



Checklist: Accessible Emails

Ensure your communication reaches everyone. A quick guide to plain language and accessible formatting that helps you create emails that are truly inclusive and easy to read for all audiences.

Write Clearly (Plain Language)

Plain language is the foundation of accessible communication. When you write clearly, you make your message accessible to people with cognitive disabilities, non-native speakers, and anyone scanning quickly. Clear writing isn't dumbing down—it's opening up.

Keep it short

Aim for sentences of 20 words or fewer and paragraphs of 3-5 sentences. Short, focused thoughts are easier to process and remember.

Use active voice

Say "We approved your request" instead of "Your request was approved by us." Active voice is direct, clear, and easier to understand.

Avoid jargon

Use common words whenever possible. For example, use "use" instead of "utilize" or "help" instead of "facilitate." Your readers will thank you.

Front-load importance

Put the most critical information or the "ask" in the first paragraph. Don't bury your main point—lead with what matters most.

Use "You" and "We"

Address the reader directly to make the tone personal and direct. This conversational approach makes your message more engaging and easier to follow.

Structure for Readability

Proper structure helps all users navigate your content, but it's especially critical for people using screen readers. Well-structured emails let assistive technology announce headings, skip to sections, and understand the content hierarchy.



Use logical headings

Use H1, H2, and H3 styles to organize content, not just bold text. Screen readers rely on proper heading tags to help users navigate through your email efficiently.



Use real lists

Use the bullet or number list tools in your email editor, not manual dashes or asterisks. Proper list markup helps screen readers announce the number of items and navigate between them.



Left-align text

Avoid centered or justified text, which is harder for some users to read. Left-aligned text creates a consistent starting point for each line, making reading easier.



Font size matters

Ensure text is at least 12pt, preferably 14pt, and uses a sans-serif font like Arial or Verdana. Larger, cleaner fonts improve readability for everyone, especially users with low vision.

Images, Colors, and Links

Visual elements need careful attention to ensure they work for everyone, including people who are blind, have low vision, or have color blindness. These practices ensure your visual content communicates effectively to all users.



Alt Text

Add descriptive alternative text to all images. Describe what the image shows and why it matters. If an image is purely decorative, mark it as such so screen readers skip it.



Color Contrast

Ensure text stands out against the background with sufficient contrast. Never use color alone to convey meaning (like "the red text indicates errors")—always include text cues too.



Descriptive Links

Avoid generic phrases like "Click Here." Use descriptive text like "Read our Accessibility Guide" or "Download the Q4 Report" so users know where the link leads.



Tables

Use tables only for data, not for layout. Ensure data tables have clear headers so screen readers can properly announce column and row relationships.

Before You Send

A final review can catch issues that might exclude some of your audience. These three quick checks take just a few minutes but can make a significant difference in how many people can actually read and engage with your message.

Check on mobile

Does it read well on a small screen? More than half of emails are opened on mobile devices. Make sure your content flows naturally and buttons are easy to tap.

Zoom test

Can you zoom in to 200% without breaking the layout? Many users need to zoom in to read comfortably. Your email should remain functional and readable at larger sizes.

Dark mode check

Does the email look readable in dark mode? Many users prefer dark mode to reduce eye strain. Test to ensure your text remains visible and your design stays intact.



"Clear communication is accessible communication."

When you prioritize accessibility, you create better emails for everyone. Start with this checklist, make it a habit, and watch your engagement improve. Accessible design is simply good design.



hello@wally.io  wally.io