

Designing For Seniors

LIKE IT OR NOT, OUR BODIES CHANGE AS WE GET OLDER. For many seniors, with age comes increasing farsightedness, which means difficulty in seeing objects that are close by. Farsightedness can make reading more challenging.

Senior-friendly design choices will make your typeset copy lead to communication, not frustration. Follow these guidelines to help keep reading a pleasure for your senior audience, and to enhance their understanding and absorption of your message as well.

Typestyle. Use simple, easy-to-read typefaces; avoid scripts and decorative typestyles. Keep the number of fonts per page to a minimum.

Type Size. Choose your text size generously, with extra leading to increase readability. A minimum of 12 point text on 14 points of leading is a good rule of thumb, although exact sizes may vary depending on the typeface that you choose.

Text Length. Avoid long blocks of text by breaking copy into chunks wherever possible. Consider using subheads, bulleted lists and boxes to organize content.

Emphasis. Use boldface to emphasize a word or a small group of words. Keep use of italics to a minimum; research indicates that italic type is 18 percent more difficult to read than Roman (upright) letters.

Color. Black type on a white or very light background is the most accessible for senior eyes. Avoid reverse or drop-out text, which is more difficult to read. Maintain high contrast and keep medium-value colors to a minimum.

White Space. Incorporate lots of white space to reduce eye fatigue. Add space in the margins, between text sections and around graphics.

