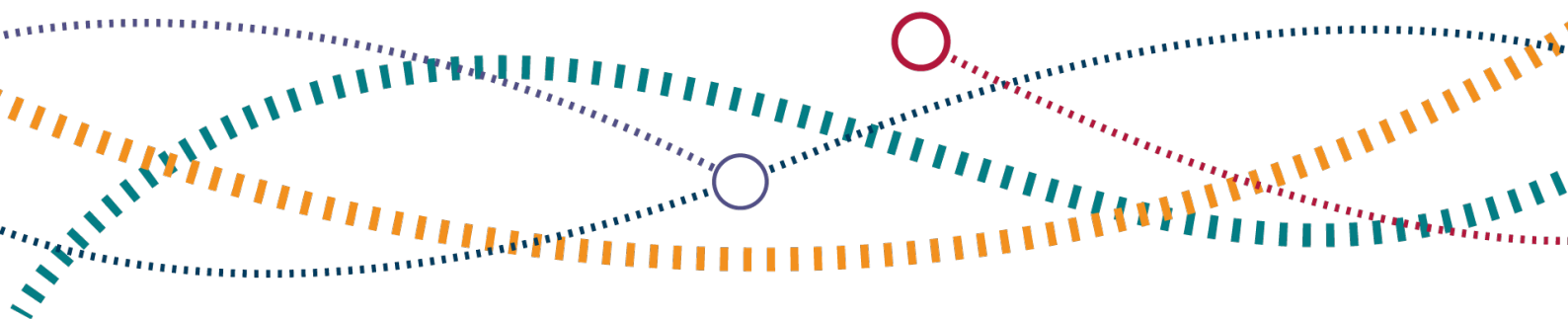




Guidelines for writing accessible reports for ORR

Guidance for external suppliers

28 March 2024



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Summary

The following information gives guidance on the format of external suppliers' reports to ensure they meet [web accessibility requirements](#), this includes the use of **headings**, **charts**, **tables** and **colours**.

Please submit your **final report** to ORR in **Word format**. PowerPoint format can also be accepted, for example when a supporting presentation document is published. We prefer these formats to PDF, as we have the relevant conversion tools to ensure better accessibility.

If you have any feedback or questions on the information in this guide, please get in touch with your main ORR contact, who can liaise with the Digital Communications team.

Why do we need accessible reports?

- [Accessibility regulations](#) mean we have a legal duty to make sure that all our content meets accessibility requirements.
- Accessibility is not just about writing in plain English, it's also ensuring our documents can be read by people for example with impaired vision, low vision or dyslexia.
- This includes making sure there is alternative text to explain what graphs or pictures show and that the right template and structure is used to help a screen reader to properly read the report.

Branded documents

We recognise that different suppliers will have different design approaches, and this guidance should work within those parameters.

1. Top tips for an accessible document

- 1.1 Use the headings and sub-headings available within Word to structure your document. Without a well applied heading structure, your document will not be accessible, and you will have to fix it afterwards – which is much more time-consuming. Make the title of your document a Heading 1, each chapter heading Heading 2, and then use other sub-headings in sequence within each chapter.
- 1.2 Paragraph size is important: long paragraphs can be problematic for users who need to magnify their screen. The recommendation is to write paragraphs of 4 to 5 sentences, and no more than 25 words per sentence.
- 1.3 Keep your document simple and write it in plain English, so it's accessible and understandable for all users.
- 1.4 Tables and charts should have sequential numbered titles above them, e.g. 'Table X – Table title'; and 'Figure X – Figure title'.
- 1.5 Minimise any use of footnotes, ideally none, but if necessary only one per page. Footnote text and hyperlinks should ideally appear within the main content of your document. Footnotes break up the reading order of the page, making it hard for people using screen readers to keep track of the text.
- 1.6 When inserting hyperlinks insert text which describes where/what you are taking the reader to, e.g. "ORR's [passenger rail performance statistics](#) show that ...". Avoid spelling out the full web link or saying 'click here'.
- 1.7 Avoid using text boxes, as they are not accessible. Add a border around the text you need to highlight instead (e.g., for case studies).
- 1.8 Don't use tables for presenting text-only information. Tables should only be used for data.
- 1.9 Try to avoid Word and PowerPoint graphics. However, if you need to use them (for example flowcharts) save them as a single image, preferably in PNG format (PowerPoint: File > Save as > PNG). You can also insert Excel charts into Word as PNG files. Please add alt text to all your PNG or JPG images, charts and graphics.
- 1.10 Left align text, don't justify it: this is important for users with dyslexia.

2. Style guides

Use the style guides below for consistency with other publications produced for ORR:

- (a) Use the [Government style guide](#) for tips on spelling and grammar conventions for your document.
- (b) [ONS style guide for numbers](#) should be followed; includes dates, percentages, etc.

Use of abbreviations

The first time you write a name or term that you want to abbreviate, write it in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. You can then use the abbreviation in later pages. As stand-alone information, any annexes should start again with the full name. Do not put full stops in abbreviations of names – for example, do not write ‘D.f.T’, but rather ‘DfT’.

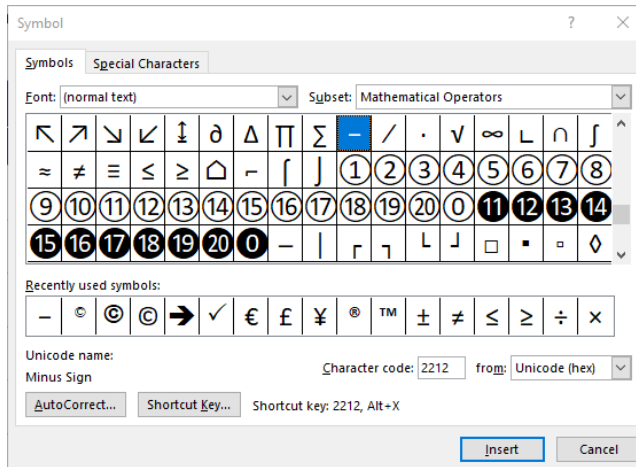
Generally, acronyms do not need “the” in front of them (for example, ORR, RDG, DfT). Also, these organisations are singular, therefore it would be “ORR is”.

Symbols

Screen readers may or may not read out particular symbols depending on user settings. Generally, it’s recommended to avoid using symbols whenever you can. For example:

- (a) Write ‘and’ at all times, instead of using an ampersand symbol.
- (b) If a forward slash symbol is used to show ‘or’, replace it with the word ‘or’. If a slash is needed, there should be no space either side of it.
- (c) Do not use dashes to indicate a span of time or range of monetary amounts. Use ‘to’ instead. For example, write ‘£36,000 to £40,000’ for a salary band instead of ‘£36,000 – £40,000’.
- (d) If you have to include footnotes in your publication, avoid using symbols such as an asterisk to label them – hyperlinked numbers or letters are preferable, although in general we advise to avoid the use of footnotes altogether.
- (e) Some symbols are needed and generally understood by screen readers. For example, all the standard punctuation symbols and these symbols: %, £, \$, °, @.
- (f) Ideally, we want all minus signs to be read as minus signs by blind users, rather than dashes. You can either Insert > Symbol (see screenshot below) or type 2212, Alt + X

to insert your minus signs. Avoid using find and replace ALL to change these in text as it will change other dashes to the minus symbol too.



3. Colours for charts and data tables

3.1 Please contact our [Information and Analysis team](#) for guidance and advice on charts and data tables. This includes using ORR branded **colours** and examples of best practice **alternative text**, which must be added to every chart or image in a report to meet accessibility standards.

3.2 Our guidance also advises on the most appropriate chart types to use, incorporating best practice from across the Government Statistical Service. It also includes guidance on producing accessible **data tables**. We can also advise on the format of maps.

3.3 We have a list of colours that can be used when producing charts that are part of ORR's brand, that are web accessible and that maximise contrasts. These are:

1. **Blue** (RGB 37,50,104) #253268
2. **Orange** (RGB 216,115,15) #D8730F
3. **Purple** (RGB 112,36,114) #702472
4. **Pink** (RGB 203,103,142) #EB678E
5. **Green** (RGB 2,96,96) #026060
6. **Light blue** (RGB 135,135,201) #8787C9

3.4 Colours to use for **RAG** (red/amber/green) status in charts, tables, arrows, etc are:

- **Red** (RGB 177,23,59) - #B1173B
- **Amber** (RGB 216,115,15) - #D8730F
- **Green** (RGB 40,153,75) - #28994b

4. Tables

- 4.1 Like charts, tables need a suitable title of the format: 'Table X [measure], [geographic coverage], [time period]'.
- 4.2 When inserting tables in Word make sure:
- (a) 'Repeat as header row' is checked in table properties if your table runs across multiple pages – this means the header row is repeated at the start of the table on each page the table runs onto, so users don't have to keep referring back up to the top of the table.
 - (b) The option that says 'Allow row to break across pages' is not checked – this keeps table rows all in one page, and it's better for accessibility.
- 4.3 Tables should not be embedded as images as they don't have selectable content. If you can only provide a table as an image, then an 'image summary or description' of one short paragraph is required just above or below the image which describes the table content. The image requires appropriate alternative text.

Tables dos and don'ts

- (1) Only use tables to present data.
- (2) Add a table summary before your table.
- (3) Add a title above each table.
- (4) Define the table header row (highlight the header row – click the 'Design' tab and then click the 'Header row' checkbox) for every table.
- (5) Don't split or merge cells - consider splitting complex tables into several simpler ones.
- (6) Use column and row headings which are unique, have meaning and are concise.
- (7) Don't nest tables.
- (8) Avoid using colour alone to convey any meaning; for example, using red font in a financial table to highlight negative values.
- (9) Use Microsoft Excel and convert to .ods format rather than Word for complex tables.

- (10) If you copy and paste from Excel, select the paste option to 'Use Destination Style'. Don't paste the table as an image: if you do, the information in the table won't be readable by screen readers.

5. Charts and images

- 5.1 You should provide short descriptive text for each image or chart included in your report (this is called alternative text or **alt text**).
- 5.2 If the image contains no information, select the 'Decorative' option. This tells screen readers that they can ignore it.
- 5.3 **Alt text top tips:**
- don't repeat the surrounding text – simply explain what's in the image
 - don't add words with intro text such as 'a graphic of' or 'this image shows'
- 5.4 Don't use graphical symbols or colour alone to represent meaning.
- 5.5 Maximise colour contrast in your charts so that they are accessible.

6. Checking if your document is accessible

- Open the document and do File > Info > Inspect Document > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility.
- The accessibility report should appear on the right.
- If you click on each problem in the report, it will tell you how to fix it.
- As you fix problems they will automatically disappear from the report.



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