

NEoN Digital Arts Accessibility Strategy

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NEoN Digital Arts Accessibility Strategy

Introduction

This is version 2.0 of the NEoN Digital Arts Accessibility Strategy, created by Beatrix Livesey-Stephens. In NEoN's mission to bring digital arts to everyone, considering accessibility is extremely important. This document is a step in making sure NEoN can provide access for disabled individuals and fulfilling that mission. We live in a rapidly changing world, and accessibility is no exception – there are always new accessibility measures being developed, and new technology to create art with. This document is a living document, and will continue to evolve with new information and guidance as the state of accessibility and digital art changes. Ongoing conversations are needed every time NEoN considers something new and the state of the intersection of digital art and accessibility changes. Most of what is in this document is from other sources, and I have highlighted these places in the references section. We would especially like to thank Glasgow-based theatre company, Birds of Paradise.

This document is mainly focused on accessibility for disabled people (i.e physical accessibility, accessibility for neurodivergent people, web accessibility, and more detailed in this document), but accessibility more broadly includes socio-economic accessibility, digital accessibility (i.e relating to digital poverty), and cultural inclusion. Accessibility is all about inclusion, and this includes everyone.

When curating an event, programme of events, or general commission, it is important to keep accessibility at the forefront. Accessibility is something that should be baked in, not added on at the last minute. By choosing accessible platforms, accessible language, and booking captioners and interpreters in advance, and involving them in the process, you are actually reducing the workload and crunch time involved, and making the programme and experience of accessibility more effective. This includes telling people (i.e coworkers, artists, and anyone else) why a specific thing is needed from them, as it helps to see how every bit of information will fit together in the end, and broadens knowledge of accessibility for everyone involved. So much of accessibility activism ends up trying to reinvent the wheel. If you are unsure whether something has been done before, or how to implement a measure, look it up on the internet. It is likely that someone has done it before you.

No piece of art can be “fully accessible”, and should not be labelled as such. In fact, what makes a piece accessible to some people can make it inaccessible to others. In the words of tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG) designer Jay Dragon (paraphrased)¹:

“Please consider conflicting access needs and insert that phrase into your vocabulary. For example, the medium of podcasts [is] not inaccessible in itself — they are an artistic medium. if you struggle to process them (as I do), then you have an access need if you want to engage with them (in my case, transcripts). If you request your access need and the podcaster is unable to provide them, then that podcast is inaccessible for you. (This is a morally neutral statement! There are many reasons why a podcaster might not be able to provide that). This doesn’t mean the podcaster should be writing articles instead of podcasting — long articles can also be inaccessible for people, there is no perfect method of communicating information which everyone can immediately understand. In some cases, we might have conflicting access needs — maybe you need the text in bright red comic sans for your dyslexia, and my migraines make it impossible for me to process that without getting a headache. Ultimately, access needs are individual and complicated, and pointing to a medium or an artistic work and branding it inaccessible is a distortion of that language's purpose, and makes it harder to discuss ableism and accessibility.”

Advice For Artists

When commissioning a film, exhibition, game, or other work, the artist will be given accessibility guidelines to work from. Since accessibility is a part of the work, artists are encouraged to think about ‘baking in’ the accessibility measures in an artistic manner, and framing these measures as a part of the art. Importantly, accessibility is a collective effort. Everyone working on the accessibility of a project should have access to all the data, transcripts, alternative text and image descriptions that people have made, and everything else. This makes creating more for access much more streamlined and means that no-one is reinventing the wheel. Access is more than a collective effort, it is a community effort – if you are having trouble finding something specific, or learning how to do something, there is a wealth of resources to help you. Some of these have been linked below in the References and Sources section, and throughout the document.

Signed Language(s) Interpretation

¹ <https://twitter.com/jdragsky/status/1490768558464413696> Dragon, Jay. February 7th, 2022.

For any language that is used in an audio or audiovisual commission, it should be interpreted in order to provide access for deaf BSL users. The interpretation should be either in British Sign Language (BSL) or another signed language. An artist who is commissioned to create an audio or audiovisual piece of work should consult a (British) Sign Language interpreter directly to interpret the commission. This ensures that the interpreter has a comprehensive knowledge of the lexicon used in the commission, including nuances, and instances when what is said is not meant to be intelligible at all.

The interpreter **MUST** be registered with the [National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People \(NRCPD\)](#) or another national equivalent. The interpreter should be booked as far in advance as possible, ideally even over three months in advance – they book up extremely quickly. Make sure to also set money aside for travel costs of getting the interpreter to and from the venue if you are hiring them for an event they have to travel to.

If the live event is over an hour, two interpreters must be hired, otherwise the quality of interpretation decreases dramatically due to fatigue. The interpreter(s) can advise on this, as it depends on the type of event. Lectures and other long talks with specialist material are guaranteed to need two interpreters, since the pace can be very fast and the material is complex.

When hiring an interpreter for a commission, the artist should consider if, how, and why the interpreter should be specifically interwoven with the work instead of being an add-on, primarily for accessibility of the commission, and also for artistic reasons. Accessibility should always be prioritised in this instance - if it isn't accessible, it isn't complete. More detailed information about best practice when working with interpreters can be found on the [Association of Sign Language Interpreters](#) website and the [National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters](#) website, including [Interpreter Fee Guidance](#). You can use the NRCPD site to search for interpreters and captioners throughout the UK → [this link takes you to a search for English/BSL interpreters in Dundee](#)

Pre-recorded Audiovisual

- Where is the interpreter placed on the screen? Are they at the side, the bottom, or the top?
- Is the interpretation covering up some of the film? Is there black/white space at the side of the film for the interpreter to fit instead (similar to on Zoom)?

- Does the interpreter have a stylised 'box' that they fit into on the screen?
- Is there an option to view the work/commission with and without the interpreter?
- Are they cut off or unclear in any way? Make sure they're not – they should be very visible!

Real-time Audiovisual (events either online or offline)

- Where in the physical space is the interpreter? Do they move around the space? Do they have room to do this?
- Have you done a trial run to make sure the interpreter is visible to those who need interpretation?
- Is the connection/frame rate stable?
- How many interpreters are needed? The quality of interpretation decreases rapidly after an hour (although this does depend, the interpreter will advise), and it is best practice to hire two or more so they can alternate, ESPECIALLY if there are breakout sessions, and more than one deaf person in the room.
- Have you vetted the BSL interpreter with the deaf BSL user, if you are booking for a specific person?

If you know who in the room is a deaf BSL user, you MUST tell them which interpreter(s) you are planning to book, before you confirm anything. Many deaf BSL users have interpreters they know well and are comfortable with, some that they are strangers to, and some with whom they have worked with before but have not had good experiences with. When it comes down to it, an interpreter is for the deaf BSL user to access the conversation with, and they are there to aid the deaf BSL user.

Remember that not all deaf people use BSL, in fact there is a serious issue of language deprivation in the deaf community, meaning that deaf people have never had the opportunity to learn BSL, and most have had to grow up without access to it. If you are booking a BSL interpreter for a specific person, such as a panellist, make sure they actually are a deaf BSL

user.

Captioning

Captioning advice for artists

For any language that is used in an audio or audiovisual commission, it should be captioned for the access of deaf and hard of hearing people and neurodiverse people (captions benefit many different groups). Artists are encouraged to think about captioning holistically as a part of the art. For material that is not live (i.e pre-recorded), the captions can be tailored to the material accordingly.

For example, an artist may want to match the captions to the colour scheme of a video, use a font that they believe fits better with the tone, or use NEoN's signature Avenir font, provided that the font used is easily readable both in style, colour, and background. A background for captions is recommended to aid high colour contrast (e.g black on white or white on black), which makes the captions easier to follow, especially for people with low vision.

Never, ever use rolling captions or 'kinetic captions' as a genuine accessibility measure. There have been studies done that show that rolling captions impede comprehension and use more brain processing power – they are not helpful to people that need them to access content.

When considering virtual reality (VR) there is debate around whether using captions "breaks immersion" since it is meant to reflect reality. However, captions make the difference between someone being able to access a piece of work and someone not being able to access a piece of work. The debate around VR and captions can be closed by making sure the captions are closed captions (CC) and are therefore able to be toggled on and off.

Tools you can use to caption

YouTube

If you are hosting a commission on YouTube (and even if you're not), YouTube is a very helpful platform to caption on. If you go through the process of uploading a video, caption it using YouTube's captioning and adjustment tools, and then download the SBV file. You can then put the SBV file through an SBV to SRT converter so you can easily burn the captions into the

video.

Adobe Premiere Pro

NEoN has access to this through the Adobe Creative Suite. You can either type captions manually when captioning a video (see the “Captions” tab), or you can ask Adobe to generate captions for you. Even if you already have a transcript (e.g if you’re the artist you will have written a script before recording a video) Adobe’s caption generation automatically syncs the transcript for you, which is incredibly useful.

Handbrake

Handbrake is very technical at first, but it is common captioning software. Use YouTube functionality to create the SBV file, convert it to SRT through a converter, and go from there.

Best practice for captioning (visuals)



- Text has high colour contrast with background colour (if appropriate)
- Large text for maximum visibility
- Two lines of text or fewer (i.e not much text to read) although this depends on the number of words. One line is preferable, again it depends on the number of words shown in the captions at any one time.
- Where possible and where appropriate, use the Avenir font (the font associated with NEoN’s brand) or Open Sans.

Best practice for captioning (taken from [Talking Type Captions best practice](#))

When editing captions manually for use in a commission or other video, make sure that you include ALL relevant dialogue. This can include:

- Laughter from a speaker, panellist, or audience - captioned as “[Bea laughs]” if the previous speaker was not Bea, “[laughs]” if the previous speaker was Bea, “[audience laughter]/[audience laughs]” if it’s the audience and “[laughter]” if the laughter is from multiple people on a panel.
- Gaps of shock/surprise, and anything else similar to this. This can be written as “[gasps]”, “[Bea gasps]”, “[gasps in shock]” similar to the guidelines above.
- Where possible, line breaks and caption breaks should follow the natural rhythm of speech for maximum readability, without breaking up complete clauses/names, separating articles from words.
- If a speaker is quoting or reading from a book/newspaper/etc., it must be in quotation marks. For quotes extending over multiple captions, each caption starts with an opening mark, and the final caption has only a closing mark.

Example: These days, we should remember
President Kennedy’s words:

“My fellow Americans,
“ask not what your country
can do for you,
ask what you can do
for your country.”

- Speaker identification will be required only if necessary for comprehension (Example: when someone is off screen, but it is still apparent who is speaking, speaker identification is not required).

When speaker identification is required, the speaker’s name should be in all capital letters, with a colon, and a space.

Example:

JOHN: I went to the library.

- Sound effects are required when relevant and do not interfere with spoken dialogue. When included, sound effects should be bracketed and formatted in all capital letters.

Example:

[PHONE RINGS]

The tense of the verb should indicate whether the sound is a singular instance or is continuous.

Example:

[DOG BARKS]

[DOG BARKING]

Be as specific as possible.

Example:

[OCEAN SOUNDS]

Versus

[WAVES CRASHING]

[SEAGULLS CRYING]

- Italicisation is required in the following instances:
 - Narration/voiceover speech (make sure to include a speaker identification)
 - Dialogue from on-screen television or radio
 - When someone (a character, for example) is heard speaking over a phone and is not physically present in the scene
 - Song lyrics
- Captions should be on screen for a minimum of one second, and a maximum of seven seconds. They should NEVER be word by word like how automatic captions sometimes work, this can be very distracting and overwhelming, especially for neurodivergent people.
- Numerals 1-12 should be written out. All other numbers should be written as digits.

Example:

– I bought five books,
so now I have a total of 15.

- – When appropriate, you may indicate speaker trailing off with ellipses, abrupt pauses or interruptions with a long dash.

Example:

– I don't know...

OR

– I am going –

– Quiet!

– Stuttering or stammering should be indicated with hyphens.

Example:

I-I-I don't know! He w-was right there!

If a speaker is spelling out a word (unless it's an acronym), capitalize each letter and put a dash between.

Example:

M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I (spelling)

Example:

FCC (acronym)

Live-Captioning

For commissions and events that are performed in real-time, such as discussions, should be live-captioned by a professional live-captioner from the [British Institute of Verbatim Reporters](#), [The Association of Speech-To-Text Reporters](#), or Stagertext - as long as the captioner is registered with the NRCPD (above) or an international equivalent. The live-captioner should be booked **as far in advance as possible**, ideally as soon as the date is confirmed (even if it is a provisional date), or even before if the general time is known (i.e only the day). Live-captioners need as much time as possible to prepare, and they become more and more difficult to find if they are sought at short notice. If an event is over an hour, two captioners must be hired so that the quality of the captioning does not decrease. They will switch over at regular intervals

and can advise about how they will do this.

Captioners understand that not everything can be prepared for (e.g responses in a panel discussion) but anything that can be passed on should be passed on. This includes pre-prepared questions, people's names (names of people speaking and names of people who will be mentioned), and any specialist language and terminology. If someone is going to be speaking from a pre-prepared script or notes, these should also be given to the captioner.

However, be wary of overloading the captioner with too much information. If it is necessary to give a captioner lots of information/documents, make sure you provide these weeks in advance, or even months. In general, captioners would much rather have a small amount of comprehensive information, rather than pages and pages of things that might be a little bit relevant. With that said, it does depend on the captioner – definitely do ask them what they prefer and then you can work from there.

It is common practice for live captioners to caption through [Streamtext](#), which most often opens in a separate webpage – if using a platform like Zoom, the captioner posts this link in the chat. However, people viewing the captions through the link will not always be able to see the event and the captions at the same time. If using a platform like Zoom or MS teams for an event, you will give the captioner 3rd party access to type captions (Zoom explains this well). If you are not displaying captions through a meeting platform, captioners are likely to use Streamcast instead. The captioner in question can advise on this, as they all handle assignments differently. Live captioners normally charge up to £200 per hour.

Wherever possible, whether the captions are live, automatic, or pre-written, captions should be closed captions (CC), which means they are able to be toggled on and off. It should be made clear to viewers that captions are available and that toggling them on and off is an option.

Low-Vision and Blind Accessibility

When designing for accessibility specifically for people who are blind or have low vision, it is firstly important to keep in mind that one size does not fit all, as is the case for accessibility as a whole. Some blind people use screen readers, but not all do. In fact, many people use screen readers who aren't blind, such as people who suffer chronic migraines and cannot always look at computer screens.

Blindness also includes colour blindness such as monochromacy or red-green colour blindness. With respect to this, colour should *never* convey any information on a website or anywhere else. As a general rule, instead of using colour to denote different elements, use shape, both physically (e.g a piece in a tabletop game) and digitally. Text should be in a sans serif font where possible, and/or have sans serif and large print/text options. Every commission should either have high colour contrast or have a high colour contrast option or version of the work. High contrast means that the text is easily readable against the background, similarly to the guidance for captions above.

When using large print, the type size should be 14pt at the very least, preferably 18pt.

Audio Description

Audio description is one of the most broadly used accessibility measures for blind people to access audiovisual content. The cost of the audio description very much depends on the length of the piece of work. Audio description should always be done by a trained professional or an organisation such as VocalEyes ([Audio description services for digital theatre – VocalEyes](#)). Freelance professionals are likely to charge Scottish Artist Union (SAU) rates. You may wish to collaborate with the professional further on specialist language, the feel of the audio, and other factors. This especially depends on whether the audio description in question is to supplement something like an article online, or if it is a reimagining of something audiovisual, like a theatre piece or video commission. See more resources below about what to make sure is included in an audio description for a video commission.

Braille

Braille can be pretty expensive to transliterate, depending on the complexity and length of the material, and if there are diagrams and pictures but here are some resources from a Scottish company.

[Braille - A2i Transcription Services](#)

[A2i Transcription Services Price Guide](#)

Screen Reader Accessibility

General

Screen reader software reads the contents of websites aloud to users, which HTML allows for. Keep this in mind when wanting to rely on contextual information that sighted people receive but visually impaired people do not, such as colour and other visual elements. A way to mitigate this can be arrows pointing to links (shown below, taken from the homepage of the [National Eye Institute website](#)).

Having color blindness means you can't see certain colors the way most people do – or you may not see color at all.

[Learn the basics about color blindness](#) ➤

Take care not to stylise links and buttons as simply “click here!” or “learn more!” This can be very confusing for a screen reader user. Instead, if you’re linking to a new page, style the link as the name of the new page. Link names show up in search engines – nobody ever searches “click here” or “learn more.” It’s also helpful to use underlining sparingly, i.e only for titles and links, since this makes it much easier for a screen reader (or a colourblind person/person with low-vision) to know which text is a link and which isn’t.

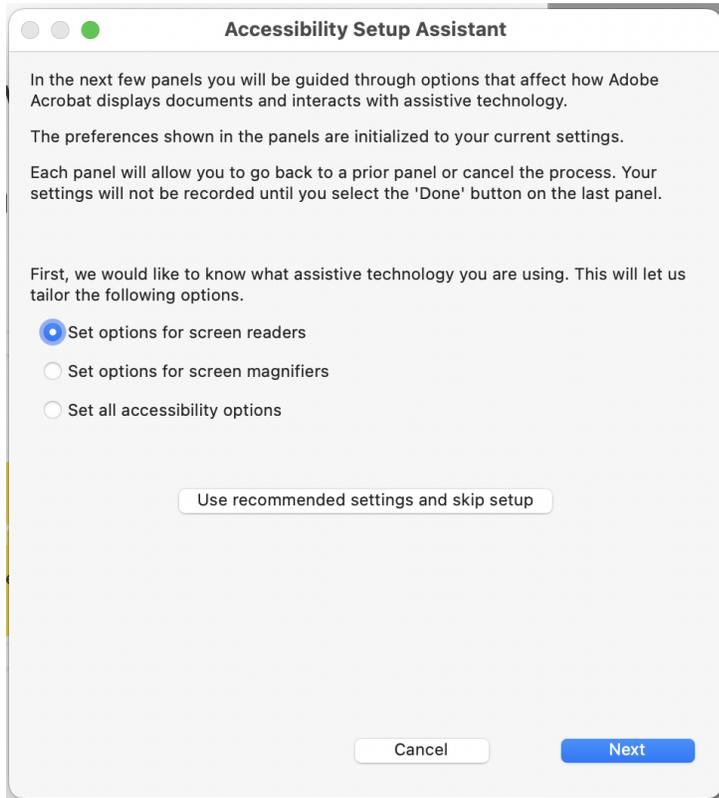
How to tag PDFS

Websites that are built with HTML and tagged PDFs allow screen readers to interact with them. Overlays can interfere with this and mean that the site cannot be interacted with. Since NEoN aims to not host documents via Google Docs so that people are not forced to use Google, PDFs are the next best option, but these are not automatically accessible to screen readers. Do not use Word Documents, as the “Read Only” mode interferes with screen readers and renders the document unreadable. To make a PDF as accessible as possible, follow these steps:

1. Open the PDF you want to fix in Adobe Acrobat. NEoN has an Adobe Suite account, so you should be able to have access to the accessibility tools, but unfortunately they’re paid features.
2. Go to the Help tab at the top of your screen and search “Accessibility.” You will find “Accessibility Setup Assistant.” Do NOT choose “Export to > Text (Accessible)”. This does not work for making PDFs accessible, since the text is not always able to be parsed

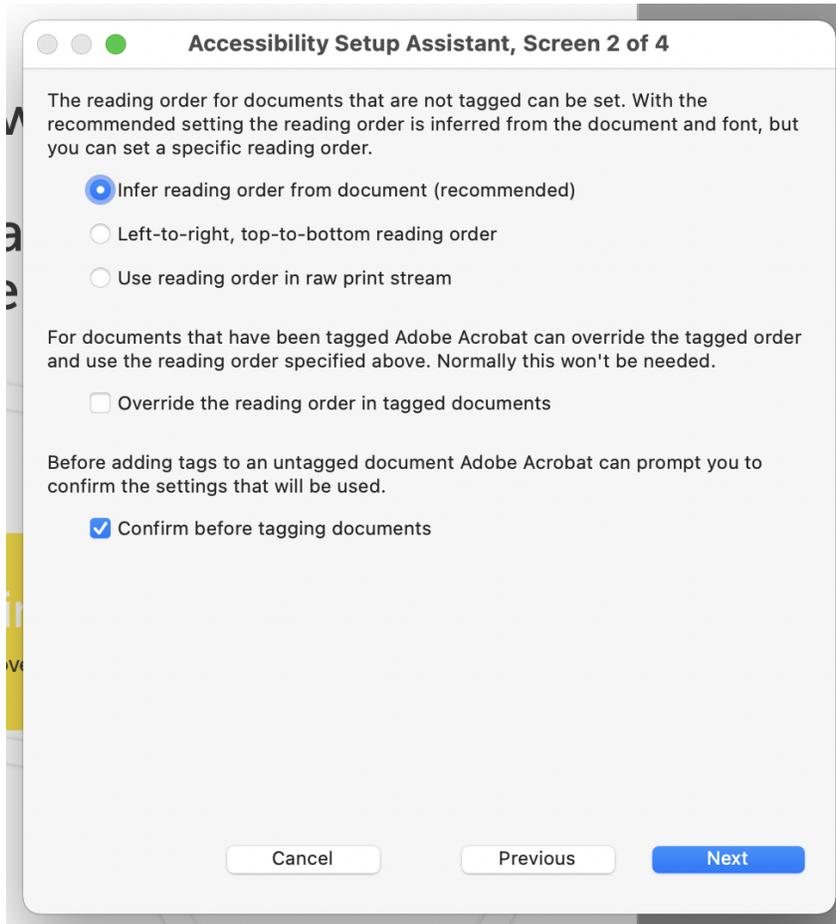
properly.

3. When you click on “Accessibility Setup Assistant”, you will see this:



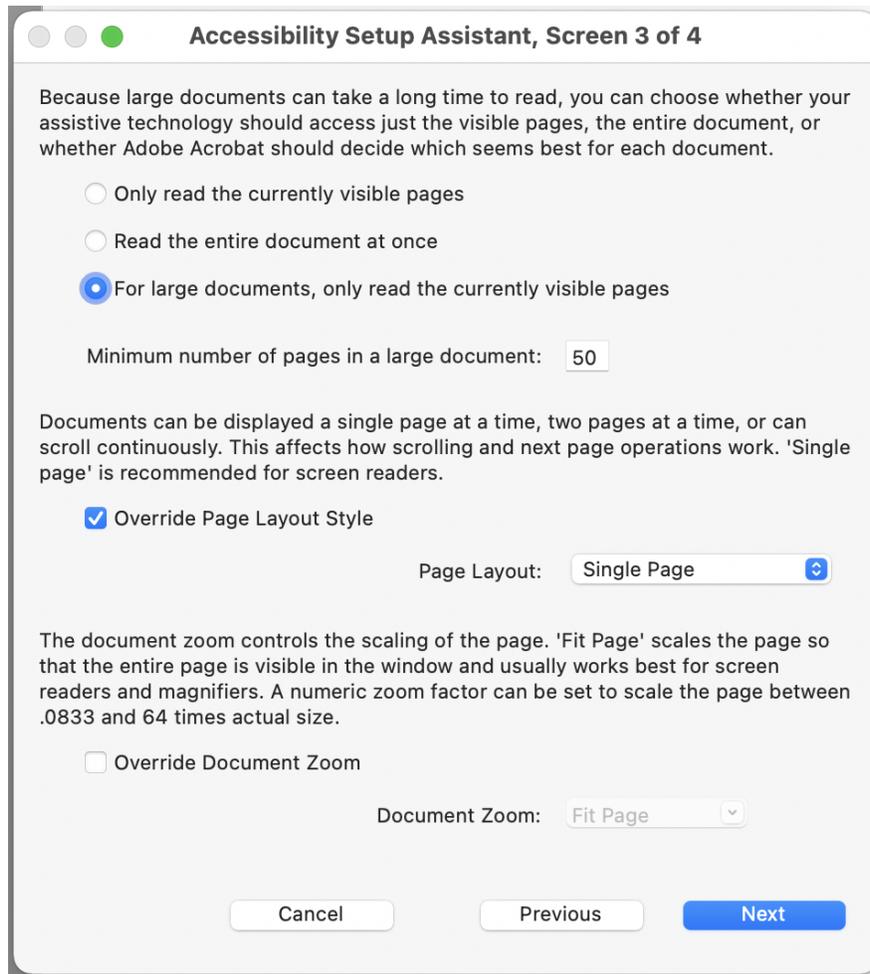
4. Click “Set options for screen readers.”

5. You will then see this:



6. Click whichever box best corresponds to how the PDF is laid out - i.e if it's in columns, infer the reading order; if it's left to right and top to bottom, then click that box. Make sure that you have checked the "Confirm before tagging documents" box.

7. You will then see this:

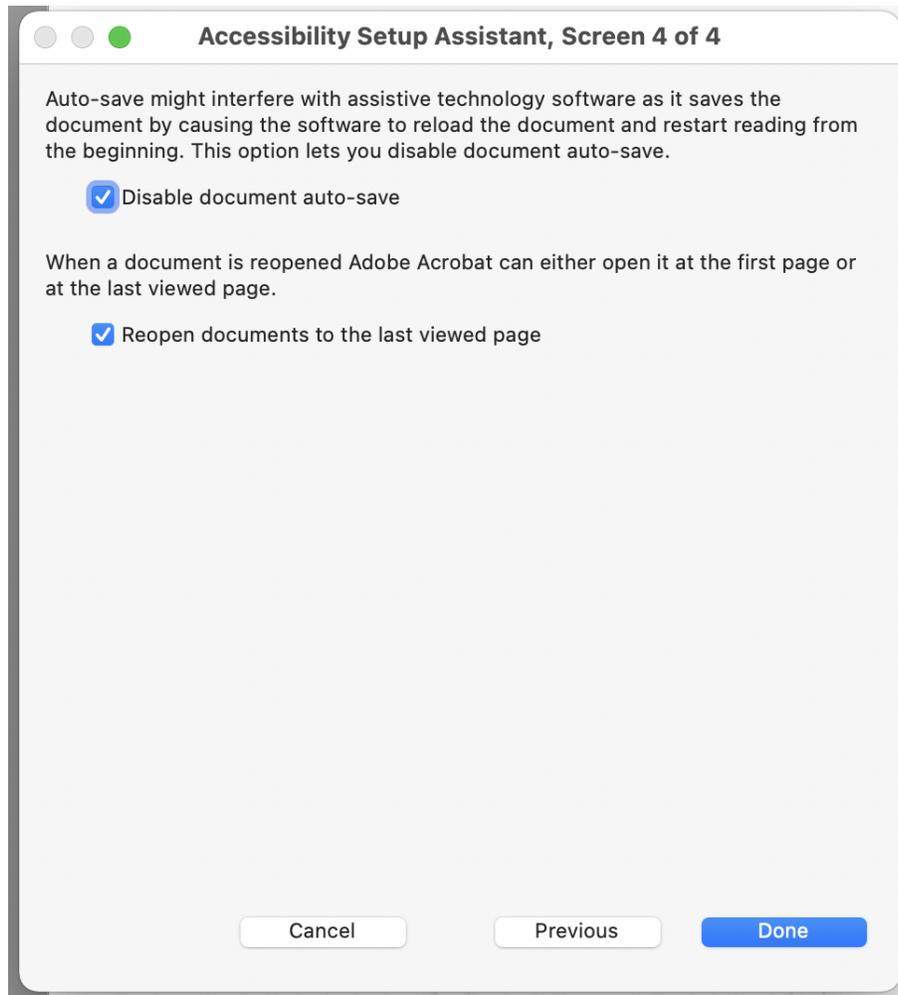


8. Check "only read the currently visible pages."

9. You can also adjust the minimum number of pages in a large document if you see fit.

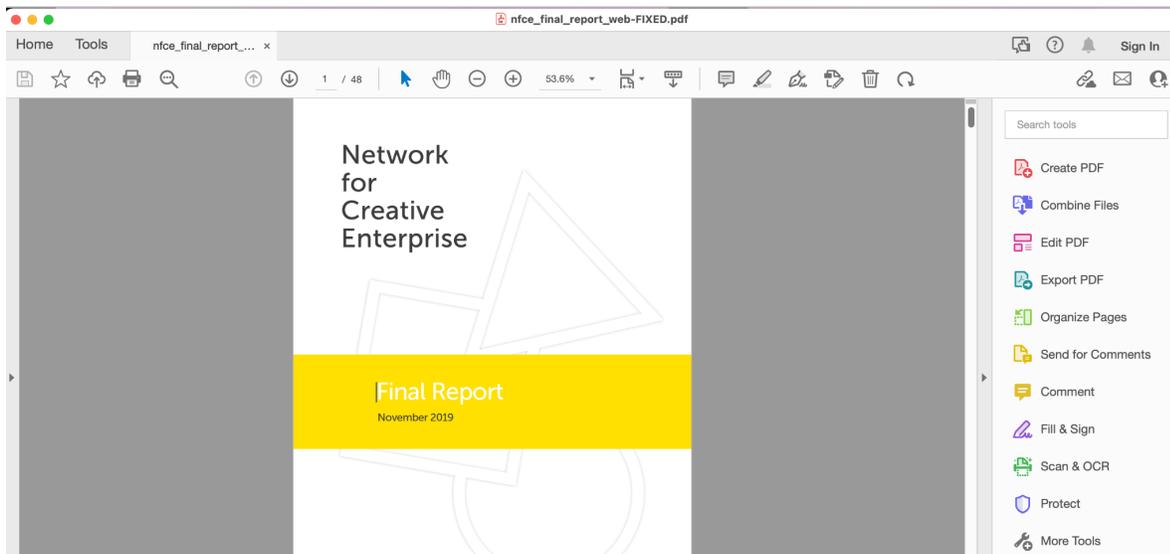
10. Make sure that the page layout style is set to "single page".

11. You will then see this, the last screen of the Accessibility Setup Assistant:



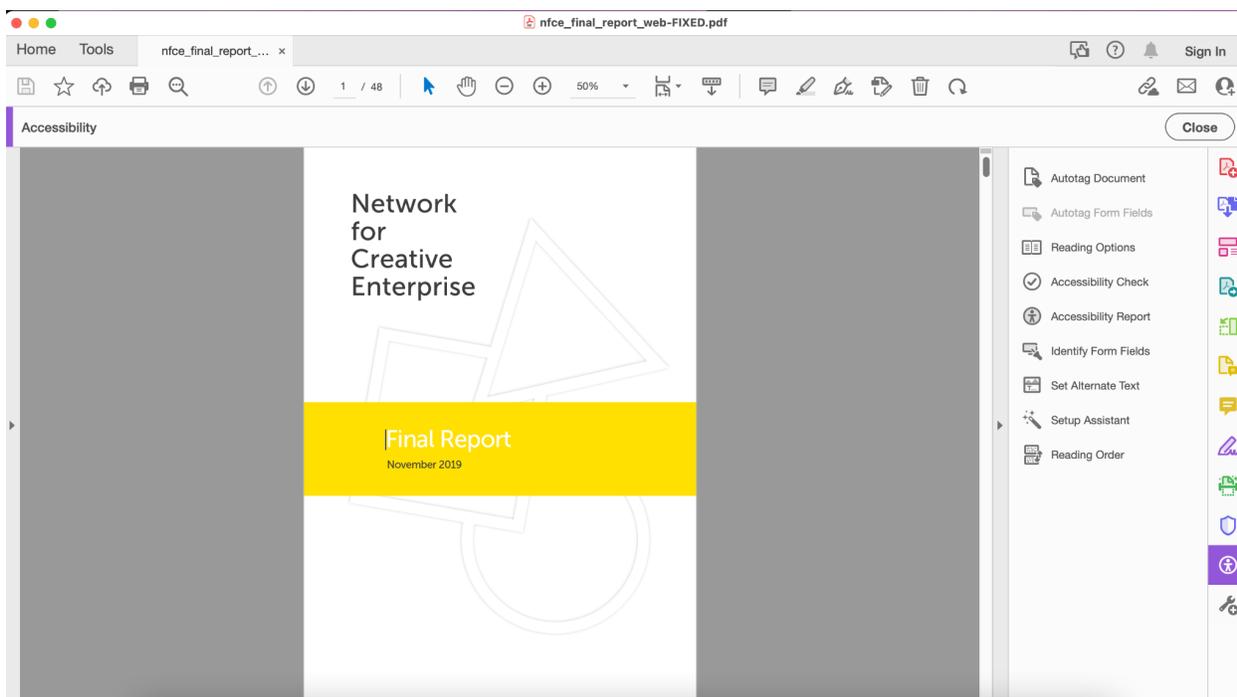
12. Make sure both of the boxes are ticked, and then click "Done."

13. After this, mouse over to the bottom-right hand corner of your screen and click on "More Tools" (pictured below).



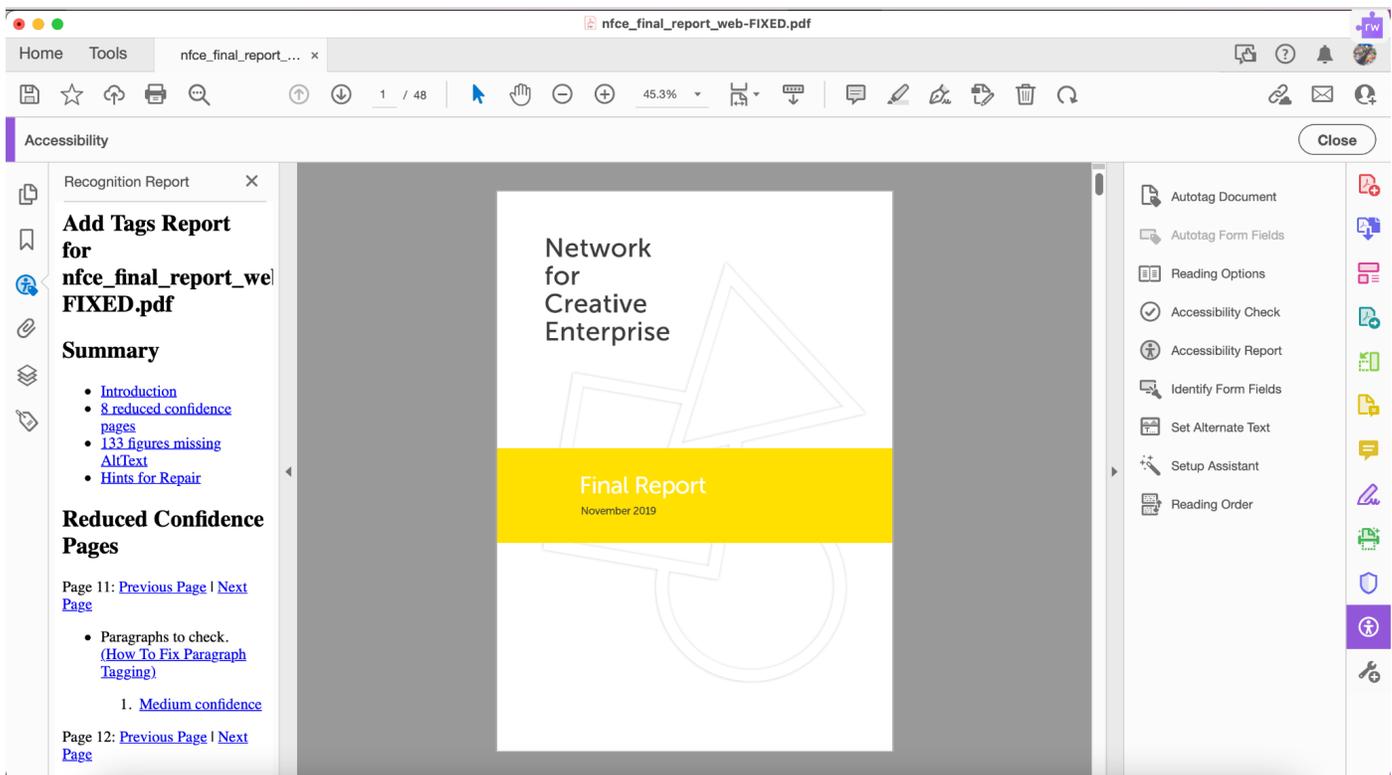
14. Scroll down to "Protect and Standardise" and you will find "Accessibility." Click this.

15. After you've clicked on "Accessibility", you will see the Accessibility menu on the left hand side of your screen:



16. From here, you can autotag the document, set reading options, do an accessibility, create an accessibility report, tell Adobe where form fields are (or aren't), alt-text figures that need to be described, and set a reading order.

17. To autotag the document, click "Autotag Document", the first option on the Accessibility list. It may say that the document is already tagged - even if this is the case, you should re-tag it to make sure.
18. When you click "Autotag Document", it may tell you that the document is already tagged, and that you are retagging the document. If you don't know that the document is correctly tagged, retag it. You will see instructions on the left hand side of the PDF viewer for how to do this.
19. You can change the reading options (infer reading order from document, left-to-right and top-to-bottom reading order, and using the reading order in the raw print stream).
20. You can continue to use the left-hand side of the PDF viewer to check which figures are not alt-texted (although decorative figures do not need alt-text), and how to continue to fix the document (see picture below).



Scans that have been turned into PDFs ARE NOT accessible to screen readers. Wherever possible, do not use scans, and if you must, make sure it is alt-texted. You can technically put a scan through an Accessibility Report/Check in Adobe, but this often comes out wrong.

Social Media (and by extension, commissions with images and videos)

For posts with an image:

- Have you added alt-text (an image description) with an alt-text feature in the social media platform of choice?
- Have you added alt-text in the body of the image caption?
- Is the text/background contrast high (i.e no similar colours overlapping, especially with text inside an image)?

For posts with a video:

- Have you uploaded an SRT file (for subtitles/captions) when prompted by the social media platform of choice, if you haven't burned the subtitles/captions into the video? (Sometimes uploading SRT files to the platform itself is more appropriate than burning the captions in, since the overlay of the social media platform can cover burnt-in captions sometimes).
- Can the captions be toggled on and off (are they closed captions?)
- Have you described the video in the post caption/comment where appropriate (the video equivalent of alt-text)?

Accessibility Etiquette for general posts on social media

- Can someone who is colourblind understand the content and context? Do the colours signify important information? Make sure colours do not convey any important information - they should just be decorative!
- Is there high colour contrast, so the text and the background/images are easily distinguishable?

- Is the text big enough to be read by someone who is at all visually impaired?
- Have you used emojis sparingly? Remember that every emoji gets read out by a screen reader, meaning that popular trends such as the “red flag” meme, emojis that create words, or are inaccessible to those who use screen readers.
- If you are posting/retweeting ASCII art or emoji art (such as the “red flag” meme or emojis that create words), have you posted it as a picture/screenshot instead, and alt-texted the picture, so people using screen readers can access it, and that people can view it on all devices?

How to write good alternative text

Alt-text is read out by screen reader software and it is indexed by search engines. It also displays on the page if the image fails to load. Good alternative text is not always about being overly descriptive. In fact, every social media platform has a character limit on how much alt-text you can write. This character limit isn't arbitrary – remember that the more text you write, the more time an alt-text user has to spend to listen to it. However, as disability is not a monolith, neither are alt-text users. Some alt-text users want the most information possible from alt-text, and others want something short. They can skip past bits of information they do not want to hear, so adding more information rather than less is generally a good option. [This Twitter thread about using alt-text](#) is useful in looking at how alt-text is used and what alt-text users are hoping for when they access alt-text.

The alt-text for the exact same image can be written very differently depending on the context the image is used in. Here is an example below (taken from the [Harvard University Digital Accessibility site](#)):



Alt-text with no context:

A mostly empty stadium.

Alt-text on a page about recent turnout for track tryouts:

Harvard Stadium with two lone runners bounding up the steps.

Alt-text on page about renovation projects:

Harvard Stadium with cracked concrete pillars.

The alt-text for this image highly depends on the context that it's used in, which is true for all other images. It entirely depends on what information the sighted person is gaining from seeing the image, and therefore what information the blind person should also access. However, sighted people get to access all of the image, and many blind people want to have the choice to access the whole image too, regardless of if something in the image "isn't relevant." If an image has a lot of text, it's useful to link to the text itself instead, although you should have the means to alt-text if you have kept all the material relating to the project in question.

Making Games Accessible

Games mainly follow the rubric of making other media accessible, such as captions and good practice in regards to blind/low vision accessibility (above). Other than this, [Game Accessibility](#)

[Guidelines](#) is a very comprehensive resource. Ren'py, the visual novel tool, also has self-voicing enabled if alt-text is used correctly ([source here](#)) and is accessible to someone with no sight. As you will see in the Game Accessibility Guidelines, one of the most important accessibility areas to focus on is remapping controls. You can go further with this by having players use as few buttons as possible to play a game. There are even "[one-button games](#)" that can be played with only one button and are seeing more and more traction in the games accessibility community.

Event Checklist

- Have you scheduled access breaks (to allow people to rest, to allow people to get medication etc, to mitigate concentration fatigue)?
- How long is the event? Are people going to be exhausted when there's still an hour left and there is high-intensity material (e.g an academic lecture or talk)? You can mitigate this by having access breaks of 10-15 minutes.
- Is the event hybrid where possible? Can people join both online and in-person?
- Is the event, if online or hybrid, hosted on a captioned platform? If the captions are automatic, is a deaf person able to follow along with them?
- Have you asked attendees for their accessibility requirements as early as possible beforehand in order to put necessary measures in place in time?
- Is the environment quiet enough to mitigate sensory overload, and quiet enough to hear clearly?
- Can the temperature of the space be controlled?
- Have you suggested what you *could* provide if needed, in order to jog people's memory about what they require to access an event? Many people will not ask for an interpreter or captioner, even if they need one, unless an organisation suggests that they can provide them.

- Do people have somewhere to sit and still have access to the event while in the seating area?
- Seating - is there mixed moveable seating, with arms if possible?
- If there is food, is the seating area separate from the food so that attendees can avoid food-related anxieties?
- Is there a hearing loop (where possible)? NEoN can provide a loop if the venue doesn't have one.
- Is there wheelchair access (can a wheelchair user and/or power chair user both enter the space and move around unassisted)? Are the doors automatic? Same level access, either via front door, or via public lift. Are there stairs into the building?
- Are wheelchair spaces available?
- Lighting - is it bright enough for people with poor sight? Is it too harsh for others?
- Is there a quiet space for people to go if they need to leave temporarily?
- Are there breakout spaces?
- Are people able to leave at any time, and return at any time, for any reason?
- Have you included a clear and public access statement on the event about what NEoN can and cannot provide?
- Have you publicised the event's access measures widely? Is it detailed, covering any questions attendees might have?
- Is there a designated point of contact for further accessibility information?
- Is there a waiting area for speakers, helpers?
- Are there public content notes/content warnings where relevant, both in event descriptions and publicly stated at the start of the event?

- Is the event near good transport links - City centre location, on central and reliable bus links?

- Are there detailed instructions about how to get to the event venue?

Neurodiversity

Neurodiversity comes in all shapes and sizes. It is defined as “the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits, regarded as part of normal variation in the human population.” This includes autism, ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), dyslexia, dyscalculia, epilepsy, Tourettes, specific learning disabilities (SLDs) and other conditions.

A person with one or more of these conditions may refer to themselves as “neurodivergent”. Grouping these conditions together in a catch-all term can be useful, but this doesn’t mean that a person who has, say, ADHD requires exactly the same adaptations or support as someone with Tourettes or dyslexia.

The best way to know how to support a neurodivergent person is to ask them, and believe them when they communicate what they need to be comfortable and work efficiently. Just as neurodivergent conditions are not a monolith, each autistic person will have different answers for how their autism affects them, for example. Above all, treat everyone with respect, believe them about how their condition affects them and their access needs, and respect the language they use about their condition – there is ongoing debate about “person first” or “identity first” language (i.e. “person with autism”/“autistic person” or “people with disabilities”/“disabled people”.) The majority of the community prefers identity first language, as they see their conditions as part of them, and this should be reflected in communications from NEEON, but if someone prefers to be referred to as a “person with autism”, this should be respected.

It can be especially difficult for someone when they have an undiagnosed condition, and are struggling without knowing why and without the appropriate support. This may affect someone’s work and general ability to function, with the added stress of not knowing the cause of their struggling. Autistic women in particular go undiagnosed very often and find that their quality of life is greatly improved once they know they are autistic. [Am I Autistic](#) by Sonia Boué is a good resource for understanding this.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of steps you can take to support neurodivergent people (and everyone at that):

- Providing a quiet environment with lack of overlapping noise
- Providing alternative sensory options – some materials can be distressing
- Being clear in communication / repeating yourself
- Asking the person directly whether they understand what they are meant to do
- Giving direct instructions
- Making it clear that people are able to ask for help if they do not understand something, or need guidance or support

It could be argued that there is no general consensus if mental health conditions are part of neurodiversity, since mental health conditions like anxiety and depression are not always about the wiring of someone's brain. However, conditions like bipolar disorder and borderline personality disorder (BPD) may well be. It depends on how the person in question wants to define themselves. As with every other disability, the crux of supporting people with mental health conditions is to ask them what they need, give them clear instructions about what you expect from them and when, and allow for flexibility. Flexible working is a lifeline for many disabled people, since it's output that fundamentally matters, not how someone gets something done.

Applying for funding for accessibility measures

You can apply to Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants for projects that take place outside of England. This includes the "making your work accessible" budget line: [see the Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants here](#). The same is true of [Creative Scotland's Open Fund for Organisations](#) – it is *absolutely crucial* that this is done very far in advance to make sure that accessibility measures have the greatest chance of being fulfilled. Other funds for accessibility measures are few and far between, but it is recommended to apply to the highest amount possible for each accessibility measure (i.e booking a BSL interpreter, booking a captioner, making sure the work is accessible to screen readers), since there is no one resource that can tell you exactly how much accessibility professionals will

charge, especially if they are freelance. It is imperative that you consult BSL interpreters and captioners before even applying so you know how much to apply for.

Conclusion

The guide is meant to support NEoN in making sure the organisation is as accessible as possible, and recognising that accessibility takes many different forms. Accessibility takes time and effort, and hopefully the further sources and reading are helpful for structuring and building on current accessibility practices. The more work goes into refining and streamlining accessibility practices, the easier it is to implement these practices in the future, and the more people are able to access digital arts.

References and sources

[Accessibility Professionals](#)

[Association of Sign Language Interpreters website](#)

[The Association of Speech-To-Text Reporters](#)

[British Institute of Verbatim Reporters](#)

[National Union of British Sign Language Interpreters](#)

[National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People \(NRCPD\)](#)

[Audio Description](#)

[Audio description | Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#)

[The Ultimate Guide to Audio Description - 3Play Media](#)

Alternative text

[Alt-text decision tree](#)

[Alt-text is not a new form to play with, it's an accessibility tool - Twitter thread and discussion](#)

[Harvard University Digital Accessibility site](#)

Braille

[Braille - A2i Transcription Services](#)

[A2i Transcription Services Price Guide](#)

Sign Languages

[Interpreter Fee Guidance](#)

PDF Accessibility

[Create and verify PDF Accessibility](#)

Captioning

[Captioning Style Guide from Talking Type Captions](#)

[Live Closed-Captioning on Vimeo](#)

[Streamtext](#)

Funding

[Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants](#)

[Creative Scotland's Open Fund for Organisations](#)

[Game Accessibility](#)

[Designing One-Button Games for Accessibility](#)

[Game Accessibility Guidelines](#)

[Self-Voicing on the Ren'py Engine](#)

[Neurodiversity](#)

[Am I Autistic](#) by Sonia Boué

[Neurodiversity at Work - Supporting Employees Across the Spectrum](#)

[Neurodiversity in the workplace - Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service](#)

[Tips for supporting neurodiversity in the workplace - Forbes](#)

[Making Digital Art Accessible](#)

[Digital Creatively Embedded Access - Birds of Paradise Theatre Company](#)

[How AI could increase art world accessibility for disabled artists | Dazed](#)

[Making your show accessible | Edinburgh Festival Fringe](#)

[Painting a Picture of Accessible Digital Art](#)

[Resources - Birds of Paradise Theatre Company](#)

[The Fringe Guide to Adapting Events for Deaf and Disabled Audiences](#)

[Using digital to make the arts more accessible | Nesta](#)

[Win-win for disabled arts-lovers and the sector | The Audience Agency](#)

[What does "Arts Accessibility" even mean? | Shawna NM Barnes](#)

Web Accessibility

[Automated Tools for Testing Accessibility](#)

[How can I make my digital work more inclusive?](#)

[How to use Semantic HTML - web accessibility](#)

[Overlay Factsheet](#)

[Web Accessibility Initiative](#)

Other

[Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion | Creative Scotland](#)

[Talking about disability at work: Supporting disabled people at work - Acas](#)