

Accessibility Tip Sheet

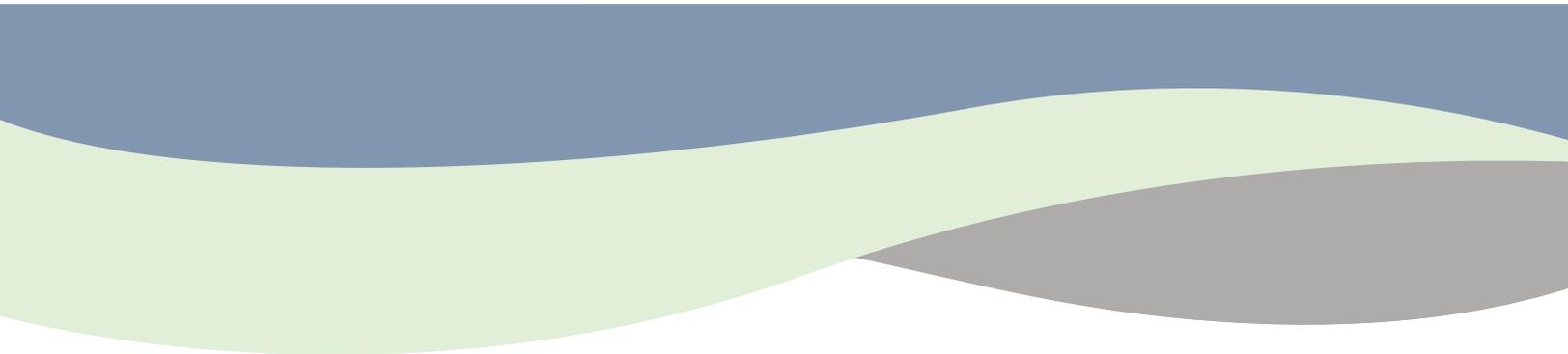
Creating accessible content is not just for individuals with disabilities. Accessible content benefits many users such as English language learners, low literacy learners, mobile device users, and users with low bandwidth. The aim of accessible content is improved access for all.

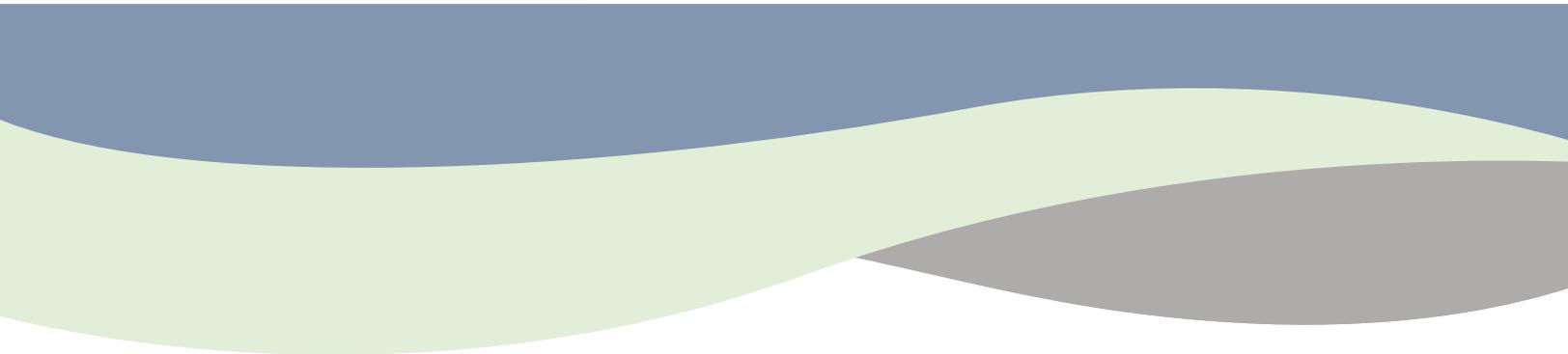
Creating accessible content can feel overwhelming at times, but it's important to remember that not everything has to be done at once. A scaffolding approach to learning and implementation can make the process more manageable. Even a few key changes can make a difference. In the beginning, the aim is not perfection, but improvement.

Note: *Microsoft and Adobe Acrobat have built-in accessibility checkers to help you.*

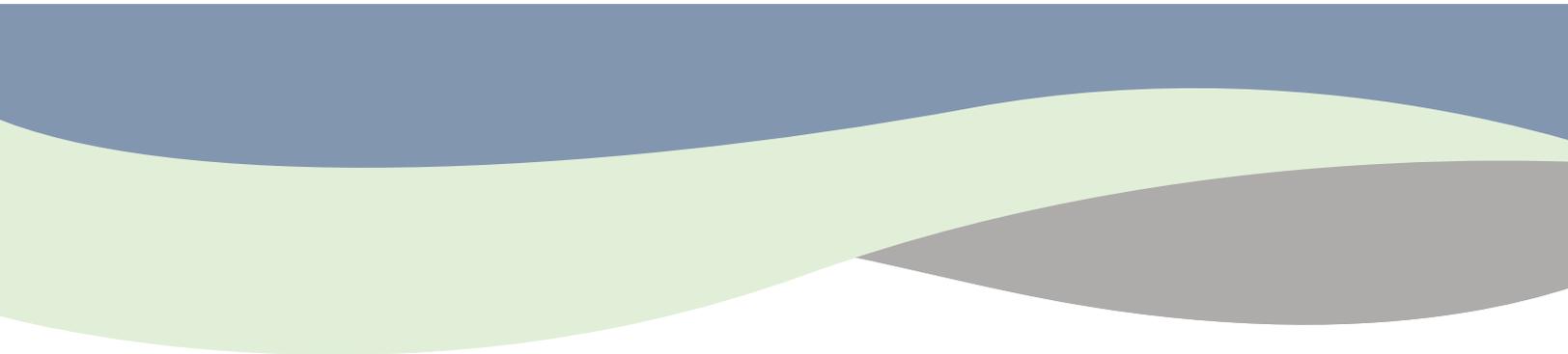
Common Barriers to Accessible Online Content

- **Cluttered or confusing online documents and website content:** Clear layout and design make it easy for users to find, access, and navigate content.
 - **Layout elements:**
 - Headings should be used to format the structure of a document or website. Using headings makes it easier for screen readers to jump from one header to another. Heading 1 (H1) is for the main topic and there should only be one H1. Subheadings should follow in order of importance. For example Heading 2 (H2) comes before Heading 3 (H3). For more information watch the [Making Headings Accessible](#) video on YouTube.
 - To add space between paragraphs use line spacing instead of hitting return. For each return entered, a screen reader will say the word "return".
 - [Identify document language](#) so that screen readers know how to read the text.

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- **Who does this help?**
 - Individuals with low vision who are using screen magnification and only see a portion of the screen at a time
 - Individuals with cognitive and learning disabilities so they can easily find and prioritize content on the page
 - Individuals with physical disabilities who have reduced dexterity
 - Individuals using a mobile device
 - Individuals using a keyboard
 - All users
 - **Tips:**
 - Create an accessible template that can be reused.
 - Save Word documents with .docx to preserve accessibility features.
 - **Images:** Screen readers cannot interpret images and slower Internet connections may have trouble loading them. Alternative text (alt text) is used to describe what the image is about so that screen readers can read that description.
 - **Who does this help?** Individuals using screen readers which can include:
 - Individual with low bandwidth
 - Individuals with vision impairments
 - Low literacy learners
 - **Tip:** Important information about the image should be included in the alt text or provided in an image summary.
 - **Tables:** Follow best practices (including using header columns and avoiding merged cells) when creating tables and check your document with an [accessibility checker](#).

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- **Who does this help?** Individuals using screen readers which can include:
 - Individual with low bandwidth
 - Individuals with vision impairments
 - Low literacy learners
 - **Tip:** Use alt text to describe table content or provide a table summary.
 - **Scanned PDFs:** Screen readers treat scanned PDFs as an image and are unable to read them.
 - **Who does this help?** Individuals using screen readers which can include:
 - Individual with low bandwidth
 - Individuals with vision impairments
 - Low literacy learners
 - **Tip:** Instead of using a scanned PDF, it is recommended to [convert a document into a PDF](#).
 - **Font:** Small or ornate text can be difficult to read. For websites and online documents, font size 12 points (pts) or higher is recommended. For presentations, font size should not be less than 18 pts. Sans serif fonts are recommended for accessibility. Arial is the most commonly used font. Other commonly used styles include Calibri, Century Gothic, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana.
 - **Who does this help?** Individuals with vision impairments
 - **Tips:**
 - Limit the number of fonts and font variations such as bold, italics, and all caps.
 - Ensure sufficient color contrast.
 - Do not rely on font color, size, or variation to convey meaning.

- **Color contrast:** A sufficient contrast ratio between text and background is needed for readability.
 - **Who does this help?**
 - Individuals with low contrast sensitivity, which is common in older people.
 - Individuals with color blindness who cannot distinguish between certain colors.
 - **Tip:** Do not rely on color contrast alone to convey meaning.
- **Lack of closed captioning:** Closed captions provide a text version of audio from video, animation, webstream, or other recordings.
 - **Who does this help?**
 - Individuals with hearing impairments
 - Individuals with cognitive and learning disabilities who need to see and hear the content to better understand it
 - English language learners
 - Individuals experiencing environmental factors such as being in a library or on a busy bus
- **Lengthy, “alphabet soup” web addresses (URLs) or vague hyperlinks:** Ideally, add hyperlinks to descriptive sentences in the page or document and avoid listing full web addresses (URLs) on their own. Hyperlink text should be clear, unique, and meaningful out of context.
 - **Who does this help?** Individuals using screen readers
 - **Tips:**
 - Avoid “click here” or “read more,” which provide no meaningful information. An example of meaningful text is: Learn more about [website accessibility](#) on the World Wide Web Consortium website.

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- Avoid raw URLs such as <https://valrc.org/index.html>. Screen readers will read out every letter in the URL.
 - Where URLs are included, shorten them (e.g., [Bitly](#) or [TinyURL](#)).

Many simple changes to improve accessibility (such as adding alt text to an image or increasing the font size of text) can be easily addressed within the tool (such as MS Word or Facebook) originally used to create or post the resource. Additional information can be found on the [Accessibility and Inclusion](#) section of the VALRC website.