

# Accessible emails

## Introduction

E-mails are used for contacting students individually, for approaching groups of students and for marketing purposes in general. Students and prospective students who sometimes have difficulty processing information - some therefore use screen readers - sometimes have difficulty understanding the content of the e-mails. Below are a few tips that can lead to good accessibility of e-mails.

## Tips for improving accessibility

- **Accessibility check.** If you copy and paste the content of the mail into Word, you can use the accessibility check (Check > Check Accessibility).
- **Text.** Avoid walls of text. The longer the text, the harder it is to read. Break up long paragraphs into shorter ones. Give each paragraph a single focus. Use white space to distinguish paragraphs. Use a generic title for group related paragraphs. Use simple words as much as possible.
- **Font and font size.** Avoid changing the font and size in order to make parts of the text stand out. Preferably use sans serif fonts such as Helvetica, Arial, Verdana or Calibri, font size .12, line spacing 1.5.
- **Emphasis.** Use italics or bold for emphasis but use them sparingly.
- **Alignment.** Align the text on the left.
- **Lists.** Use numbering to indicate components in lists.
- **Action points.** Repeat action points at the end of the mail.
- **Images.** Use images to visualise and support text content but provide the images with alternative, descriptive text. Avoid using text in images as the only method of conveying information. Otherwise, provide a brief description of the image in the alternative text and state the presence and intent of the text.
- **Numbers.** Write numbers as numerals except when they do not represent specific facts (several hundreds). The same applies to ordinal numbers (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>).
- **Formulas.** The best way to write formulas is with MathML. If that does not work, the formulas can also be written out.
- **Colour contrast.** Make sure there is sufficient contrast between foreground and background colours. Make sure that colour is not the only means of conveying text.
- **Links.** Give links a short and descriptive link text. Mention the link once and do not repeat the link continuously.
- **HTML.** E-mails that are sent for marketing purposes are often formatted in HTML code. Recipients of those e-mails sometimes use screen readers to read the e-mail. For them it is important that the language code is added in HTML, a character set is defined and headers and paragraphs are defined in HTML.

More information:

- [Microsoft](#)
- [Accessible-email.org](#)
- [Contrast and Colour Accessibility](#)
- [W3C Math Home](#)
- [Writing out formulas](#)

Leiden University

Fenestra Disability Centre

Student centre Plexus

[fenestra@sea.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:fenestra@sea.leidenuniv.nl)

Tel: 071 527 80 25

[www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/functiebeperking](http://www.student.universiteitleiden.nl/functiebeperking)