# Accessible Content Core Skill 1: Layout

The way we choose to present or lay out information is key to creating accessible content. We have to be intentional when choosing layout elements such as [font](#), [alignment, spacing](#) and [lists](#).

Some layout and formatting choices still used today are based on old habits and practices that are not accessible. We need to move past these dated practices that continue to be systemic barriers to accessibility.

Font Type and Size

Font type: Certain types of fonts are easier to read for most people. These are called **sans-serif fonts**, which have even letter thickness and do not have decorative endings (known as serifs) on each letter.
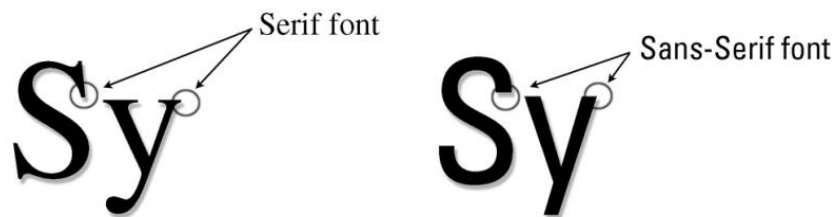
Font size: When it comes to font size, bigger is always better. Larger fonts have higher resolution, reduce the need for users to zoom in or enlarge text, and are generally easier to read.

> **Did you know?** Text larger than size 18 (or size 14 with bold) can meet accessibility requirements with lower contrast ratios.

Alignment and Spacing

Alignment: Text should always be aligned to the left margin to keep even spacing between words. "Justify" aligns text to both the left and right margins and creates uneven spacing between words. The extra space between words

is much harder for some people to read because it can create "rivers of white" that flow down a page and distract from the actual text (example below).

> Justify aligns text to both the left and right margins and creates uneven spacing between words. The extra space between words is much harder for some people to read because it can create "rivers of white" that flow down a page and distract from the actual text.

Spacing: The spacing between lines of text is just as important as the alignment and spacing between words. Some people have trouble tracking lines of text if they are too close together (example below).

Single spacing ⌐
1.25 line spacing ⌐
1.25 line spacing ⌐

> Some people have trouble tracking lines of text if they are too close together. Line spacing set at 1.25 size allows users to move down or track to the next line of text more easily.

Line spacing set between 1.20 to 1.30 allows users to move down or track to the next line of text more easily. However, "single spacing" is the default line spacing in word processor software like Microsoft Word and Google Docs.

Line spacing between paragraphs should be formatted using the built-in paragraph or line spacing tools. Using the space bar, 'Tab' or 'Enter' key repeatedly creates visual space only, which is not accessible to people who use screen readers. Every extra line or 'enter' will be read as the word "blank" with most screen reader software.

Did you know? You only need one space after a period, question mark or exclamation point. The use of two spaces to begin a new sentence is a dated practice that adds unnecessary spacing to a document.

Lists

Using nugget or number lists are an effective way of presenting information so it is easier to process and understand. We are more likely to read content presented in lists than in long paragraphs that we see as "walls of text".

Including long paragraphs is not recommended for accessible web content. Instead, use short paragraphs or lists to present key concepts, ideas, steps or procedures. Lists help to break up text into smaller chunks of information.

Chunking is the preferred way of reading and scanning information, especially for reading online.

To create accessible lists:

- Use the built-in nugget or number lists available in different programs or website builders;

- Use the standard nuggets that come up automatically (custom nuggets may not be accessible to screen reader software);

- Add appropriate spacing between list items (just like between lines of text); and

- Try to split longer lists into separate smaller lists with headings if possible (a long list that takes up a whole page may still look like a "wall of text").

Do (Best Practices)…

- Use a consistent sans-serif font with clear upper and lower case letters (e.g. Arial, Poppins, Verdana).

- Keep text above a 12-point font size and use larger font sizes for headings.

- Use **bold** to emphasize text.

- Align text to the left margin to keep even spacing between words.

- Ensure at least 1.20 spacing between lines of text.

- Use built-in paragraph or line spacing tools to create both visual and non-visual space.

- Start a new sentence with only one space.

- Use nugget or number lists (and/or short paragraphs) to chunk information.

Do Not (Dated Practices)…

- **Don't** use serif fonts like Times New Roman or different fonts throughout a document or web page.

- **Don't** use font sizes below 11.

- **Don't** use all capital letters, italics or underline (hyperlinks excluded) for emphasis.

- **Don't** justify text alignment as it creates uneven spacing between words.

- **Don't** use single spacing between lines of text.

- **Don't** use the 'space' bar or 'enter' key repeatedly to create white space.

- **Don't** use two spaces to begin a new sentence.

- **Don't** have long paragraphs or "walls of text" in a document or web page.