3</sup>

---

## **Design and Layout**

### **Size**

A lot of people with learning disabilities have some difficulties with their vision. Text and symbols should be quite large. Symbols should be no smaller than the area of this square.



Text should be at least size 14 font.<sup>1</sup>

### **Colour**

Most symbol systems are made up of simple black line drawings.

There are two ways of using colour. There is a colour symbol set. Some packages allow you to colour the lines of black and white symbols.

A lot of colour can mean more information to take in. This can be confusing. Black and white lines are easiest for most people with visual impairments.<sup>1</sup>

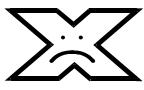
---

## Position

People position their symbols on a page in different ways.  
No one way has been proved as more effective.

1. Some people prefer to have the symbols positioned above the words they represent in a sentence. This happens when writing using a symbols package. This method can be particularly helpful for people with some reading skills.

Example:



It's bad to put cotton buds in your ears

2. Some people prefer one or two symbols separate to the text.

Example:



If you have earache  
you should visit your  
doctor

It is very important that you ask people with learning disabilities how the symbols should be positioned.<sup>1</sup>

---

## **Before distributing material that uses symbols**

Make sure that any copyright rules laid down by the symbol provider have been followed. Most providers ask that you put an acknowledgement statement somewhere on the document.<sup>2</sup>

Make sure that some people with learning disabilities have been asked to check out the finished document.<sup>1</sup>

# Resource section

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There are three main sources of symbols in the UK: Widgit Rebus, Mayer-Johnson Picture Communication system and Makaton. Makaton's symbol system is designed to be used in an integrated way with signing and speech. There are also additional symbols by other groups such as Signalong.

You could contact the speech and language therapists at your local Community Learning Difficulties Team for advice on the use of symbols.

\*\*\*\*\*

Widgit

**Address:**

124 Cambridge Science Park  
Milton Rd  
Cambridge  
CB4 0ZS

**Telephone:** (01223) 425 558 **Fax:** (01223) 425 349

**Email:** [info@widgit.com](mailto:info@widgit.com)

**Website:** [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)

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## Makaton Vocabulary Development Project

**Address:**

31 Firwood Drive  
Camberley  
GU15 3QD

**Telephone:** 01276 61390

**Email:** mvdp@makaton.org

**Website:** www.makaton.org

\*\*\*\*\*

## Mayer-Johnson Inc.

**Address:**

P.O. Box 1579  
Solana Beach CA 92075  
U.S.A.

**Telephone:** 011 +1 858 550-0084

**Fax:** 011 +1 858 550-0449

**Email:** mayerj@mayer-johnson.com

**Website:** www.mayer-johnson.com

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**Signalong** is a sign-supporting system based on British Sign Language.

**Address:**

The Signalong Group  
Stratford House  
Waterside Court  
Neptune Close  
Rochester  
Kent  
ME4 4NZ

**Website:** [www.signalong.org.uk](http://www.signalong.org.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

**SymbolWorld** is a non-commercial website, providing safe, fun and easy to use on-line resources for symbol users.

**Website:** [www.symbolworld.org](http://www.symbolworld.org)

\*\*\*\*\*

An overview of relevant issues can be found in: Beukelman D R, Mirenda P. Augmentative and Alternative Communication: management of severe communication disorders in children and adults. Paul Brookes Publishing Co.; 1998.

\*\*\*\*\*

You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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Rebus, Makaton and PCS symbols were used in this guidance. The guidance does not necessarily represent the views of these organisations.

# References

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1. Evidence from Information for All interviews, 2003.
2. Abbott C. Symbols now. Leamington Spa: Widgit Software Ltd; 2000.
3. Ward E. Picture This: Report on using pictures and symbols with people who have a learning difficulty. Brixton: Brixton Social Education Centre; undated.  
Detheridge T, Detheridge M. Literacy through symbols (second edition), London: David Fulton; 2002.
4. Sheehy K. The Effective Use of Symbols in Teaching Word Recognition to Children with Severe Learning Difficulties: a comparison of word alone, integrated picture cueing and the handle technique. International Journal of Disability, Development and Education 2002; **49**(1): 47–59
5. Moffatt V. Life without jargon. London: Choice Press; 1996.
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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)



# Audio



Guidance ■

Many people, including people with learning disabilities, cannot read, or find reading hard. Many have a visual impairment.

People with visual impairments are blind or have difficulty seeing things. This means that recordings on audio tapes or CDs play an important part in making information easier for people.



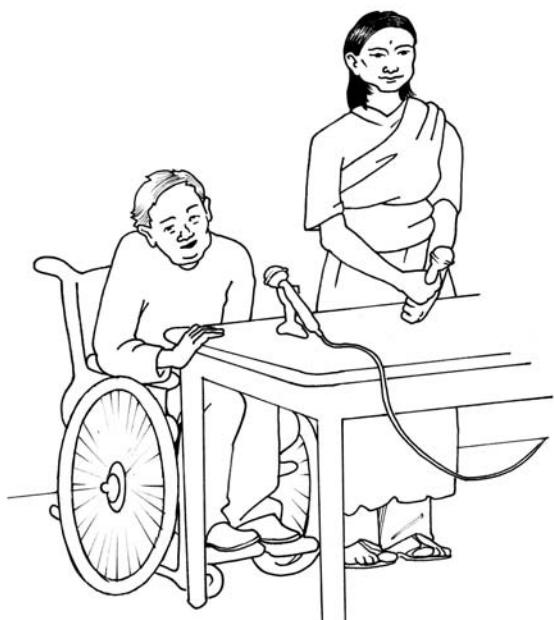
# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



**1. Make a recording that is easy to understand.** Work with people with learning disabilities to make your recording. Make it short and include only the key information. Use the best recording equipment you can. Make your recording in a quiet room, where you will not be interrupted.



**2. Use interesting voices.** You can use more than one voice on your recording. You can include the voices of people with learning disabilities and people from different parts of the country. They should sound clear, interesting and not speak too quickly.



**3. Make a recording that is easy to use.** You can use words or music to show people where they are in the tape or CD. Label your tape or CD carefully, with pictures and symbols for people who can't read. You can have labels in braille or Moon for people with visual impairments.



**4. Match audio with written information.** If you make written information for people with learning disabilities you should offer an audio version as well. When you write the words, make sure they will be easy to understand when they are read out loud. You need to do this **before** you make your recording.

# 1

## Make a recording that is easy to understand

---

The best way to make your recording easier to understand is to work with people with learning disabilities to make it.<sup>1</sup> It is important not to include too much information. Make your recording short, with only the key information you want to get across.<sup>1</sup> The voices should be slow enough to give people time to understand. Put small pauses between each piece of new information to give people time to think about what they have heard. But do not make these too long or people might think it is the end.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> Recordings for people with learning disabilities need to be a bit slower than ordinary audio books.<sup>1, 5</sup>

To get a clear sound, you will need to use the best recorder and microphone you can. Digital recording equipment gives the best quality. Test out your equipment before you start. You will need to make sure the microphone is in the best place, so it records the voices well and does not record the sound of the tape recorder. Be careful not to knock it.<sup>1, 4</sup>

---

If you are not using a studio to make your recording, you will need to think carefully about the room you use. The room needs to have good acoustics. That means it will not make your recording sound echoey. A room with lots of soft furnishings like curtains, blinds and a carpet can give you better acoustics.<sup>4</sup> Make sure you do not have any background noise, like ticking clocks or noisy radiators.<sup>4</sup> Try not to make any noises yourself, like sniffing or rustling paper.<sup>4</sup> Make sure you will not be interrupted.<sup>1</sup>

When the recording is finished, you can edit it, to take out any parts that you do not want to include. Then you need to listen through before it is copied lots of times, to make sure there are no mistakes.<sup>1, 4, 5</sup>

Think about whether to use other sounds and music on your recording. Sounds can support the information you are trying to get across and make it more interesting.<sup>1</sup>

---

You can include background noises that fit in with the place you are talking about, or what is happening in the recording.<sup>1</sup> You can use sounds and music to fit in with the mood of what you are saying. If you do this you will need to make sure the sounds are suitable for the age group of the people the tape is aimed at. Are the noises or music you plan to use too babyish? Are they too old fashioned for teenagers?<sup>1</sup>

You also need to remember that many people with learning disabilities have a hearing impairment.<sup>1, 2</sup> People with a hearing impairment are deaf or have difficulty hearing things. Background sounds can make it harder for them to hear the information.<sup>2, 6</sup> They can make it harder for people to concentrate on the information.<sup>1</sup> If you do use background sounds, it is better to record them separately from the voices, so you can alter the volume and put them in the best place on your recording.<sup>1</sup>

## **2** Use interesting voices

---

Think carefully about the voices that will be on your recording. They should sound clear, interesting and not speak too quickly.<sup>1, 2, 6</sup> It can be easier to hear people if their voice is not too high or too deep.<sup>1</sup> You can make your recording sound more interesting by using different voices. But do not swap voices too often as this can be confusing.<sup>1</sup> It is helpful to have clear changes between different information and people.<sup>2</sup> You can use one voice to read out headings and another for the information that follows. Or you can have one person asking questions and different voices answering.<sup>1, 2</sup>

It is good to include the voices of people with learning disabilities.<sup>1</sup> If people have not been recorded before, they may feel nervous about it and may be uncertain about hearing their own voice. They will need the chance to practise and get used to hearing themselves. All sorts of people can play a part in the recording. Some people with learning disabilities use voice output communication aids. They can use these for the recording.<sup>1</sup> If they cannot read they can listen to someone else saying the words and copy them. Then the other person's voice can be edited out. Any long pauses can be edited out too.<sup>1</sup>

---

Think about whether you want to include voices from different parts of the country. Strong regional accents can be hard for some people to understand.<sup>2</sup> But if people hear a voice that is like theirs, it can help them feel the information really applies to them.<sup>1</sup>

# 3

## Make a recording that is easy to use

---

You can make your recording to be played on tape or CD, depending on what your audience uses. CD players are getting cheaper, so more people are able to buy them. If you are not sure, you can make your recording available on both tape and CD. You can put audio recordings on websites and CD ROMS as well. But remember, simply putting audio clips on a website will not make it accessible for people who are blind or partially sighted. They will not be able to navigate their way to your website or audio clips, unless they are using a screen-reader programme.<sup>1</sup> See the guidance section on ‘Computer based information’ for more information about this topic.

It is important to help your listeners find their way around the recording as easily as possible. If they are using the recording with a booklet and lose their way, it can be very confusing.<sup>2</sup> This is easier to avoid with a CD, because you can make it easy for people to go to a particular chapter or page number, by matching it with a track number on the CD. With a tape it is much harder to go back and forwards to find the place you want.<sup>1</sup>

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You can help your listeners follow the recording in a booklet by saying the page numbers and letting them know when they need to turn the page. Give them plenty of time to do this. You can let them know when they get to a new section, when they get to the back page and when the recording ends.<sup>1, 2, 4, 7</sup>

You can use a short piece of music, or other sound to show people where they are. You will need to explain how the music or sounds are used.<sup>1</sup> You will need to make sure you do not use music that has a copyright. That means it cannot be copied unless the person who owns it agrees.<sup>1</sup>

It is very important to label your recording carefully. You need to say who the recording is from, what is on it and how long it lasts.<sup>4</sup> You need to put labels on the box and on the tape or CD itself. Label which is side 1 and 2. If the cassette is in a series, put which number it is. You will need to include a picture, symbol or logo as well as words, for people who cannot read. You might need to have a braille or Moon label for people with visual impairments.<sup>1, 4</sup>

# **4 Match audio with written information**

---

Audio recordings are often made to go with written information. If written information is made for people with learning disabilities they should always be given the chance to have a recording too.<sup>1</sup> Even if people cannot read, they often want to want to look at the written information and pictures and hear the recording at the same time.<sup>1, 4, 7</sup>

It is important to work on making the words easy before you record them. See the guidance section on 'Words and language' for more information about this topic. When writing the words, bear in mind that they will be taped. When words are read out loud, it helps to check they are easy to understand, especially if they are read by people with learning disabilities. So you need to practise reading them out loud and make the recording before the words are printed, in case you need to make any changes.<sup>1</sup>

You need to think about how far to match the words exactly. If there is detailed contact information at the beginning of a recording, this could put people off. You might want to put it at the end instead. Or you might want to leave out names and addresses and say that people can get them from the booklet.<sup>1</sup>

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You need to make sure that the labels on your audio information match those on the other sorts of information you have made. You might be asking people to reply to your information. If you are sending it out on tape, you need to give people the chance to send it back on tape too.<sup>1</sup>

# Resource section

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The **Royal National Institute of the Blind** has provided a pack called 'See it Right'. This has useful information on making audio recordings for people with visual impairments.

**Address:**

Royal National Institute of the Blind  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE

**RNIB telephone helpline:** 0845 766 9999

**RNIB email helpline:** [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

**RNIB website:** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



Registered Charity Number: 226227

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The **Independent Television Commission (ITC)** has written guidance on standards for the production and presentation of audio description. The ITC's duties are now covered by OfCom, the Office of Communications. You can find the guidance on their website at:

[www.ofcom.org.uk/codesguidelines/broadcasting/tv](http://www.ofcom.org.uk/codesguidelines/broadcasting/tv)

\*\*\*\*\*

**COTIS** is the **Confederation of Transcribed Information Services**. They have a newsletter and offer a range of guides about putting information on tape.

**Address:**

COTIS Project Office  
67 High Street  
Taporley  
Cheshire  
CW6 0DP

**Telephone:** 01829 733351

**Email:** [administrator@cotis.org.uk](mailto:administrator@cotis.org.uk)

**Website:** [www.cotis.org.uk/](http://www.cotis.org.uk/)

**You can find more resources to help you make **easy  
information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)**

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1. Evidence from Information for All interviews, 2003.
2. Rix J. Defining Best Practice Strategies For Basic Language Audio Tours Through The Needs Of People With Down Syndrome. MA Dissertation. Applied Language Studies in Education. London: King's College, University of London; 2001.
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6. Marcell M, Ridgway M, Sewell D, Whelan M. Sentence imitation by adolescents and young adults with Down syndrome and other intellectual disabilities. Journal of Learning Disability Research 1995; **39**: 215-232

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7. London Boroughs Disability Resource Team. Access Pack: An Access Guide to Conferences and Events for Disabled People – 4. Information for blind and partially sighted people. London: London Borough Disability Team; undated: 1-14

This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

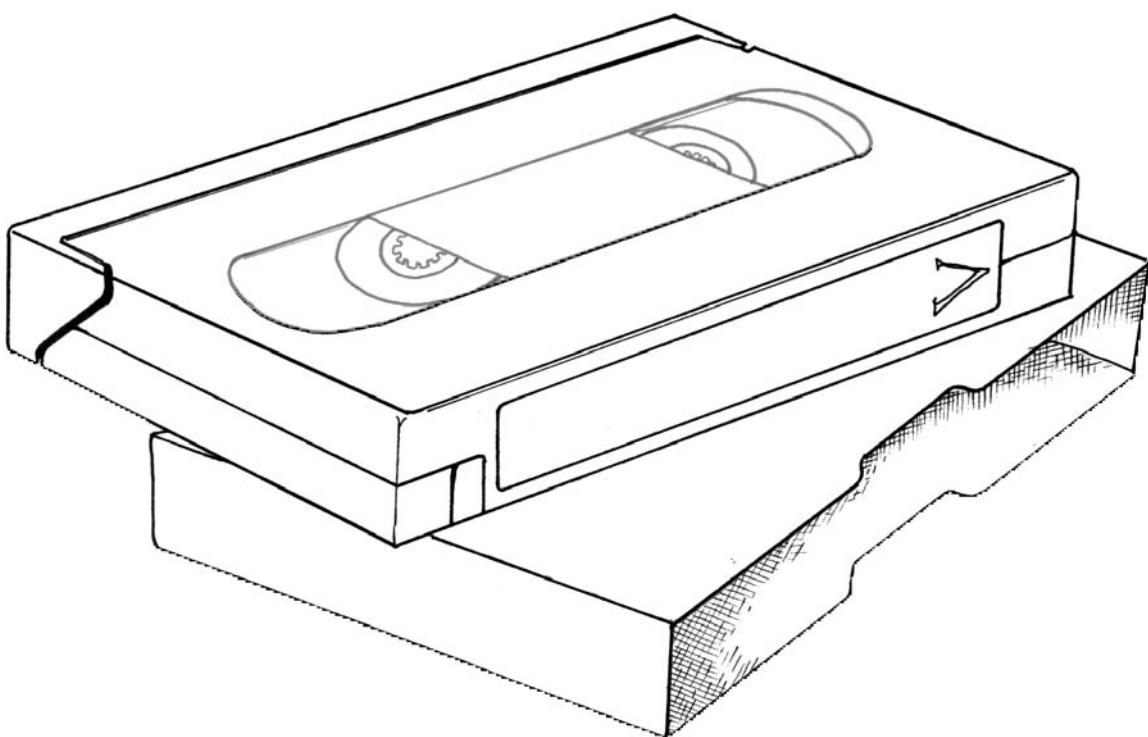


# Video



■ Guidance ■

Video can be a fun, friendly and exciting way of getting information to people with learning disabilities. There are some things it is worth thinking about, to help you get your message across successfully.



# Easy summary

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The key points covered in this section are:



## **1. Is video a good way of getting your information to people?**

Video can be used in a lot of different ways. It can encourage people to make changes and help them to learn. But you need to have enough time and money to make a really good video.



## **2. Work together to make a video.**

It is important to work together with people with learning disabilities to make your video. With the right support and training people can be involved in every part of the work. You will need to make sure all the information about making the video is easy to understand. You can work with equipment that is easier to use.



### **3. Make a good quality video.**

You will need to make your video as good to watch and listen to as you can. You might need to learn some new skills and you might want to get help to make your video. You will need to plan ahead to do a good job.



### **4. Make your video easy to understand.**

You will need to think about who will watch your video and make it right for them. Make sure your video is not too long. You can divide it into short sections. You can make sure all the information that comes with the video is clearly labelled and easy to understand.

# 1

# Is video a good way of getting your information to people?

---

You can use video in different ways. You can make a video to get your message to a lot of people. Or a video can be for one person or a small group, to help them think about their lives or what they are doing. Video clips can be used in websites or in CD ROMs. See the guidance section on ‘Computer based information’ for more information on this topic.<sup>1, 2, 3, 4, 5</sup>

Videos can be used to help people learn.<sup>2, 3, 4</sup> They can show someone doing something that other people can copy. People can watch a video as many times as they want, to remind them of what they have learnt.<sup>3</sup>

Videos can help self advocacy.<sup>5</sup> They can show role models and help people believe they can achieve what they see in the video.<sup>2, 3</sup> Videos can show different choices, to help people decide what they want.<sup>3</sup> Videos can help people feel less worried about things that may happen in their lives.<sup>3</sup> They can show real places and situations. People can think about how they would act in those situations.<sup>1, 2, 4</sup> Videos can help people to express themselves and tell their stories.<sup>5</sup> People who do not read and write can get their message across.<sup>1, 5, 7</sup>

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Videos can be a friendly way of getting a message across. People are used to watching television and videos. Videos can be entertaining and funny and grab people's attention.<sup>1</sup> They can be dramatic, showing moods and feelings.<sup>1</sup> They can be good to get a message to people who find reading difficult.<sup>3</sup> It can be fun to make a video. Videos can go well with other sorts of information such as booklets, to bring a message to life.<sup>1</sup>

There are some reasons why video might not be such a good way to get your message across. Videos can take a lot of time and money to make. It is not so easy to change videos, so the information may go out of date.<sup>1, 2, 4</sup> It might be better for someone to show people how to do something, like fill in a form, rather than make a video about it.<sup>1</sup> A video might not be the best way to show private information. The video player might be in a living room that other people use.<sup>1</sup>

# **2 Work together to make a video**

---

If you are making a video for people with learning disabilities, it is important to work together to make it.<sup>1</sup>

Some very successful videos have been made by and with people with learning disabilities.<sup>5</sup> It is a good idea to agree some ground rules before you start so that people are treated fairly and you do not upset anyone.<sup>7</sup> You can set up a group to give you advice and include people with learning disabilities in the group. And people with learning disabilities can be involved in every part of making the video.<sup>1, 5, 7</sup>

People can think of ideas for what the video will be about. They can do research to find out more about the topic.<sup>1</sup> They can help make sure that people with learning disabilities are shown in a good way in the film. They can help make sure all sorts of people with learning disabilities are included, like people with other disabilities and Black people.<sup>1</sup>

People with learning disabilities can take part in the film. They can do interviews or be interviewed. People can read out words or act in it. People will need to learn how to do these things and have the chance to practise.<sup>1</sup>

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If people are going to be filmed they need to give their permission, or consent. The law says that people who make videos should get this in writing.<sup>5</sup> Lots of people who make videos use a consent form. This needs to be easy to understand. It is important for people to understand what it means when they give their consent. The way this is explained will need to be right for each person. You will need to spend some time finding out all you can about consent and working out what you need to do about it for your video.<sup>1, 5</sup>

People will need the chance to get used to being filmed.<sup>5</sup> They might like to have the clips of themselves when filming is finished, as well as a copy of the whole video.<sup>1</sup> If people are to play a full part, you will need to make sure all the information about how the video is being made is easy to understand.<sup>1</sup>

People might need practical support like transport. You will need to work out who is going to be paid for their work on the video and how they will get their money, taking account of any benefits they might be getting.<sup>1</sup> It is a good idea to give carers information about the film, so they can support the person to take part.<sup>1</sup>

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It is important to give people the chance to work the equipment that is used to make a video. If they have training and support, people with learning disabilities can work on recording the sound, working the camera and editing the video.<sup>1</sup> You need to work with equipment that is easier to use, such as video cameras with large buttons.<sup>5</sup> Everyone will need to work safely and know what might be dangerous, for example by taping down loose cables.<sup>5</sup>

# **3** Make a good quality video

---

People are used to seeing good quality television programmes and videos, so you need to make your video good to watch and listen to.<sup>1</sup>

You need to decide if you will make your video indoors, in a studio, or if you will make it on location, filming in real places. If you film in a studio you can use more than one camera and film from different directions. It is easier to get clear sound with less background noise. It is easier to control the filming and you will probably get your filming done quicker. But filming on location can make your video more real and believable for your audience.<sup>4</sup>

Making a video involves different skills. You need to write a script with all the information about how the film will be made.<sup>2, 7</sup> You might want to make a story board for your film. This is a set of drawings with words, showing the main scenes you want to include.<sup>7, 8</sup> You need to make sure the sound is recorded clearly and to match the soundtrack to the right parts of the video. You need to get the lighting right. For example, making sure there is not a shadow on people's faces, so they can be seen clearly in your video.<sup>1</sup> And you need to edit the video, to take out any bits that you do not want to include.<sup>4</sup>

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If you do not have these skills you can learn some of them from books. You can go on a course to learn more.<sup>5</sup> Or you can get someone to help you make your video and learn from them.<sup>1</sup> If you decide to get help, you need to think about what you want help with. You might want help with thinking of ideas about what will go in the video. Or you might want help with the skills to make your video.<sup>1</sup> You will need to choose carefully the people who will help you. You will need to think about what they will charge. You will need to be sure they will not take over, but will listen to what you want to say. They will need to be good at working with all sorts of people and treat people with learning disabilities with respect.<sup>1</sup>

Good planning is an important part of making a video.<sup>8</sup> You need to decide why you are making it, what it will be about and who it will be for.<sup>4, 7, 8</sup> You will need to plan to get the money to make the video and for the time to make it. You need to have enough time for people with learning disabilities to play a full part.<sup>1, 5</sup> You will need to make sure the people involved are there when you need them.

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You will need to make sure the equipment you need and the places you want to film are available at the right times. You might want someone to help you with all this.<sup>4</sup>

If you are making your video for more than a few people, you will need to plan ahead for how you will check it out with other people and how you will get it to your audience.<sup>8</sup>

# **4** Make your video easy to understand

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To make your video easy to understand, you need to think about the people who will watch it and try and make it right for them.<sup>4, 7</sup>

Videos should not be too long. Think about what the key messages are and stick to them.<sup>1</sup> Keep the scenes in the video as simple as possible. You can leave out any objects, sounds or movements that are not part of your message.<sup>4</sup>

Show how long the video will be on the label.<sup>1</sup> You can split the video into short sections.<sup>4</sup> Show clearly when a section begins and ends.<sup>9</sup> If you put writing between sections of your video, remember that not everyone will be able to read it. You might want to use pictures, music or voice as well or instead.<sup>1</sup> You will need to give people enough time to use the pause or stop button.<sup>1, 4</sup> Some people might want to watch your video all at once, so you need to make sure it all fits together well.<sup>1</sup> But you can let people know that they do not have to watch the whole video at once. You can give them information about the different sections that they will see in the film.<sup>1</sup> You can repeat the important points and summarise them at the end of the video.<sup>1</sup>

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You might want to include several different people in your video. But it can be hard for people to remember who the people are.<sup>6</sup> Give the name of the person when they first speak and a few times after that, until people recognise them.<sup>1</sup> It can also be helpful for people in the video to dress differently from each other, so it is easier to tell who is who.<sup>1</sup> You might want to include different voices to make your video more interesting.<sup>1</sup> Everyone should use easy words. Any difficult words should be explained.<sup>1</sup>

You need to think about making your video easy to understand for people with hearing impairments. These are people who are deaf, or have difficulties hearing things. Subtitles can be used for people who can read. People will need enough time to read them. You will need to think about what language to use.<sup>1</sup>

Some videos include a box in the bottom right hand corner, with a person translating the words into British Sign Language. Few people with learning disabilities get the chance to learn British Sign Language. But try and find out if the people you want to watch your video would find it helpful.<sup>1</sup>

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Some people with learning disabilities use other signing systems that help them to understand what is said and to express themselves. People in the video can use signs as they speak. You will need to know what sign system is used by the people you want to see your video, so you can use the best one for them.<sup>1</sup>

You will need to plan for the costs of including subtitles or signing. You will need to plan in the time for a signer to be filmed in a studio, before the video is finished.<sup>1</sup>

The video, the box it comes in and any information that goes with it can get separated. You need to label them all clearly.<sup>1</sup> Try to think of a title that is easy to understand.<sup>1</sup> Make sure all the information that goes with the video is easy to understand too.<sup>1</sup>

# Resource section

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**Mental Health Media** uses all media to promote people's voices in order to reduce the discrimination and prejudice surrounding mental health and learning disabilities. They produce 'Shot by Shot' a video training pack about using video with people with learning disabilities.

**Address:**

Mental Health Media  
356 Holloway Road  
London  
N7 6PA

**Telephone:** 0207 700 8171

**Email:** info@mhmedia.com

**Website:** [www.mhmedia.com/](http://www.mhmedia.com/)

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**Transactive** have put together some useful tips on making video (and other information) as part of their pack about transition. You can find them on their website [www.trans-active.org.uk](http://www.trans-active.org.uk), in the Information Zone resources, under hints and tips.

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The Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) has provided a pack called 'See it Right'. This has useful information on making videos for people with visual impairments.

The RNIB has also written a good practice guide for those who wish to make their videos accessible to people with visual impairments. For more advice and information, contact the RNIB's Head of Broadcasting and Talking Images.

**Address:**

Royal National Institute of the Blind  
105 Judd Street  
London  
WC1H 9NE

**RNIB telephone helpline:** 0845 766 9999

**RNIB email helpline:** [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

**RNIB website:** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



Registered Charity Number: 226227

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The Norah Fry Research Centre has produced a short book on making video with people with learning disabilities. The details are: Williams C and Mackenzie S. *Video First: Ideas for using video for self-advocacy*. 1993, Bristol: Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol.

**Address:**

Norah Fry Research Institute  
3 Priory Road  
Clifton  
Bristol  
BS8 1TX

**Telephone:** 0117 923 8137

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

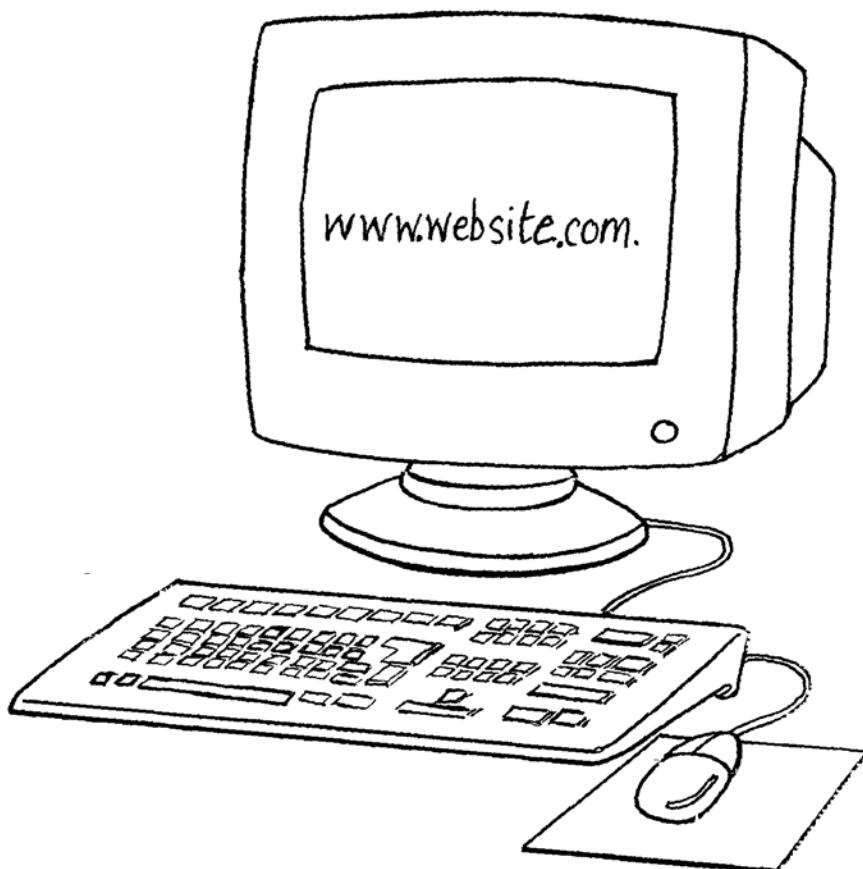


# Computer based information



Guidance ■

This section covers things to think about when you make information that people will use with computers. There are many different ways that you can give people information on computers. Words and pictures, video clips, symbols and sounds are some of the ways. You can let people choose how they want to see, hear or read your information to suit them best.



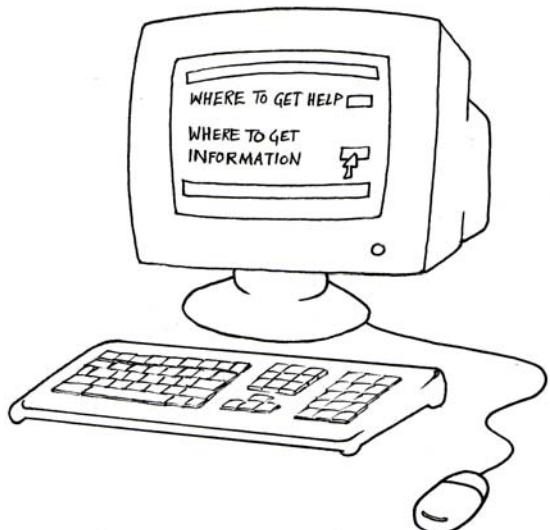
# Easy summary

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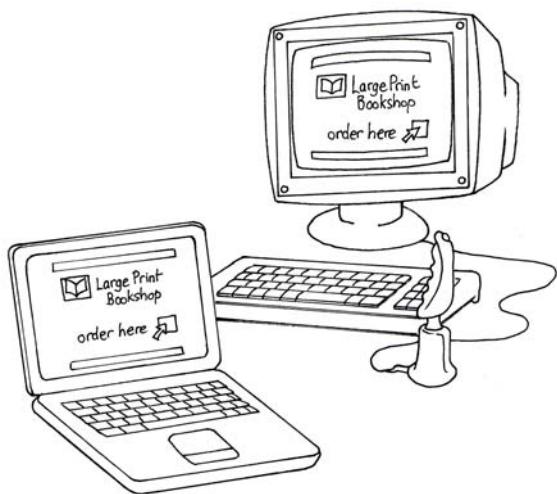
The key points covered in this section are:



**1. You can use the Internet to give people information.** The Internet is a good way of providing up to date information. People use the Internet to look at websites or send emails. It is easy to make changes to information on a website or to add new things.



**2. Make your information easy to understand.** Give your information in ways that are clear and easy to understand. Think carefully about what your information says and how your information looks.



### **3. Design your information so that everyone can use it.**

Everyone should be able to use your information no matter what type of computer they have. There are many guidelines to help you with the technical design of your website or CD Rom.

### **4. You can use CD Rom to give people information.** CD Rom is a good way to make your information interesting for people to use. You can put your message across in different ways. People can do activities like games, which can help them understand the information.

# 1

## You can use the Internet to give people information

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The Internet links together computers all over the world. Most people use the Internet to search for information on the World Wide Web and to communicate with other people through email, chatrooms and newsgroups.

Although most people with learning disabilities would use a personal computer to access the Internet there are many other ways to get online such as mobile phones, digital TV and handheld personal organisers.

The Internet is becoming more and more important as a way of providing information. There are many good reasons for producing web-based information.

It is easy to make changes and keep the information on the website up to date.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible for the user to change the way web-based information is presented to suit their needs, like making the text bigger.<sup>2</sup>

It is possible to reach lots of people living in many different places using web-based information.

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It is easy to add colour and other design features to a website.<sup>1</sup>

It is cheap to produce good quality web-based information.<sup>1</sup>

You can use lots of different ways to get your web-based message across such as audio, video and words and pictures.<sup>1</sup>

The Internet is interactive. That means users can give you feedback about your website online and communicate with other people using the Internet.<sup>3</sup>

But, there are still many barriers that people with learning disabilities face in using computer based information.

Many people with learning disabilities have little or no access to computers.<sup>4</sup>

People may not have the skills or confidence to use computers.<sup>1</sup>

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There are big differences between the types of computers that people may be using. Very often people with learning disabilities are using very old or basic machines.<sup>5</sup>

It usually costs money to use the Internet.

There is so much information on the Internet that it can be difficult for users to find their way through it all.

# **2**

## **Make your information easy to understand**

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You will find lots of information about making written information easier to understand in the guidance section on ‘Words and language’ and ‘Design and layout’. You might also want to look at the guidance section on ‘Using pictures’ and ‘Using symbols’ if you are thinking of including these on your web pages.

This section deals with some extra things you need to think about if your information is computer based.

Plan the layout of the home page so that it is obvious straight away what information is being provided. A site map will help people see what is on your site and get to the pages they want quickly.<sup>6</sup>

Use straight-forward, clear language.<sup>7</sup>

Use a mixture of sounds, words and pictures to help people understand the information on your page.<sup>8</sup>

Break long documents into shorter, more easily understood pages with clear links from one web page to the next.<sup>4</sup>

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Think about making large amounts of information downloadable as PDF (Portable Document Format) files. This saves the user having to spend a long time on line reading them and helps keep the size of your site manageable. Create these files using Adobe Acrobat with the accessibility option enabled. Remember to provide a link for people to install Adobe Acrobat.<sup>4</sup>

Always include a postal address and telephone number for people to contact you on, as well as an email address.<sup>6</sup>

### **Finding your way around the website**

Use the same navigation bars in the same place on every page. Have a clear route through to the other information that can be found on the site.<sup>10</sup>

These buttons should be on every page: Exit, Home, Help, Next Page, Last Page.<sup>11</sup>

Avoid lots of buttons with different functions. For example, do not have some buttons that lead to links and some that do not.<sup>12</sup>

---

A good aim is to be able to get from any page on your website to any other page with no more than three clicks on your mouse.<sup>6</sup>

## **Links**

Avoid long lists of links and group related links together on the page.<sup>4</sup>

Use more than one way to make links stand out such as colour and underlining.<sup>1</sup>

All links should make sense without the need for surrounding text or graphics.<sup>2</sup>

## **Moving images**

If you use moving images it can help attract people to your information. But make sure that the way that you present your information doesn't distract the user from the information itself.<sup>3</sup>

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Pop up boxes and moving pictures such as GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format) can make your web pages fun to use. But if you have too much going on, your important messages may get lost. Make sure you leave a good pause between image changes and always provide a way for the user to switch them off.<sup>9</sup>

Avoid flickering screens and do not use moving, blinking or scrolling text. A screen reader is a software programme that reads the content of a computer screen aloud. A screen reader cannot read rolling text. Many users find moving content difficult to concentrate on.<sup>2</sup>

## Colour

All information produced in colour should also be available without colour. It is helpful if the user is able to adjust the colour to suit their needs using their browser settings. A browser is a software programme that is used to search and view information on the internet. Some people with learning disabilities may find it hard to change these settings.<sup>10</sup>

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Avoid heavily patterned background and too many bright, clashing colours.<sup>2</sup>

Use an off-white background to reduce flicker.

A strong contrast between foreground and background is more important than the actual colours used. Dark letters and numbers on light background are better.<sup>13</sup>

## Font

Use a clear, ordinary typeface, or font. Sans serif typefaces are easier to read. Good sans serif typefaces are Arial, Avant Garde, Futura and Helvetica Medium.<sup>14</sup> See the guidance section on ‘Design and layout’ for more information about this topic.

What works on paper may not always work on screen. This is because on paper you are looking at the ink while on screen you are looking at shining light.<sup>6</sup>

Try to use relative or adjustable font sizes rather than absolute or fixed font sizes.<sup>2</sup> This lets users change the font size in their browser to suit their needs.

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Avoid large blocks of italic text, which can appear wobbly on the screen.

Try to avoid using underlining for emphasis as people may mistake it for a link.<sup>6</sup>

### **Line length**

Keep line lengths short. It is easier to lose your place when lines are longer.<sup>12</sup>

### **Columns and margins**

Don't lay text out in columns as many people find this difficult to follow.<sup>15</sup>

Your computer will let you choose whether your text is justified or unjustified. Unjustified text is easier to read on screen.<sup>16</sup>

Wide margins are better for readability.

Put the most important information in the middle of the screen.<sup>11</sup>

# **3 Design your information so that everyone can use it**

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Many groups have now produced guidelines for web designers about making accessible web pages. These guidelines contain detailed advice about the technical aspects of making websites accessible to all sorts of different users. Some of the guidelines for designing web pages for people with learning disabilities are listed in the resource section at the end.

You may want to pay someone to help you design your site. If you do, make sure that they know about the guidelines that they should be following. Remember that the designer is there to produce what you have asked for, not to use your site to show off what they can do.<sup>6</sup>

Try to create one version of your site that is accessible to everyone no matter how they get to the web. Remember that there will be big differences in the types of computer that people are using and the software that they have installed.<sup>5</sup>

There will also be differences in the input devices that people use. Many people find a keyboard easier than a mouse; others will be using switches or voice input to control their browser.<sup>2</sup>

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People will also be using different output devices. These are the ways that people get the information from their computer like monitor screens, printers and loudspeakers. Not everyone will be viewing your information on screen. Some people will be using audio output or Braille.<sup>2</sup>

Always ask people with learning disabilities to test the website for you.<sup>1</sup>

Test with different browsers and different versions of Internet Explorer and Netscape navigator as the site may look very different using each one.<sup>1</sup>

Check out how accessible your pages are with the World Wide Web Consortium validator.<sup>10</sup> More information about this can be found in the resource section.

Use ‘Bobby’ the automated programme for checking the accessibility of web pages. You can access Bobby online free of charge. Remember that although Bobby can check the technical aspects of your pages it does not cover the language needs of your users. Check out with your users if your site is using words that they understand.<sup>2</sup>

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## Email

Email is a way of sending messages between 2 people with an Internet connection. It can save a lot of time and money.

Although more and more people are using email make sure that you always provide other ways of receiving the information.

Remember that just because you have sent an email it doesn't mean that someone has received it. Some people may not connect to the Internet very often and would not know if they had a message waiting.<sup>1</sup>

The way people write an email can be very different to how they would say things in a letter or over the phone. Emails are often very short and to the point. It can be quite easy to give the wrong impression.<sup>1</sup>

Email is not a good way to send private information, because other people might read it.<sup>1</sup>

# **4 You can use CD Rom to give people information**

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CD Rom stands for **Compact Disc Read Only Memory**. A CD Rom looks just like a CD but you have to play it in a computer. It can have audio, video, words and pictures on it so that people can hear, see and read your information. You can choose to present your information in any or all of these ways.

One of the good things about using a CD Rom is that the user can interact with the information presented. For example, they can do activities, they can stop or pause when playing video, or make their own files from text they want to keep.

You can let the user choose how they receive your information and in what order. You can make links between different pieces of information so people can access them quickly and easily.<sup>17</sup>

You can give a ‘bookmark’ option, so people can mark particular pieces of information and find them again quickly.<sup>1</sup>

---

You can give a ‘search’ option, so people can look for things and find them quickly and easily.<sup>1</sup>

You can give website and email address links to other people, sources of information, chatrooms or newsgroups on the Internet.<sup>1</sup>

You can give an option for people to make their own files, so they can keep pieces of information separate from the rest of the CD Rom.<sup>1</sup>

It is not expensive to make lots of copies of your CD Rom and they are cheap to post.

Some of the bad things about using CD Rom to provide information are the same as when using web pages. Some people may not have access to a computer to play a CD Rom or they may not have the skills or confidence to use a computer.<sup>18</sup>

CD Roms can take a lot of time and money to produce (although they are cheap to copy and post).

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You will need expert technical advice.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike web pages, once you have produced a CD Rom you can't easily change what's on it, so it isn't good for information that will go out of date or change frequently.<sup>1</sup>

### **Making a CD Rom that is easy and interesting to use**

It is important to make sure that the people you want to reach will be able to use your CD Rom. You need to think about the way people will be using your CD Rom. Will they be on their own or with other people? Will they be using a mouse or a keyboard? Will they have audio speakers? You need to think about what computer programmes people will need to play your CD Rom. You also need to think about what equipment you will need to produce it.

A CD Rom can use different ways to put across the same piece of information at the same time. For example, you can use a video clip for people to hear and see someone speaking, with text running at the same time so people can read their words. But be careful not to overload the user with too many choices and distractions.

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Provide support to help users get what they want to out of the multimedia.<sup>8</sup>

You can also design different activities for people to do with the information you provide such as ‘drag and drop’ games. These involve using the mouse to move things around on the computer screen.<sup>1</sup>

It’s a good idea to have a look at other CD Roms and talk to people who know about the different activities that are possible. Then, think about the information you want to provide and the people you want to reach, to help you decide which activities will be most helpful.<sup>1</sup>

Always make sure you get people to test your CD Rom before you get copies made. The more people who try it out, the less chance there is of a design fault or problem in the final version.<sup>1</sup>

### **Ways to present your information on a CD Rom**

Many of the things you need to think about when presenting information on CD Rom are the same as when you are making web pages.

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Always start with an introduction and ‘home page’. The home page should include an overview or sitemap of what information is on the CD Rom. It should say how to find things and how to exit.

Every page should have links to Home, Help and Exit. If you can, it is a good idea to show the sitemap on every page too.<sup>1</sup>

Use different symbols for links to audio, video, graphics, text or activities so that it’s clear what the link will take you to.<sup>1</sup>

## **Audio and video**

When people see video on a CD Rom it will be in a small box inside the computer screen. The biggest size will be about a quarter of the screen. This means big close-up shots on your video will be easier to see than long shots or wide shots.

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When people hear audio on a CD Rom they may be listening through small speakers in the computer. This means it might be hard to hear voices above background noise or music. So when you make audio for CD Rom, it is especially important to try and keep it simple and clear.

You might want to provide an audio version of your text, and a text version of your audio, that can run at the same time. You can do the same thing with video.

Always show on the screen how long audio and video sections will be. Use a running time line with stop, start and pause buttons.

See the guidance section on ‘Video’ and ‘Audio’ for more information about this topic.

# Resource section

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**The Royal National Institute of the Blind** has lots of resources and guidelines. The Web Access Centre has pages on Understanding Accessibility, Planning for and Testing Accessibility, checkpoints and techniques and case studies of how other organisations have made their websites accessible.

**Website:** [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)



Registered Charity Number: 226227

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**The World Wide Web Consortium** has produced guidelines as part of its Web Accessibility Initiative. These guidelines cover the technical aspects of designing accessible websites. They are updated regularly. The current version can be found at:

**Website:** [www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/)

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**Mencap** The Accessibility Unit offers advice and training about making websites. Their guidelines about 'Making your website accessible for people with a learning disability' can be downloaded at:

**Website:** [www.mencap.org.uk/download/webaccess.rtf](http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/webaccess.rtf)

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**The National Information Forum** has produced guidelines: 'How to use the internet and create an accessible website'. These can be ordered online from:

**Website:** [www.nif.org.uk](http://www.nif.org.uk)

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Guidelines from the **National Foundation for Learning Disabilities** are summarised on:

[www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/html/content/webdesign.cf](http://www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/html/content/webdesign.cf)

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The **Making Connections Unit** produces lots of helpful advice. Contact their website: [www.mcu.org.uk](http://www.mcu.org.uk)

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**Plain English Campaign** tips for clear websites can be found on: [www.plainenglish.co.uk/webdesign.html](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/webdesign.html)

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You can find more resources to help you make **easy information** on: [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

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This guidance was produced in February 2004. It was written by the Information for All team at the Norah Fry Research Centre, University of Bristol (Telephone: 0117 923 8137) and RNIB Multiple Disability Services. The work was funded by the Department of Health. Drawings are by Maxine Letham and design is by Karen Gyde and Sue Pirrie. There are a total of 13 sections of guidance. These are listed in the 'Introduction to the guidance'. All the guidance can be found on [www.easyinfo.org.uk](http://www.easyinfo.org.uk)

