Webinar On
How to write inclusive documentation

Speaker
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Senior Technical Writer
Zapier
Pronouns: She/hers
Overview

- Definition of inclusive documentation
- Why accessibility is important?
- Tips for inclusive documentation
- Case study
- Most common web content accessibility issues
- Final thoughts
- Q&A
What’s inclusive documentation?

“Language is inclusive when it doesn’t exclude anyone based on characteristics such as gender, physical or mental disability, or cultural background.”
Why accessibility is important?

1 in 6 people have a disability
## Permanent, temporary and situational impairments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Permanent, temporary, situational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td>blind, cataracts, eye irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>hearing impairment, ear infection, in a noisy cafe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor</td>
<td>Parkinson’s disease, arm in plaster, on a moving train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>memory issues, medicine side-effects, stressful situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tips for inclusive documentation

- Screenshots
- Slang, idioms or cultural references
- Ableist, biased or gendered language
- Don’t assume on behalf of the reader
- Dates and times
- Writing for screen readers
Screenshots

- Add alternative text
- Don’t use screenshots as replacement for text
- Annotations aren’t translated, use them sparingly.
- Avoid screenshots for text-heavy content.
- Contrast ratio of at least 4:5:1 except for
  a. Large text: 3:1;
  b. Incidental: No contrast requirement
  c. Logotypes: No contrast requirement.
What to avoid

- Idioms
- Slang
- Cultural references
Don’t use

- Ableist language
- Biased language
- Gendered language
## Don’t use ableist language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t use ❌</th>
<th>Refers to</th>
<th>Consider using ✅</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>Refers to d/Deaf or hard of hearing people, people with speech-related disabilities, or people with linguistic or communication disorders or disabilities.</td>
<td>dense, ignorant, lacks understanding, impulsive, risk-taker, uninformed, silly, foolish (to replace metaphor); nonspeaking, nonverbal, person with a speech impairment, person with a cognitive disability, Deaf person, hard of hearing person (to refer to a Deaf or disabled person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crazy or Insane</td>
<td>Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.</td>
<td>wild, confusing, unpredictable, impulsive, reckless, fearless, lives on the edge, thrill-seeker, risk-taker, out of control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuts</td>
<td>Refers to people with mental or psychiatric disabilities.</td>
<td>Uninformed, reckless, impulsive, ignorant, risk-taking, risky and dangerous.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Don’t use biased language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don’t use ❌</th>
<th>Type of biased language</th>
<th>Instead ✓</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Blacklist” “Whitelist”</td>
<td>Racial bias</td>
<td>“Denylist” or “Blocklist” “Allowlist”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Sanity Check”</td>
<td>Mental health bias</td>
<td>“Quick check” or “Confidence check”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Man hours”</td>
<td>Gender bias</td>
<td>“Staff hours” or “people hours”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Don’t use gendered language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Bypass the use of gender where possible        | • ✗ The user chooses a password, and then he types it into the text box.  
|                                                | • ✓ User user chooses a password and then they type it in the text box.  |
| Use plural nouns and plural pronouns           | • ✗ Each user has his own login name and password  
|                                                | • ✓ Each user has their own login name and password  |
| Avoid pronouns where you can. Instead use “A” or “The” | • ✗ You’re writing it for him.  
|                                                | • ✓ You’re writing it for the reader.           |
Don’t assume on behalf of the reader

- Simply click [button]
- It’s super easy
- It’s not as hard as it seems.
Date and time

× Last updated on 02/03/2023

3 February 2023?
2 March 2023?

✓ Last updated on March 2, 2023

✓ Last updated on 2 March 2023

✓ Last updated on Thursday 2 March 2023
Writing for screen readers

- Use clear and concise language
- Use proper headers
- Include descriptive alt text for images
- Label links meaningfully
- Use lists properly
- Use a table makeup for data tables
- Indicate language changes
- Avoid repetitive content
Case study: The language of health

Image source: Digital NHS UK
Case study takeaways: The language of health

- Clarity in writing
- Writing directly to your users
- Choosing widely understood words
- Pitch at the right level
## Web content accessibility trends 2022

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WCAG failure type</th>
<th>% of home pages in 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low contrast text</td>
<td>83.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing alternative text for images</td>
<td>55.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty links</td>
<td>50.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing form input labels</td>
<td>46.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty buttons</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing document language</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final thoughts

• Inclusive documentation doesn’t exclude or harm others
• Inclusivity is a guiding framework for writing
• Inclusive documentation can help expand user’s comprehension of your product or service
• Keep learning and expect to be challenged
Resources

- Conscious style guideline: https://consciousstyleguide.com/
- Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) 2.1: https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/
- Plainlanguage.gov: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/about/definitions/
- WAVE browser extension: https://wave.webaim.org/extension/
- Hemingway app: https://hemingwayapp.com/
- Tips writing for screen readers: https://www.w3.org/WAI/tips/writing/
Questions

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Thank You!

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