



Autism Friendly



Aspect Autism Friendly Visual Design Guidelines

November 2024

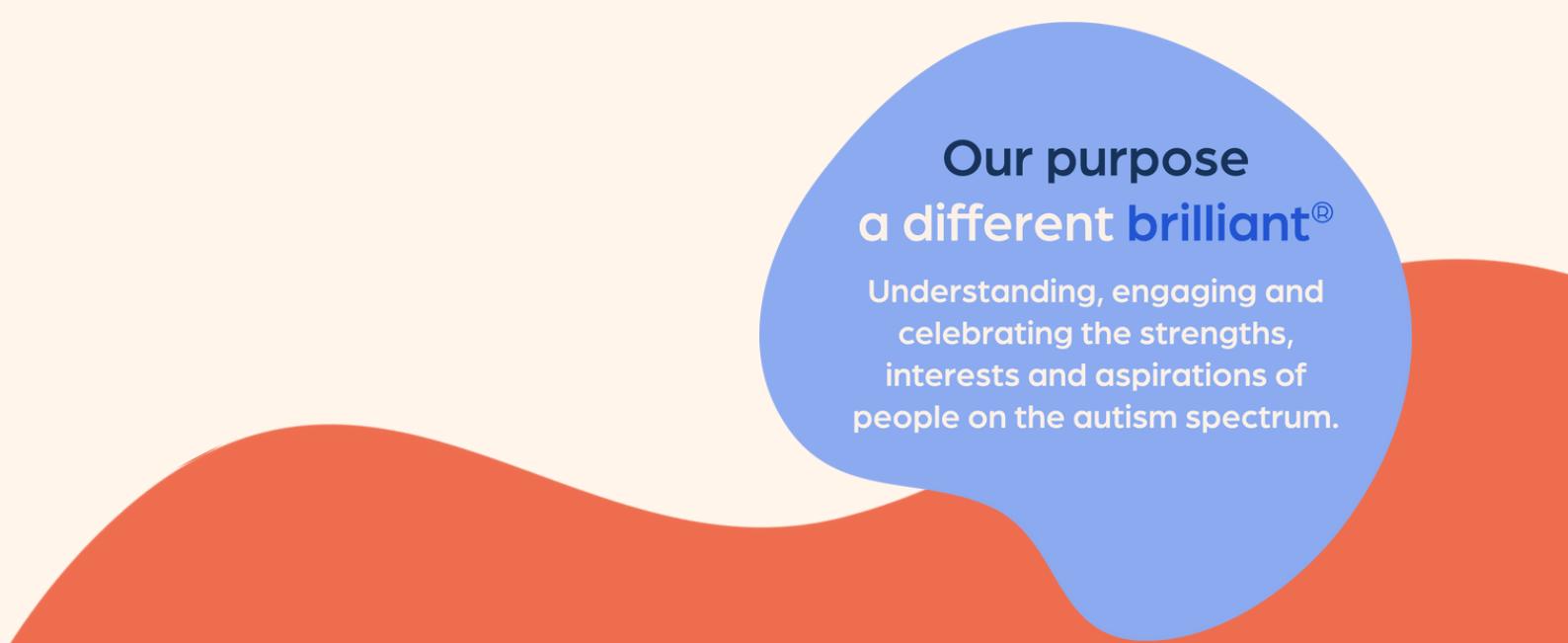
Why do we need Visual Design Guidelines?

Designing accessible resources for Autistic and neurodivergent people requires attention to several visual design principles.

These principles focus on reducing sensory overload, supporting clear communication, and providing structure. This guide outlines the key visual principles and explains why they are important.

The key principles include:

1. Simplicity and clarity
2. Use of space and organisation
3. Designing for sensory sensitivity
4. Predictability and structure
5. Use of visual supports



Our purpose
a different brilliant®
Understanding, engaging and
celebrating the strengths,
interests and aspirations of
people on the autism spectrum.

Simplicity and Clarity



Minimalistic Design

Autistic people have a strength in visual processing but can be overwhelmed by complex or cluttered visuals.

Resources should feature a minimalist design with clean, uncluttered layouts. This helps to reduce sensory overload and allows the individual to focus on key visual information.



Consistent Layout

Consistency in layout helps reduce cognitive load by allowing users to become familiar with the format, making the resource easier to navigate.



Plain Language and Icons

Using clear, simple language is essential for comprehension. Text should be concise, with key information emphasized using headings and bullet points. Icons or visuals that reinforce the meaning of the text are also beneficial for visual learners.

✓ This

HEADING

SUB HEADING

Main text *Nullam id dolor id diam vel felis bibendum. Cras non velit nec nisi aliquet porttitor. Nullam id dolor id diam vel felis bibendum. Cras non velit nec nisi aliquet porttitor.*

• Phasellus nec ex semper, ornare tellus ac, gravida orci. Donec tempor ante massa.

• Vitae malesuada urna vulputate sit amet. Cras mattis sapien tellus, consectetur malesuada felis dapibus ut.

• Praesent justo lorem, molestie non rutrum ut, auctor sit amet lorem. Sed at sem eget magna sagittis consectetur.

SED AT SEM EGEST MAGNA SAGITTIS CONSECTET.

✗ Not this

HEADING

Main text *Nullam id dolor id diam vel felis bibendum. Cras non velit nec nisi aliquet porttitor. Nullam id dolor id diam vel felis bibendum. Cras non velit nec nisi aliquet porttitor.*

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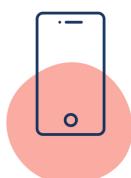
• Praesent justo lorem, molestie non rutrum ut, auctor sit amet lorem. Sed at sem eget magna sagittis consectetur.

Use of Space and Organisation



Ample White Space

Use lots of white space around text and images to help reduce visual clutter and increase readability. Text should be grouped in digestible chunks, with line breaks between bullet points and clear separation between sections.



Clear Navigation

Clear and straightforward navigation is essential. Buttons, menus, and links should be prominent and easy to find. Physical resources such as signage should use bold headings and visual markers like arrows or numbers to guide users through the material.

✓ This

A screenshot of a web browser window. The title bar is blue with standard window controls. The main content area is white and contains a heading 'HEADING' in bold black font. Below it is a large number '1' in bold black, followed by the text 'Main text Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.' and a bulleted list of four items. The text and list are well-spaced and easy to read.

✗ Not this

A screenshot of a web browser window, identical in layout to the 'This' example. However, the text and list are much smaller and less prominent, appearing as a dense block of dark grey text. The overall design lacks the clarity and readability present in the 'This' example.

Designing for Sensory Sensitivity

Low Sensory Load

Autistic individuals can be highly sensitive to visual and auditory stimuli. Resources should avoid bright, flashing, or highly saturated colours. Neutral tones and muted colours are often preferred to reduce visual distraction.



Font Selection

Clear and straightforward navigation is essential. Buttons, menus, and links should be prominent and easy to find. Physical resources should use bold headings and visual markers like arrows or numbers to guide users through the material.



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Predictability and Structure

Logical Flow

Resources should follow a predictable structure, presenting information in a clear sequence. This is important for helping Autistic individuals anticipate what will come next, reducing anxiety.



✓ This

A screenshot of a computer application window titled "VISUAL SCHEDULE". It displays a grid of six items, each consisting of a small image of a landscape with a cloud and a green hill, followed by a number (1 through 6) and a short text block below it. The text block contains placeholder text: "Sed at sem eget magna duis sagittis. Sed at sem eget magna sagittis ut tempus consectetur magna sagittis." The application has a standard window interface with title bar, menu bar, and scroll bars.

Step-by-step Sequence

Many Autistic people benefit from seeing steps in a process visually laid out (e.g., using a visual schedule). It helps them understand and manage transitions between activities or stages.



✗ Not this

A screenshot of a computer application window. At the top left, there is a heading "HEADING". Below the heading, there is a grid of six items, each consisting of a small image of a landscape with a cloud and a green hill, followed by a short text block below it. The text block contains placeholder text: "Sed at sem eget magna duis sagittis. Sed at sem eget magna sagittis ut tempus consectetur magna sagittis." The application has a standard window interface with title bar, menu bar, and scroll bars.

Photos and Images

Pictorial Representation

Incorporating images, icons, or symbols that represent actions, emotions, or instructions can be helpful. These visuals act as cues to reinforce meaning and support understanding for individuals who may struggle with text-based communication. When possible use clear pictures of real staff, uniforms and locations.



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GETTING THERE

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- 2
- 3

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Consistency in Icons

It is important to use consistent iconography throughout a resource to reduce confusion. If an icon is introduced to represent an idea or action, it should remain the same throughout the material.



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GETTING THERE

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- 2
- 3

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Looking for more information?

Please contact Aspect's Autism Friendly Team
E: autismfriendly@aspect.org.au

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