

Top tips on using text

Be adventurous with fonts – but don't use every font you own in one document

Most computers have at least 100 fonts loaded onto them by default. When you start using many of those fonts in one document, the message gets lost in the jumble of fonts.

A safe method is to use one font for the headings and another for the main text.

If you are feeling confident then you can use other fonts but make sure they compliment each other and that there is a reason why you're using the fonts you choose.

How big is your font?

Using text that is small not only affects those of us who have deteriorating eyesight, but can also be a hindrance to people with dyslexia. Try to avoid using fonts any smaller than 10pt, but check the size of the font you are choosing as they vary in size. This paragraph is in Arial at 12pt, *except this line that is in Dom Casual 12pt* - see what I mean?

DO NOT USE ALL CAPITAL LETTERS

People read by the shapes of words, not letter by letter. The rise and fall of letters - 'ascenders' and 'descenders' - are what makes it easy to quickly identify the shape of a word.

When you use all capitals the shape of almost every word becomes a rectangle, and it becomes harder to read.

That doesn't mean you can't ever use all capitals. Short phrases or headings can work well in all capital letters.

Don't centre large amounts of text

When you read, you rapidly scan one line and then your eye has to go from the right side of the page back to the left side of the page. When text is centred, it can be harder to find where the text begins again on the left side of the page, and actually all too easy to skip down lines of text.

Save centred text for headings that don't run more than several lines deep.

Top tips on layout

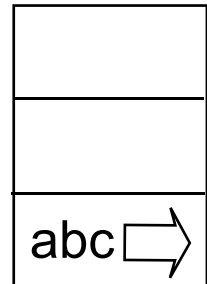
Black on white on black

Avoid using too much black when photocopying. This uses a lot of toner and can make your publication look too heavy.

Also try to avoid using photographs when photocopying a document. If you do use one make sure there is good contrast in the image or it will come out all black or all grey.

Avoid dividing the page into halves

You want your documents to be visually interesting. One of the best ways to do that is to divide the page into thirds, and then place the most important objects (headings, photos, visuals) in the top or bottom third.



Recommended software - Serif Page Plus.

Simple to use desk-top publishing software, also enables you to save pages as pdf, so you can email your publications around as well as print them out. Available for under £100.

Don't box me in

Don't overcrowd your page with boxes and lines. Boxes and lines can be a good way to highlight important information, and to make it stand out from the crowd. Using too many will detract from what you want to say.

Space to breath

You need to give everything some space to breath. Don't be afraid of leaving some space on the page. This is best used around information that you want to stand out. The order of paragraphs and columns should be clear to all readers so that they know what to read first. White space is very important.