Structuring Accessible Learning Materials

The way you structure and present your learning materials has a significant impact on how accessible they are to your learners, whatever medium or file format you choose. Content that is structured into appropriate sub-sections and organised logically will be easier to navigate regardless of how it is accessed, but it is important to create the structure by using styles rather than merely formatting to alter the visual appearance. Further guidance is available at the links below:

[Introduction to Structuring Documents](#)

[Accessible Word 2007 Documents](#)

It is also worth considering that certain file formats are more accessible than others: for example, HTML web pages separate style from content allowing users to change the font size or background colour (far more easily than, say, a PDF document).

In providing content to learners, ensure that filenames and headings are consistent to avoid confusion and make it easy for learners to find and select the appropriate file. Providing materials online, in advance, gives learners greater opportunity to fully access materials and reduces the need for individual adjustments.

Structure

- Avoid using formatting alone to structure your document; for example, do not identify headings simply by using bold type. Instead, [use styles](#), such as "Heading 1", "Heading 2" etc. in Microsoft Word, or <h1>, <h2> etc. in web pages.
- Break up longer materials into smaller chunks where possible, and where it is not include aides to navigation such as linked tables of contents (these can be generated automatically in Microsoft Word), links and anchors in web pages or links to jump to particular slides in presentations.

- Separate style from content where possible, for example, by using styles in Microsoft Word or cascading style sheets (CSS) in web pages.
- Description of tables should be undertaken in approximately the following order:
  - Authorial intention/learning objectives – title of table
  - Type of table – chronological, quantitative
  - Major components – subjects, axes, values
  - Saliencies/Trends – major findings (unless the object is for the student to define these).

Appearance

- Ensure clear, readable fonts are used consistently: avoid gimmicky fonts and stick to those recommended for easy reading (sans serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma and Verdana).
- To make text more generally accessible, consider slightly larger font (e.g. 14pt) and use wider line spacing.
- Use left-aligned paragraph styles which leave text 'ragged' on the right, rather than justified styles which are aligned to both left and right margins. Users are more likely to skip lines or lose their place in the text if it is justified.

http://learning.cf.ac.uk/inclusive-curriculum/technology-and-accessible-learning-materials/structuring-accessible-learning-materials/