# Design tips to improve engagement and usability

## Designing for readability

We want learners to be able to easily read content and absorb it so that they focus on its purpose. Here are some simple tips to ensure you will achieve useful, user-focused content.

### Focus on the audience

* Consider who your audience is and what you want them to feel, think and do.
* Have a clear purpose in mind for each page.
* Do not include every piece of information on the subject you are writing about – only include information that is central to the topic.

### Say it simply

Plain English improves readability and comprehension.

* Stick to one idea per paragraph
* Limit acronyms and always write them out in full in the first instance.
* Opt for simpler, shorter words – for example, 'use' not 'utilise'.
* Avoid jargon – your audience may not understand the terms. If using specific terms, define them in the content or in a glossary. Do include Stage- and KLA-appropriate terms and concepts.

### Cut down on capital letters

Capital letters make content harder to scan and read. Use them sparingly and appropriately.

* Reserve capitals for proper nouns.
* Use capital letters for official titles of people, organisations, programs and publications.
* Use sentence case for headings. This means the first letter is upper case, but the rest of the heading is lower case, except for proper nouns.

### Use a font that’s easy to read

Font choice and spacing have a significant impact on either enabling or slowing learners’ comprehension. Digital high resolution screens make text appear smaller, creating barriers for a variety of users.

* Use font sizes between 12 and 18 points for body text. If the document is designed to be read on-screen, make 14 point your normal paragraph size.
* Use a sans serif font like Monserrat, Calibri or Arial.
* Use line spacing of a minimum of 1.3 up to 1.5 for paragraphs.
* Avoid large amounts of text underlined or italic. Avoid using fonts in bold or light weights.

### Break text up

Present content in layers. Break up the text into easily readable chunks. This helps users to scan and digest the detail. Use subheadings and bulleted lists to help the process.

* Identify the most important points you want to make. You do not need to cover the topic from all angles – just include the key information.
* Start each section with the most important information.
* Try breaking up your sentences into short and medium-length sentences. This also helps with readability.
* Use tables for presenting tabular data. When using tables, ensure that the first row and/or column is identified as the header so screen readers can understand the table data. Do not use tables for layout or for large amounts of text.
* Provide alternative (alt) text for any non-text content such as graphics, icons or diagrams. Adding alternative text (alt-text) describes what is in an image. It ensures people who cannot see the image still get the information conveyed. When writing alt text, describe the most important aspect/s and be concise.

### Navigating the page

Headings, lists and other structures help readers absorb detail and make meaning. They also support navigation on the page and throughout a larger document.

* Use actual heading styles, as opposed to text formatting such as bold or font size to give the appearance of headings. Assistive technologies rely on heading styles to determine and communicate structure.
* Make sure that headings follow a logical hierarchy. For example, in Microsoft Word, use paragraph styles in sequential order – after the first heading (H1), cycle down and up through Heading 2 (H2), followed by H3, H4 etc as needed.
* Keep lists to 5-7 points. Use numbered lists when the sequence is important, such as a stepped process. Use bulleted lists to list items or points.
* In digital documents, ensure links can be easily distinguished from the surrounding text. Do not use URLs and avoid links with phrases such as “click here” or “more”. Instead, ensure the link text makes sense on its own by making the purpose of each link clear from the link text itself, eg. “learning strategies (docx 106kB)”.