

Making Information Accessible

Everyone has the right to access public information. If a person cannot access a public document because of a disability, they are being denied their right to access.

What are alternate formats?

Alternate formats are other ways of publishing information besides regular print. Some of these formats can be used by everyone while others are designed to address the specific needs of a user.

Why do we need to provide information in other formats?

Some people cannot read because of their disability. This can include people who:

- Are blind or have low vision
- Have an intellectual or other cognitive disability
- Cannot hold publications or turn pages because of a physical disability
- Have difficulties accessing information on the Internet, or
- Have difficulties watching or hearing video presentations.

By providing alternate formats, everyone can access your information.

Examples of alternative formats

Large Print

This helps people who have low vision. Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.

Screen readers

This software converts text that is displayed on a computer monitor to voice (using a speech-synthesizer) or to Braille.

Braille

This is an alternative format for people who are blind or deaf blind. Braille is a tactile system of raised dots representing letters or a combination of letters of the alphabet. Braille is produced using Braille transcription software.

Audio Format

This is an alternative format for people with a vision, intellectual or developmental, or learning disability who are unable to read print.

Captioning

Captioning translates the audio portion of a video presentation by way of subtitles or captions. They usually appear on the bottom of the screen.

Captioning may be closed or open. Closed captions can only be seen on a television screen that has a device called a closed caption decoder. Open captions are "burned on" a video and appear whenever the video is shown.

Captioning makes television programs, films and other visual media with sound accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Windowing

Windowing lets people who are Deaf to read by means of an interpreter who explains using sign language what other people are hearing during a video presentation or broadcast.

The interpreter appears in a corner or "window" in the screen translating spoken word to sign language. Windowing may include open or closed captioning.

Descriptive Video Service (DVS)

DVS provides descriptive narration of key visual elements — the action, characters, locations, costumes and sets — without interfering with dialogue or sound effects. This makes television programs, films, home videos and other visual media accessible for people with vision disabilities.

Assistive Technologies

People with disabilities may use one or more of the following assistive technologies in communicating with others or in getting information:

- Speech input and synthesized speech output
- Screen readers, screen magnifiers, screen projectors
- Audio recorded information
- Text telephones
- Adjustable signal level and tone on audio devices
- Volume control
- Hands-free data entry and response selection

- Intelligent word prediction software
- Alternative pointing devices, such as mouth sticks
- Keyboard controllers
- Book holders and page turners
- Touchscreens, and
- Standardized icons.

Telecommunications

Although many people who are Deaf or hard of hearing use wireless or hand-held communications devices to send and receive text messages, TTY (teletypewriter) is still widely used.

Bell Canada Relay Service lets TTY users and hearing people talk to one another by phone with the help of specially-trained operators. Here is how it works:

- The TTY user dictates the conversation to the operator.
- The operator relays the conversation to the TTY phone.
- The TTY conversation is then relayed to the regular phone user.

This service is confidential and the only cost is any long-distance charges that would regularly apply. Local calls are free.

Accessible websites

Providing easy access to information through accessible websites benefits helps everyone, including:

- People with disabilities
- Seniors
- Consumers living in areas that do not have access to high-speed Internet
- People who have difficulty reading and writing
- People whose first language is not English.