

## Increasing the accessibility of written materials

In general, text-based materials will be easier for other people to read (both on screen and on paper) if the writer or producer can ensure that certain rules are observed. These rules may be summarised and briefly explained as follows:

<p>1. Select a sans serif font such as Arial or Verdana.</p>	<p>Sans serif fonts lack the small flicks and tails on the letters which serif fonts such as Times New Roman have. This makes them clearer and easier to read.</p>
<p>2. Use 'sentence case', a mix of upper and lower case, as appropriate to the content, rather than all BLOCK LETTERS.</p>	<p>Block letters may be easier to hand-write, but they are harder to read - there is less shape differentiation between different letters when they are printed in upper case.</p>
<p>3. Justify only to the left side of the page.</p>	<p>Leaving the right margin ragged ensures that the word processing software does not try to crush or expand the letters to try to make them fit the remaining line length, which would make the text harder to read. A ragged right margin also helps the reader to retain their correct location on the page.</p>
<p>4. Select a suitable size of font.</p>	<p>For most people font sizes of around 11 or 12 characters per inch are the most comfortable to read (this is size 11).</p>
<p>5. Make good use of layout, rather than squashing all you can onto a page.</p>	<p>'White space' around the text can be important – for example use of spacing to separate points or indentation to show a linked minor point below a major one. The use of bold, italics and underlining can emphasise certain points.</p>
<p>6. Use bullet points as appropriate.</p>	<p>Bullets can help information to stand out and may be useful in summarising, but keep them short! Give them plenty of space, too. If using PowerPoint slides, limit yourself to three to four bullet points per slide (maximum).</p>
<p>7. Choose an appropriate background.</p>	<p>The background needs to have a high contrast with the colour of the text. Stark white can cause glare, so many people prefer off-white or pale pastel colours for their paper / screen.</p>
<p>8. Graphics.</p>	<p>Ensure that all graphics are directly relevant to the content and not just a distraction from the text. Try not to overlay text onto graphics, which makes it very hard to read.</p>

<p>9. Electronic documents</p>	<p>People who need to use electronic documents may have particular needs, but in general terms either a plain text document (ie no bold, underlining or italics) or a document produced in the DAISY (digitally accessible information systems) format will usually be acceptable.</p>
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The following two pages feature the same information in two different presentations – we hope you agree which is more accessible! You may find it easiest to see if you print out the two pages.

## Asperger's Syndrome - Version 1

This condition falls within the group of conditions called Autistic Spectrum Disorders. The features include: high intellectual ability, fairly good communication skills (see below for some features of communication) and “normal” appearance. People with Asperger's Syndrome may also experience obsessive thoughts and / or compulsive behaviours. In a minority of cases the person may experience high anxiety or depression. Current thinking about Asperger's Syndrome is that among the key dysfunctions is a problem with the development of the child's “theory of mind” [ToM], which is to say that s/he has difficulty in creating mental representations of others' mind states (e.g. difficulty understanding that others have beliefs, knowledge, etc. which may be different from ones own). This ToM difficulty affects the development of various social skills, including empathy. Some people with Asperger's Syndrome may have difficulty in correctly interpreting common facial expressions and mis-interpret other people's intentions, which can have various effects on social situations. If this difficulty happens to occur in someone who also has a high tendency to be sociable, then it can lead to poor risk assessments (e.g. failing to realise that the other person may intend harm). Among the difficulties with social interaction which can occur in people with Asperger's Syndrome are the following:

- The person may have unusual non-verbal behaviours, for example some people with Asperger's Syndrome have difficulty in making eye contact or in maintaining that contact; whereas others may maintain eye contact more than is usual, which can be very disconcerting for the person to whom they are speaking.
- The dysfunction in theory of mind can result in a tendency to fail to adapt the content of conversation to others' interests and knowledge (e.g. talking endlessly of one topic which is of interest only to the speaker); and a tendency to fail to notice non-verbal cues which indicate that the listener has lost interest.
- In some cases the person may develop a very fixed, rigid style of social interaction and may be disconcerted if others react in ways they find unpredictable.
- The person with Asperger's Syndrome may not understand metaphorical language and will often take such comments literally rather than as the speaker intended. They may miss jokes and may also fail to grasp the true meaning intended in ironic or sarcastic comments.
- The person may make unwarranted assumptions that the listener shares their own knowledge (and therefore may fail to tell the listener key facts).
- The comments made by a person with Asperger's Syndrome can sometimes seem very hurtful or tactless, though in fact they are intended simply as observations and there was no intention to cause distress.
- Some people with Asperger's Syndrome develop obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviours, which are sometimes expressed as an intense interest in one particular topic or activity.

Some people with Asperger's Syndrome have extremely good memories (especially for factual material which interests them) and in particular they may have a very strong visual memory or a strong ability to recognise patterns (e.g. in sets of numbers).

Note: this version of the handout has been produced in a less accessible format

## Asperger's Syndrome – Version 2

This condition falls within the group of conditions called Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

The features include: high intellectual ability  
fairly good communication skills (see below for some features of communication)  
'normal' appearance.

People with Asperger's Syndrome may also experience obsessive thoughts and/or compulsive behaviours. In a minority of cases the person may experience high anxiety or depression.

Current thinking about Asperger's Syndrome is that among the key dysfunctions is a problem with the development of the child's 'theory of mind' (ToM), which is to say that s/he has difficulty in creating mental representations of others' mind states (eg difficulty understanding that others have beliefs, knowledge, etc. which may be different from one's own).

This ToM difficulty affects the development of various social skills, including empathy. Some people with Asperger's Syndrome may have difficulty in correctly interpreting common facial expressions and misinterpret other people's intentions, which can have various effects on social situations. If this difficulty happens to occur in someone who also has a high tendency to be sociable, then it can lead to poor risk assessments (eg failing to realise that the other person may intend harm).

Among the difficulties with social interaction which can occur in people with Asperger's Syndrome are the following:

- The person may have unusual non-verbal behaviours, for example some people with Asperger's Syndrome have difficulty in making eye contact or in maintaining that contact; whereas others may maintain eye contact more than is usual, which can be very disconcerting for the person to whom they are speaking.
- The dysfunction in theory of mind can result in a tendency to fail to adapt the content of conversation to others' interests and knowledge (eg talking endlessly on one topic which is of interest only to the speaker); and a tendency to fail to notice non-verbal cues which indicate that the listener has lost interest.
- In some cases the person may develop a very fixed, rigid style of social interaction and may be disconcerted if others react in ways they find unpredictable.
- The person with Asperger's Syndrome may not understand metaphorical language and will often take such comments literally rather than as the speaker intended. They may miss jokes and may also fail to grasp the true meaning intended in ironic or sarcastic comments.
- The person may make unwarranted assumptions that the listener shares their own knowledge (and therefore may fail to tell the listener key facts).
- The comments made by a person with Asperger's Syndrome can sometimes seem very hurtful or tactless, though in fact they are intended simply as observations and there was no intention to cause distress.
- Some people with Asperger's Syndrome develop obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviours, which are sometimes expressed as an intense interest in one particular topic or activity.

Some people with Asperger's Syndrome have extremely good memories (especially for factual material which interests them) and in particular they may have a very strong visual memory or a strong ability to recognise patterns (eg in sets of numbers).