Accessibility Best Practices

for Emails

## PART 1. EMAIL CONTENT

| **SUBJECT** | **DO** | **DON’T** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Bilingual message | * Write “Le **français** suit l’anglais”; * Write “The **English** follows the French”[[1]](#footnote-1); and * Perform language markup (Select English text, go to “Review” … “Language” … “Set Proofing Language”). | * Do not **alternate** one paragraph English and one paragraph French; * Avoid “Click **here** for French”; * Avoid “Cliquer **ici** pour le français”; and * Do not place English and French **side-by-side** using columns or tables. |
| Plain Language | * Use plain language; * Know your audience; * Choose straightforward vocabulary and simple structures; and * Divide your text into main points and secondary points. | * Do not confuse with oversimplified or condescending style; and * Avoid writing sentences of more than 20 words. |
| Acronyms and Abbreviations | * Spell out the first time in usage; and * Write them in uppercase. | Do not add a period or an apostrophe to acronyms. |

## PART 2. EMAIL FORMAT

| **SUBJECT** | **DO** | **DON’T** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Background | Keep the background white to ensure proper contrast. | Avoid shading or images for background. |
| Text | * Minimal 12 points size; * Choose Sans serif fonts, such as Arial, Helvetica or Verdana; * Modify paragraph style to add space; and * Use styles to structure the text (Titles, Headings, and bulleted lists). | * Avoid from using decorative or script fonts, such as Bradley or Brush; * Avoid using Full Justification; * Avoid extra spaces or returns for formatting; * Avoid large amounts of text in bold, italics, underlined or all caps; and * Avoid animated text. |
| Tables | * Use simple structures; * Create header for tables; * Identify tables with a number for referral; and * Add alternative text to the table. | Avoid merging and splitting cells to ensure proper reading order. |
| Heading Styles | * Format your text using built-in heading styles; * Use proper style order; and * Change style to better fit your needs. | * Avoid italic text; and * Avoid bold and underline of text as it simulates a hyperlink. |
| Colour | * Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background; and * Use pattern with colour for charts. | Do not convey information by colour alone. |
| Images | * Consider content and function when adding alternate text to images (no longer than two sentences); * Label images with a figure number and refer to them by their number; * Position all object “in line with text”; and * Add data table for complex images, such as charts. | * Avoid repeating text from the document in the image Alt-Text; * Do not rely solely on charts to convey meaning; * Avoid image with floating position; * Avoid referring to images by their appearances; * Avoid using “image of”, “graphic of” in the Alt-Text; and * Avoid using images of text. |
| Text Hyperlink | * Provide a descriptive text of a link as to where it leads; * Text has to be clear “out of context”. | * Avoid links such as “click here”; * Avoid the word “link to”. |
| Signature block | * Use of regular text; and * Block the signature all “French” and all “English” or vice-versa. | * Avoid vCards or Electronic Business Cards. * Do not mix French and English on the same line; and * Avoid images in signature blocks. |

REFERENCES:

[Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) - Official languages in the public service](https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/values-ethics/official-languages/public-services/bilingual-offices-facilities.html)

[TermiumPlus - Plain language](http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?i=1&info0=13&lang=eng&lettr=chapsect13?lang%3Deng)

[TermiumPlus - Acronyms](http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tcdnstyl-chap?lang=eng&lettr=chapsect1&info0=1)

[Make your Outlook email accessible to people with disabilities](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-outlook-email-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-71ce71f4-7b15-4b7a-a2e3-cf91721bbacb?ui=en-US&rs=en-US&ad=US)

[Rules for the Accessibility Checker](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/rules-for-the-accessibility-checker-651e08f2-0fc3-4e10-aaca-74b4a67101c1)

Please use the [Intake Form](http://iservice.prv/eng/imit/A11Y/intake.shtml) on iService or email us at [edsc.ti-it.a11y.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca](mailto:edsc.ti-it.a11y.esdc@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca) to request an Accessible Information and Communications Technology service.

1. French language comes first when the sender is located in the province of Quebec. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)