# Guidelines for creating an accessible template

Every Word document is based on a template. The default template is usually called “Normal” or “Blank”. A template contains instructions on how the document will look when Styles are used to create Headings, Bullet List etc. The use of Styles is essential in producing accessible documents.

If you use a stand-alone computer, you can modify your default template to meet accessibility guidelines. This will mean that every time you click on “New/ Blank or Normal Document” in Word you will know that the document you create will be accessible – **providing you use “Styles” to create Headings, Bullet Lists etc.**

It is helpful to remove Styles you are unlikely to use such as “Emphasis”, “Intense Quote” from the Styles Gallery to make the important styles more prominent. This will make it easier to apply them routinely.

A quick way to change your default template is by clicking:

* “Set as Default” when you make choices about the whole document, and
* “New Documents Based on this Template” when you modify styles.

(See our step-by-step guide to creating an accessible template)

In order to create an accessible template for everyone in your organisation to use, i.e. a “house style”, you will need to work with technical staff to set this up on the network. It is a good idea to make this template “read only” so it cannot be changed by users. You will also need to train staff members to apply styles routinely.

You can also design accessible templates for specific purposes and save them as templates (.dotx) for future use. To use these templates, click on “File”/ “New”/ “Personal” (2013) or “Office Button”/ ”New”/ “My Templates” (2007/2010) and open the required template as a document. This document will save as .docx.

## SAIF’s Recommendations

These are SAIF’s choices for a basic accessible template.

### Whole Document

* Font - Arial (Body) and Arial (Headings)
* Paragraph Spacing - 12 points after paragraph. Setting the default paragraph spacing means that you will not need to use the Return Key to create space between paragraphs.
* Line Spacing – Multiple 1.15
* Alignment - Left

### Specific Styles

* Normal/Body Text - Size 14 Regular
* Heading 1 - Size 18 Bold, 3 points before, 12 points after
* Heading 2 - Size 16 Bold, 3 points before, 12 points after
* Heading 3 - Size 14 Bold, 3 points before, 12 points after
* Header and Footer - Size 12 Regular
* List Bullet - No indentation with a special Hanging by 0.5 – no space between paragraphs of same type
* List Number - No indentation with special Hanging by 0.8 – no space between paragraphs of same type

### Use of Colour

These recommendations are based on using a black typeface. However, you may wish to introduce colour into your template, for example in Headings and Bullet Points to make them stand out. This will not affect the electronic accessibility of a document but may affect its visual accessibility. You need to check that there is good contrast between text and background:

* on screen
* printed in colour and greyscale
* photocopied in colour and black and white.