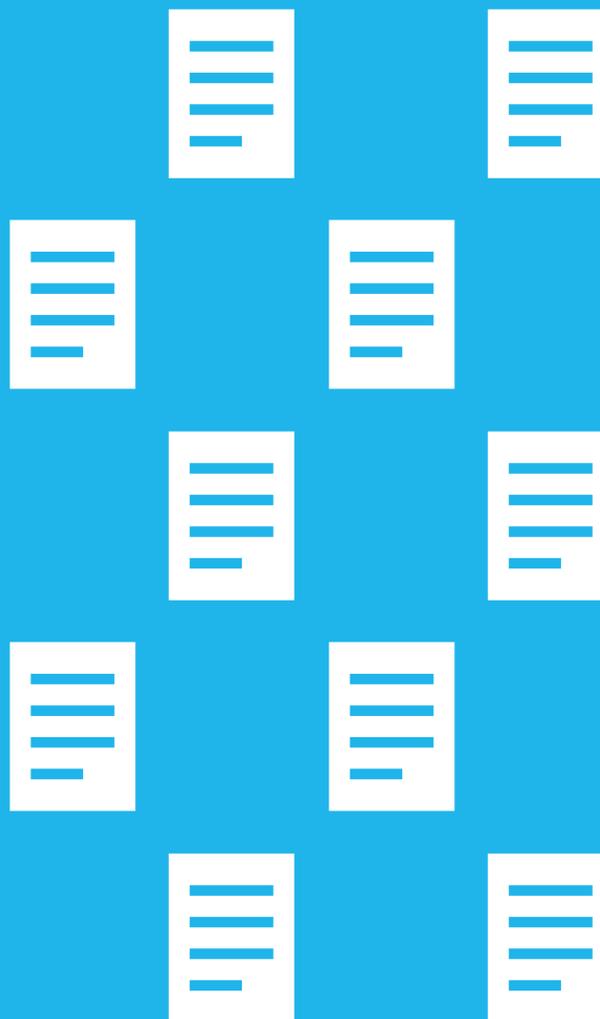


Accessible e-texts

Ten guidelines for successful e-text accessibility practice



Foreword

This study is the result of a collaboration between Nota and a number of stakeholders in the publishing sector. In the light of a seminar on accessibility held in the spring of 2014, a working group was established to develop a range of tangible accessibility guidelines, which could forge a common best practice basis for the accessibility of e-texts in Danish.

This document meets the following objectives.

- to describe the general requirements of e-text markups and structure
- to describe why these exact requirements are relevant to people with reading disabilities, and assistive technology
- to exemplify how these requirements can be implemented in practice.

These guidelines can be used in the production of e-books, websites and other digital publications and the intention is that they will help support a better practice for the accessibility of Danish digital productions.

Thank you

Dansk Psykologisk Forlag, Tellerup A/S, Gyldendal, Politikens Forlag, Rosendahls – BookPartnerMedia, SBi Forlag, TUR Forlag, Special-pædagogisk Forlag, KulturDigitalisering Aps

Nota wishes to help ensure that all digital texts in Denmark are produced with the highest possible degree of accessibility. When texts are delivered in accessible formats from the start, the likelihood that people with reading disabilities will be able to get by on equal terms with others in education, leisure and business is increased.

Ten guidelines for successful e-text accessibility practice

1. Texts should be marked up structurally and have a navigable table of contents
2. The elements must be marked up semantically
3. Texts must indicate the correct reading order
4. Layout and scaling must be adaptable to the user's needs
5. Images and graphics must be accompanied by a textual description
6. Language must be specified for both the main text and sections with other languages
7. Links must have clear destination descriptions
8. DRM protected titles must provide an open alternative
9. The supply chain must be incorporated
10. Metadata must specify the text's content and degree of accessibility

Background

The ten guidelines are reviewed individually to explain the background for their inclusion in this study. We briefly discuss the relevance of the ten guidelines for people with reading disabilities, and assistive technology.

1. Texts should be marked up structurally and have a navigable table of contents

When using assistive technology, it is not possible to ‘skim’ and get a quick overview of the structure of the text’s structure. The text is presented entirely chronologically and the reader depends on it being typographically correct, hierarchical in its construction and with a comprehensive table of content linking to the various paragraphs in the text.

2. The elements must be marked up semantically

Markups using the correct semantic elements – notes, lists, tables, captions, fact boxes and more – enable the speech synthesizers to tell the user the nature of the coming element, and the user can for example choose to ignore or skip over elements while reading.

3. Texts must indicate the correct reading order

When you cannot skim, you need to be given a reading strategy for the text elements. The text must therefore indicate the correct reading order so that one can follow the main text with as little disturbance as possible. Secondary text elements – notes, page numbers, captions, tables and margin texts etc. – should be placed in a way that they disturb the process as little as possible.

4. Layout and scaling must be adaptable to the user’s needs

When you read slowly and with difficulty, it is important to be able to influence the text’s layout, size and colour according to your own preferences. These preferences are individual and cannot be generalised. A typical challenge: texts with a fixed typeface or page width, which can make the text illegible if you need a larger typeface with a narrow page margin, for example. Therefore, the text’s layout and scaling must be flexible.

5. Images and graphics must be accompanied by a textual description

If you cannot see, it is not possible to decode non-text elements such as images or graphics. Therefore, non-text elements must be accompanied by a textual description of their content.

6. Language must be specified for both the main text and sections with other languages

When using speech synthesis, it can often be problematic if the text changes language without it being specified. The speech synthesizer continues to read, for example, English or German with a Danish speech synthesizer and besides sounding completely wrong, it is also difficult for the user to guess and change the language manually. Language must therefore be specified for both the main text and sections with other languages.

7. Links must have clear destination descriptions

Readers using assistive software often use the link listings to get an overview of complicated texts. So, links that do not tell you anything about where they lead – for example, ‘read more here’ – are not feasible. Links must independently describe where they lead.

8. DRM protected titles must provide an open alternative

It is often a challenge for users of assistive technology that texts are DRM protected, because quite simply assistive software is not allowed to open the document. It is recommended that an open alternative to DRM protected titles be provided for people with reading disabilities.

9. The supply chain must be incorporated

It is important that e-text retailers and distributors are aware of accessibility and ensure that their systems – presentation of titles, purchase procedures, payment and delivery and so on – are also accessible.

10. Metadata must specify the text's content and degree of accessibility

Metadata must tell the reader what to expect from the text before reading. This can include information about the actual text or plot summaries, the author, ISBN number etc. Metadata must also include information about the text's accessibility, for example, the languages it contains and where possible, the formal guidelines it meets.