Guidelines for Preparing Menus in Large Print

Many individuals with low vision or who are legally blind are able to read large print; some may read with prescription lenses, special magnifiers, or other technologies. So it is reasonable to conclude that they may need large print menus rather than having to ask someone to read them aloud. We hope you will want to make alternative menus available to people who are blind or visually impaired to show you are eager to attract this group as loyal customers and also because it's the right thing to do. Having equal and timely access to written information is absolutely critical for blind and sighted people alike.

Offering accessible menus, specials of the day, and wine lists to this consumer group gives you a chance to target this population with its buying power. If you publicize how low vision customers can obtain accessible information, you will expand your customer base, and these customers are sure to spread the word about a company's obvious commitment to access. People with disabilities are willing to support companies that promote accessibility.

The following are best practices and guidelines for creating large print documents to assist you in providing accessible information about your food and drink offerings for people with visual disabilities.

1. It is generally understood that the characteristics which have the greatest effect on the readability of large print documents can be ranked as follows: spacing, font size, contrast, and font style.

2. Generating large print documents for individuals who have low vision can most easily be accomplished in-house using a simple word-processor like Word. Using a copy machine to enlarge and darken the print is not the best approach. The copier's enlargement feature does not produce effective large print documents – it creates fuzzy text, which is often on oversized pages, making the document cumbersome. Instead, documents in large print need to be very clear, reformatted to increase font size and improve print contrast, with text that is easy to track visually.

3. Fonts
    a. Select a font that is plain and easily readable.
    b. For optimum readability, consider the following fonts: Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, Tahoma, Verdana, Futura Light Bolded, and Gotham Rounded.
    c. Font size should be at least 18 point, and preferably 20 point.
    d. Titles and headings should be larger than the text of the document and contain both upper and lower case letters.
    e. Bold the entire document so that the print will be dark enough to offer an additional level of contrast between the print and the paper.

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     f.   Emphasis is best achieved by simply underlining an individual word or using asterisks, dashes, or double bolding. The use of color or italics is not recommended for low-vision readers.

4. Spacing and Formatting:
   a. Use a one-column format, with the text left justified. Do not center text. Also left-justify paragraphs.
   b. Left and right margins of one inch are recommended.
   c. Set line spacing to 1.5. This provides good readability and helps reduce eye strain. Do not double-space the document.
   d. Do double space between sections and paragraphs for readability.
   e. Number pages at the top or bottom outer side of the page. Numbers should be the same font style and at least the same font size as the document text.
   f. Titles and headings should be aligned left rather than centered.

5. Horizontally connect two columns of information with leader dots: for instance,

   Roast Beef Medallions……………………$26.95.

6. Remove all non-essential graphics (boxes, decorative borders and symbols, custom bullets, etc.). Often customers with low vision find it easier to indicate their menu choices from looking at photographs of the food offerings, but make it clear that the image and the text are connected.

7. Printing
   a. To print, use 8-1/2 by 11-inch, non-glossy, off-white or light yellow/eggshell paper to minimize eye strain. White paper creates glare, and dark or bright colored paper reduces the contrast between text and paper.
   b. If printing on both sides, use heavy enough paper so letters do not bleed through the other side.
   c. Make sure the ink generates clean copy without lines or smudges.
   d. Print out and keep several large print copies of your full menu, specials of the day, and wine list on hand.
   e. Spiral-bind or staple the pages together if necessary, so they can be opened flat.

8. Make sure servers and hosts are alert to the possibility that diners may need large print menus and that they know where the menus are kept.

9. Note on your regular menu and/or at your entrance that you have large-print menus available.

10. It will be helpful to retain an electronic file of the large print version so that it can be quickly printed, e-mailed, or refined as needed.

If you do not wish to create large print menus or other documents in-house, most printers, if you are clear about what you want and use these guidelines, should be able to do what you need. Alternatively, here are two search terms that will help you find specialized printers for accessible menus: "**Large Print and Braille menus**" and "**Accessible printing Indiana.**"