

Catering for everyone

Food menus and people with a vision impairment

VISABILITY

 *Equal Opportunity Commission*
Western Australia



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Please note that this guide can be provided in alternate formats if requested.

1 Acknowledgments

These guidelines have been developed by the Equal Opportunity Commission of Western Australia, the Youth Advisory Council, the Australian Hotels Association of Western Australia and in consultation with VisAbility and the Caterers Association.

Following advice from the Youth Advisory Council that inaccessible menu formats had impacted the independent participation of youth with a vision impairment, the Equal Opportunity Commission collaborated with the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) of WA to conduct a survey about how AHAWA members formatted their menus and how they dealt with customers who could not read the menus. Feedback from the members who responded showed an interest in having access to guidelines on alternative formats.

Who is this guide aimed at?

These guidelines have been designed for the hospitality industry. They are intended to improve the accessibility of menus for customers who are blind or have a vision impairment but may also benefit customers with print disability such as dyslexia, cognitive impairment or learning difficulties for who find a standard menu difficult to read.

Accessible menus are not a special treatment, they are about providing the same information to those with a vision impairment that is available to other customers. This guide aims to provide information to restaurants and other venues about how to make their services more accessible to a diverse range of customers, which not only benefits the customers but increases the business of the venue.

2 What is vision impairment?

Vision impairment is defined as a significant limitation of visual capacity (including low vision and blindness) usually brought about by degenerative or congenital disorders, or through trauma:

According to the National Health Survey (2016), more than 453 000 Australians are blind or have vision impairment with over 50 percent of the population having at least one long term eye condition.

As people age the prevalence of eye disease increases, thus with an ageing Australian population the percentage of customers who may benefit from alternative formats is likely to increase.

3 What the law says

Under the *WA Equal Opportunity Act 1984* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Commonwealth) people with a disability have a right to access facilities, and obtain goods and services.

It is unlawful for a person to be discriminated against because of a disability, directly or indirectly. The law encourages those providing goods and services to make 'reasonable adjustments' to make their businesses more accessible to those with a disability.

4 Menus for vision impaired

People with vision impairment have different levels of vision, which may require different formats.

Options include large print menus, Braille menus, electronic menus on websites or smart devices and audio menus.

Things to consider:

- Some customers may have some vision and prefer large print or electronic options
- For those who are blind, Braille may be the easiest option as some people cannot or do not use mobile phones or tablets
- Frequency of menu changes - Braille will incur cost, especially if menus change on a regular basis
- Consider using different formats when rewriting a standard menu such as an online menu as well as a large print menu.

5 Easy to read menus

Printed Format Guidelines

Best practice guidelines for large print menus consider font size, font style, colour contrast between the text and background, and spacing. These alterations can be made and printed in-house at a low cost if you have that capability.

Font Style

Menus written in plain font styles are easier to read than stylised or ornate fonts. Characters need to be easily distinguishable with even spacing between the letters. Font styles that use serif (the tick at the end of some fonts) make it difficult to separate individual letters and make it harder for screen readers which recognise words rather than individual letters.

Fonts such as Arial, Helvetica and Verdana are easy to read and are found on most computers making it easier to alter and reprint menus when necessary.

Plain, easy to read fonts include:

Arial

Verdana

Century Gothic

Difficult to read fonts with 'serifs' such as:

Bradley Hand

Kirsten ITC

Freestyle script

Font Size

Font size needs to be large enough for those with a vision impairment to see. VisAbility recommends 18 point minimum font size on printed materials.

This is 9 point

This is 12 point

This is 14 point

This is 16 point

This is 18 point

This is 20 point

Colour and contrast

Menus are easier to read when there is:

- Good contrast between text colour and background
- Black or dark ink
- Non-glossy paper and matt laminating pouches to reduce glare
- Paper is white, off white, yellow or very pale in colour to minimise eyestrain
- Paper thick enough to prevent bleed through or single sided print
- No underlining, italicising or using colour - bold words are best for emphasis
- Clear text with no marks, lines, smudges or fuzziness
- Minimal use of hyphenation.

Spacing

Menus are easier to read when there is:

- 1.5 spacing between lines
- Double spacing between paragraphs
- Titles or headings are larger than the body of the text
- Fewer capital letters in words as this makes it difficult to distinguish between individual letters
- Left alignment
- A vertical rule between each column.

Picture and image guidelines

Place pictures and images on a separate page if possible and ensure there is an explanatory description of the image located outside and not imposed onto it.

Braille Menus

Braille menus incur a cost for a translator and printer. Although the percentage of people who are blind who read Braille is low, for some it is the most suitable format to provide.

One A4 text page usually equates to two and a half Braille pages. The initial cost is in the conversion to a master copy. This can be kept so reprint costs are minimal.

There are different types of Braille. Grade One uses raised dots to represent each individual letter whilst Grade Two has around 300 abbreviations to reduce Braille document reading time. It is recommended that Grade One is used to ensure that every Braille reader can access it.

Electronic format

An increasing number of people access menus from websites on computers, tablets or mobile phones. Electronic formats allow people with visual impairments access to large screen text, screen readers, voice or Braille outputs.

Some forms of electronic menus are easier for these devices to recognise than others, especially if assistance technology is used. It is therefore necessary to consider this when formatting your menu or website. Guidelines on accessible online print can be obtained through World Wide Web Consortium and the WCAG 2.0 guidelines.

Digital format is an easy, efficient and cost-effective way to make menus accessible. Screen readers find it easier to read Word documents or documents in HTML format rather than PDF. Plain text to allow for magnification. Keeping a master copy of the word document allows information such as pricing and specials and allows new items to be added as the menu changes.

Audio

Tablets and laptops can be used to record voice overs of menus and prices. Customers can then listen to this and it saves staff having to read out the menu. It also allows the customer to repeat options without having to rely on staff.

Text to speech apps are also available on electronic devices. These can be downloaded to the device so that the menu can be read by the app then converted to speech.

6 Vision friendly venues

Lighting

Does the venue have good lighting so that it is easier for people to read menus? Is the lighting level consistent throughout the venue? Do you have options such as dimmer switches on lighting or portable devices such as a magnifier with a light to bring out to customers who may need it?
<http://www.visibilityshop.com.au>

The table setting

Consider contrasting dinnerware and tables, such as dark plates on light tables or light plates on dark tables.

Layout

- Is there a clear path to tables without obstructions or trip hazards?
- If there are steps, are they well marked and signed?
- Do glass doors have safety signage on them?

Signage

Is the signage large and clear?

Customer Service

- Inform customers who are blind where things are positioned on the table and when you have moved something
- Make sure you speak to the person with the disability, not their carer or those accompanying them
- If your staff have name tags use plain, large print name tags
- Have staff available to read out the menus if alternative formats are not available
- Make sure there are a range of resources on disability awareness training for staff
http://www.disability.wa.gov.au/understanding-disability1/understanding-disability/accessibility/access_trainin.

Assistance Animals

By law, guide dogs and hearing dogs are allowed entry into public places.

Consider assistance animals welcome stickers at the point of entry make people aware of your inclusivity and make sure there is adequate room near the person for their guide dog to be comfortable.

<https://www.guidedogswa.com.au/learn-about-the-guide-dog-program/guide-dog-access-rights/>

7 Further information and advice

For large print menus or braille menu conversion and printing

VisAbility (Accessible Information Service)

61 Kitchener Avenue

Victoria Park

1800 484 333

<https://www.visibility.com.au/>

Vision Australia

1300 84 74 66

<http://www.visionaustralia.org>

Round Table (for print material guidelines)

<http://printdisability.org/>

For creating accessible websites

World Wide Web Consortium

<https://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php>

What the law says

Equal Opportunity Commission

Albert Facey House
469 Wellington Street
Perth WA 6000
(08) 9216 3900
www.eoc.wa.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

www.humanrights.gov.au/dda-guide-buying-goods-and-using-services

