



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

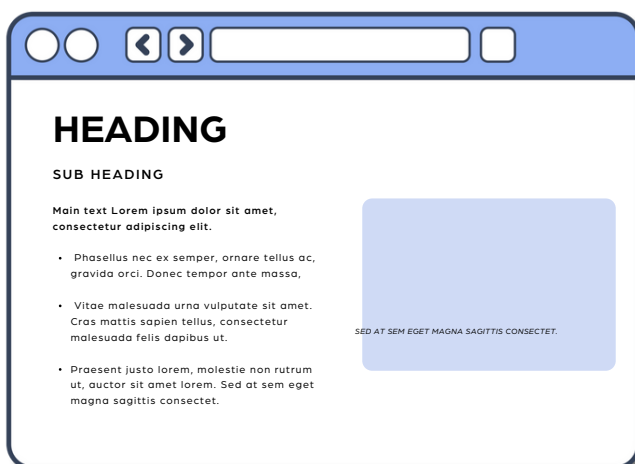
Consistency in layout helps reduce cognitive load by allowing users to become familiar with the format, making the resource easier to navigate.



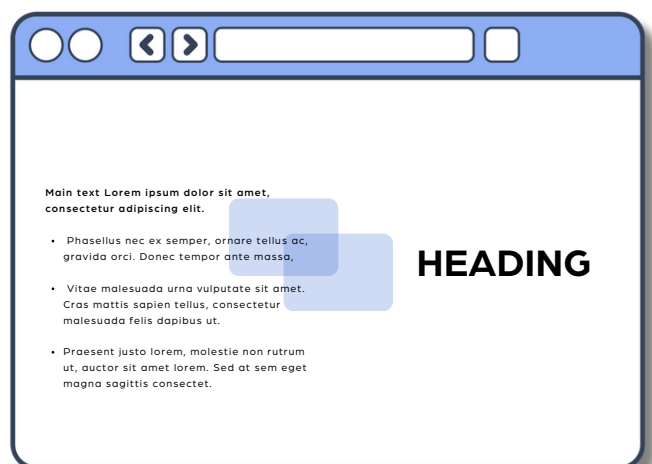
Plain Language and Icons

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.

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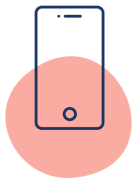


Use of Space and Organisation



Ample White Space

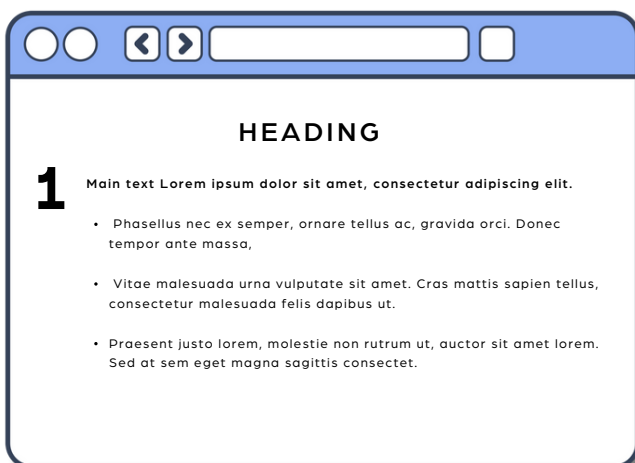
Use lots of white space around text and images to help reduce visual clutter and increase readability. Text should be grouped in digestible chunks, with line breaks between bullet points and clear separation between sections.



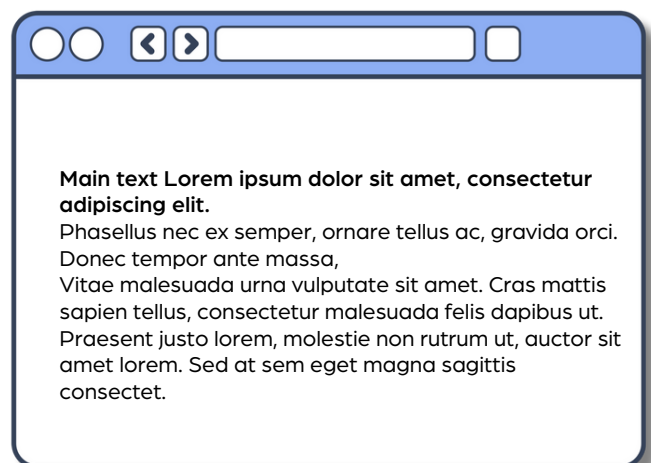
Clear Navigation

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.

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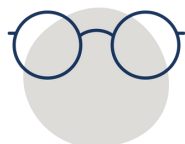
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Designing for Sensory Sensitivity

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.

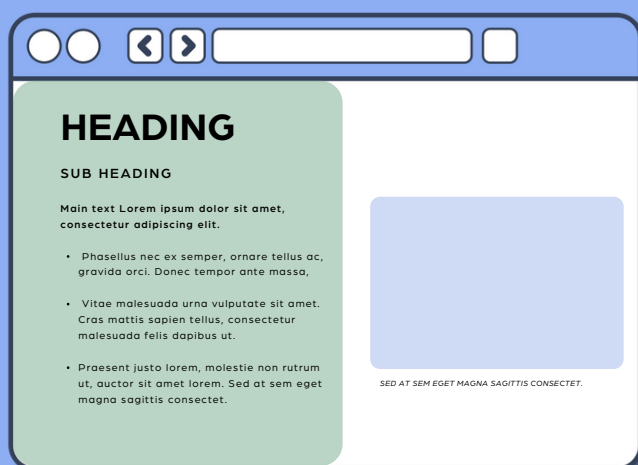


Font Selection

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.

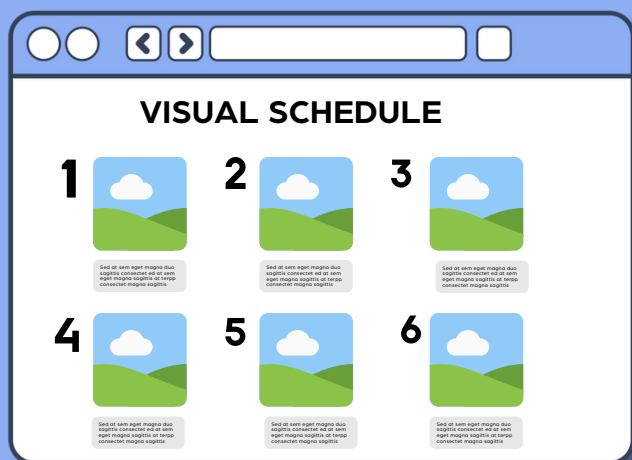


Step-by-step Sequence

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.



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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.

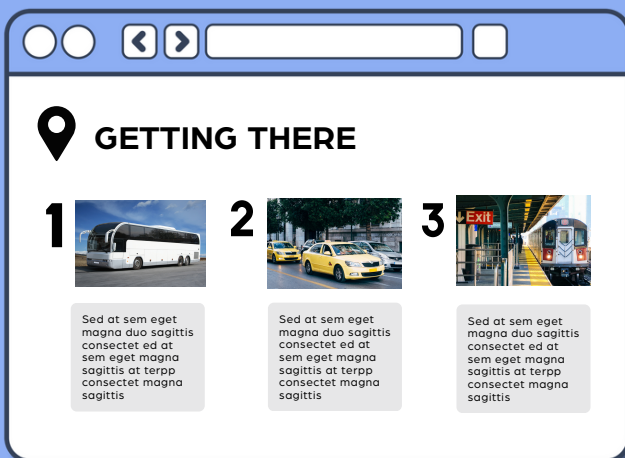


Consistency in Icons

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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Autism Friendly

Looking for more information?

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

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