



## A Write Checklist



# Document layout

This checklist covers the key aspects of document layout that make information easy to scan, read, and absorb. Layout is often the last thing writers think about, but it's the first thing readers notice. First impressions matter.

## How to use the checklist

- Use this checklist as you create your document (print, slide, or online content):
  - before, to help you set up the document with the ideal spacing, styles, and colours
  - during, to maintain consistency as you create your document
  - after, to assess your document for impact, readability, and clarity.
- Adapt the checklist to your own context. You might want your people to use specific colours or fonts, so add these details to the checklist. You might also come up with unique layouts that are particular to your brand, so use this checklist to ensure your documents are professional, consistent, and on brand.
- Use the acronym **CARP** to help you remember the key aspects of this checklist.
  - C** for Contrast
  - A** for Alignment
  - R** for Repetition
  - P** for ProximityThen you just need to remember the one additional thing: **Density**.

We adapted the CARP elements from *The Non-Designer's Design Book* by Robin Williams, which we wholeheartedly recommend. We've found the advice in this book invaluable over many years. You will too!

# The Write Checklist for Document Layout



## Contrast

1. Fonts are easy to read in print or on screen
2. Headings stand out clearly from the body text, and from each other
3. White space makes the document feel open and reader-friendly — ideally with as much white space as text
4. Bold, italics, and capitals in body text show emphasis, but limit or avoid them if you can
5. Colours have a strong contrast between text and background, especially when text is in white or light colours

## Alignment

6. Text aligns to the left whenever possible, with a ragged-right margin
7. Visual and text elements are aligned on the page vertically and horizontally to maintain clean and consistent lines
8. Indented text is used minimally to help readers see structure or hierarchy

## Repetition

9. Elements are repeated to create unity and cohesion — for example, the same font for the same type of information, consistent colours, and icons to signal similar types of information

## Proximity

10. Page margins are generous — at least 2.5cm in print documents
11. Headings link visually to the text they relate to with more space above them than below
12. Related content is grouped together and spacing makes the relationship obvious
13. Line spacing is adequate and keeps related content close together

## Density

14. Lines across the print page mostly contain no more than 15 words, fewer for webpages
15. Paragraphs mostly contain 6 lines or fewer