



# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Guide

A starter guide to creating more mindful work in the creative industry by Pono Design Studio.

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# About this guide

This document is a starting point for how we can be thoughtful about our visual and written communication choices.

It is a working collaboration that we will continuously update as we grow with the evolving world around us.

# Why this matters

The work we do is a reflection of how we view the world. As creatives, we have a platform to demonstrate and an opportunity to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion through the visual and written choices we make. We want to show our audiences that DE&I matters and that we are committed to going above and beyond to represent all people accurately and respectfully.

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# Defining DE&I

To start us all on the same page, here's how we see these broad terms in context to this guide.

## **Diversity**

Being mindful and celebratory of all aspects of human differences.

## **Equity**

Enabling equal outcomes while recognizing different circumstances.

## **Inclusion**

Creating environments that are accessible for all, not just some.

# Guiding principles

DE&I plays an important role in design, content, and building user experiences.

**Be as inclusive of different people, environments, and experiences** in your projects as possible. More representation gives the opportunity for more people to engage and identify with your work.

**Make choices with integrity.** Do not exaggerate or stereotype any particular individual, group, culture, belief, etc.

Being inclusive and diverse should oftentimes be **subtle**; it does not need to be the focus of your project.

**Think beyond** your own idea of what makes up the majority. Do as much as possible to consider and include representation and accommodations for all people.

## Be inclusive of all forms of diversity:\*

Race	Gender expression
Ethnicity	Sexual orientation
Disabilities	Marital status
Age	Parental/family status
Appearance such as:	Family structure
Body size	Religion/spirituality
Tattoos	Language
Piercings	Geographic location
Clothing	Nation of origin
Hair type/style	Military/veteran status
Freckles, birthmarks, scarring, skin conditions	Socioeconomic status
	Education
	Lifestyle

\*Source: Inspired by [Marilyn Loden's Diversity Wheel](#)

# Sourcing visuals

Be deliberate in your stock asset searches.

Visuals with multiple forms of diversity may be challenging to find, but searching for them is an act of inclusion in itself.

A pregnant woman of color, in the office, in a leadership role

A transgender man of color with a disability (ex: a vision impairment signified by the use of a screen reader) in a professional setting

Two men of different ethnicities, with young kids, at home with artifacts in the room that represents their unique backgrounds and cultures

The more we use these search terms, the more we demonstrate what we want provided to us.

A woman of color with Down syndrome working from home, in a coffee shop, or at a small business

A woman of color who is a veteran working on her laptop with her elderly parent (indicating she is their caregiver)

An older, heavysset man of color engaging on a work Zoom call

The images on this page are from [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com) (free), [Pexels.com](https://pexels.com) (free), [Nappy.co](https://nappy.co) (free), [Tonl.co](https://tonl.co), and [iStock.com](https://iStock.com).





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# Visual asset creation

Every new asset is an opportunity for inclusion.

## When planning a photo or video shoot:

Having a purposeful, upfront dialog around creating assets that are diverse and inclusive will help direct your team on everything from choosing the talent to picking the location to coordinating the wardrobe and props.

It is important to choose the right partners who will understand your vision and accommodate your project, as well as represent each person/group/situation appropriately.

## Implementation

When implementing visuals into a project, be mindful of:

**Color correction** and how it affects a person's skin

**Lighting** and how it affects a person's skin

**Retouching** a person's face or body—is it a temporary "imperfection" such as a blemish, or is it something that is a part of who they are?

**Cropping** with consideration of what makes the person/photo diverse

Visuals may be edited for design purposes, but we must strive to do so mindfully, without harming the integrity of the person in the photo and/or the group they represent.

# Written information

Always strive to use language that is inclusive, respectful, and empowering.

## Best practices:

**Do not assume gender or sexuality.** If a person's desired pronoun is unknown, use (they/them/their) as gender-neutral pronouns.

Avoid generalization about race and be careful to write in a way that does **not assume white is the default**. For example, if you note the race of one individual, you would do the same for all others mentioned.

Be mindful of certain words, phrases, and descriptions that may be **outdated and offensive**. Example: In real estate, use "primary bedroom" instead of "master bedroom."

**Research current, preferred terms** before making assumptions about what is "politically correct." Example: "Disabled" is the preferred term, not "differently abled."

## Writing resources:

Inclusive writing is ever-changing and evolving. Use these helpful resources to guide you:

**GLAAD Media Reference Guide (LGBTQ community)**  
[glaad.org/reference](https://www.glaad.org/reference)

**NCDJ Disability Language Style Guide (disabilities)**  
[ncdj.org/style-guide](https://www.ncdj.org/style-guide)

**The Diversity Style Guide (general)**  
[diversitystyleguide.com](https://www.diversitystyleguide.com)

**Conscious Style Guide (general)**  
[consciousstyleguide.com](https://www.consciousstyleguide.com)

# Accessibility matters

1 billion (15%) of the world's population experience some form of disability.\*

19.9 million (8.2%) have difficulty lifting or grasping. This could, for example, impact their use of a mouse or keyboard.\*

8.1 million (3.3%) have a vision impairment. They might rely on a screen magnifier or a screen reader, or might have a form of color blindness.\*

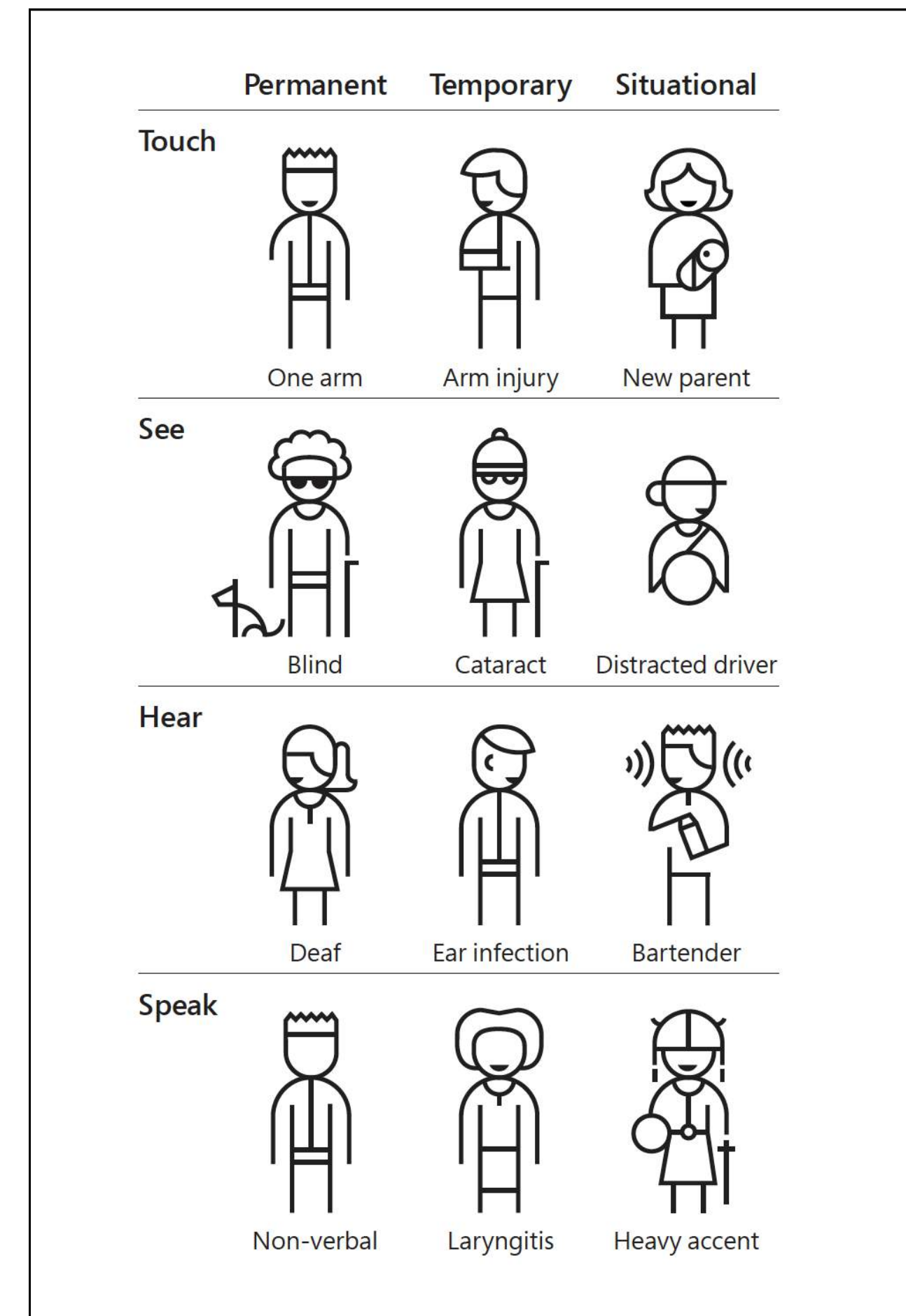
7.6 million (3.1%) have a hearing impairment. They might rely on transcripts and/or captions for audio and video media.\*

61 million (26% or 1 in 4) adults in the United States experience some form of disability.\*\*

\* Source: [worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org) Last updated: Apr 14, 2022

\*\* Source: [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov) Last updated: Oct 28, 2022

It's not only people with permanent disabilities who may need or use accessible options and features.



Source: Graphic from the [Microsoft "Inclusive 101" Toolkit](#)

# Accessible creative

Creating accessible materials ensures that as many people as possible, including those with disabilities, can more easily access information.

## Text size & contrast

Have enough visual difference between the background and content. Text size, color, and background color should pass WCAG 2.0/2.1 requirements. Using a [contrast checker tool](#) can help you make accessible color choices for web and digital projects.

## Communicating with color

Do not rely on color alone to differentiate important information. Rule of thumb: Use a minimum of two ways to distinguish information. Example: Color and descriptive labels. More on [color accessibility](#).

## Multimedia

Do not rely solely on graphics to communicate important information. Include sufficient labeling, descriptions, speaker notes, voiceover, transcripts, etc., wherever possible.

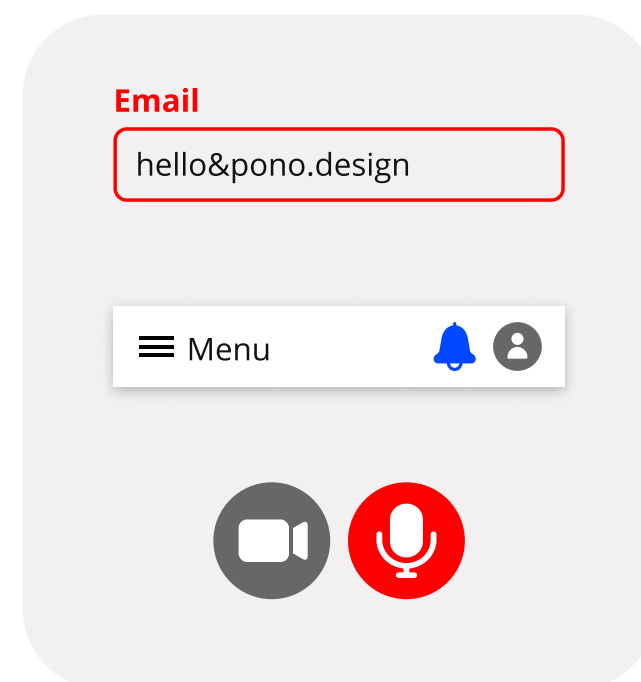
## Stay up-to-date

As different platforms improve their accessibility, the creative industry must stay in the know. For example, [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) all allow custom alt text on the visuals you post. [Apple](#) has many accessibility features built into their devices to consider when designing apps. And companies like [accessiBe](#) offer products you can add to your website to help you comply with accessibility standards.

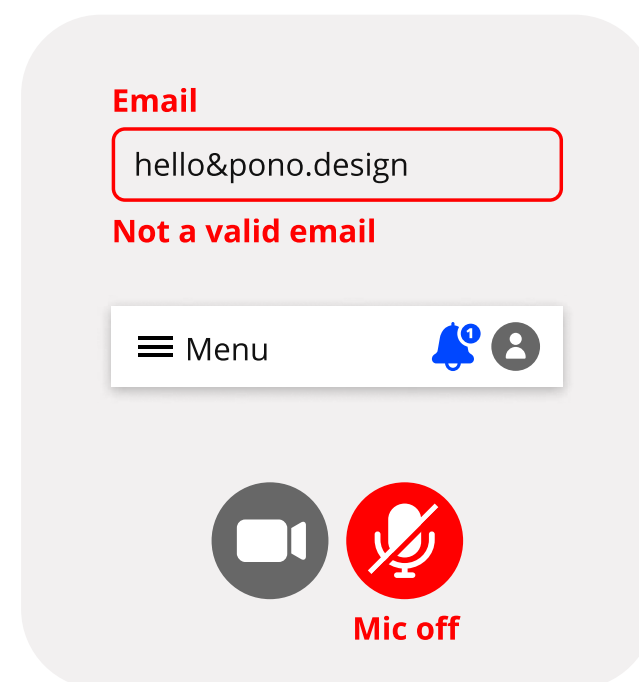
## Do not rely on color alone

Use shapes, icons, and text to distinguish information.

Less accessible:

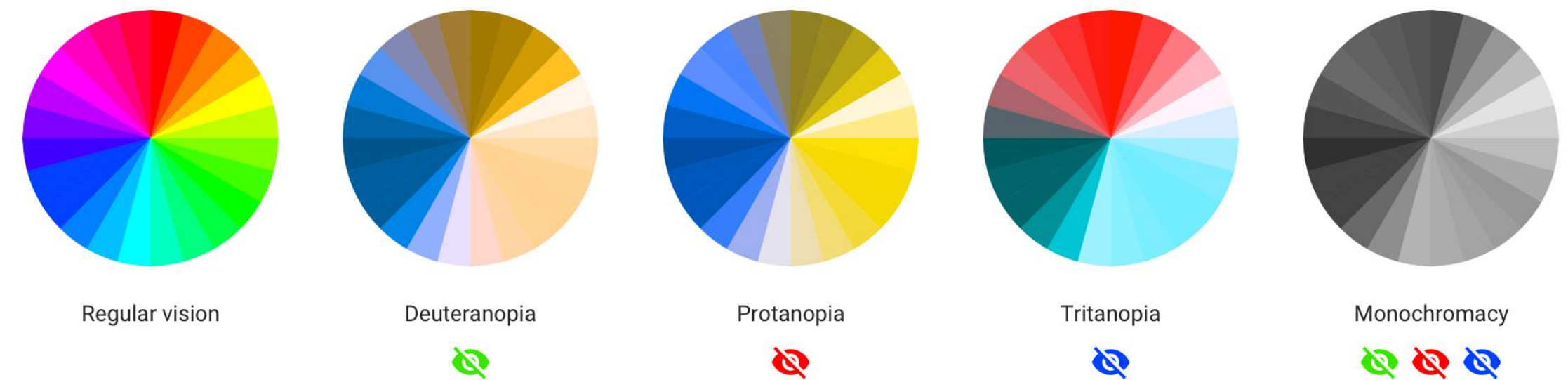


More accessible:



## Understanding color blindness

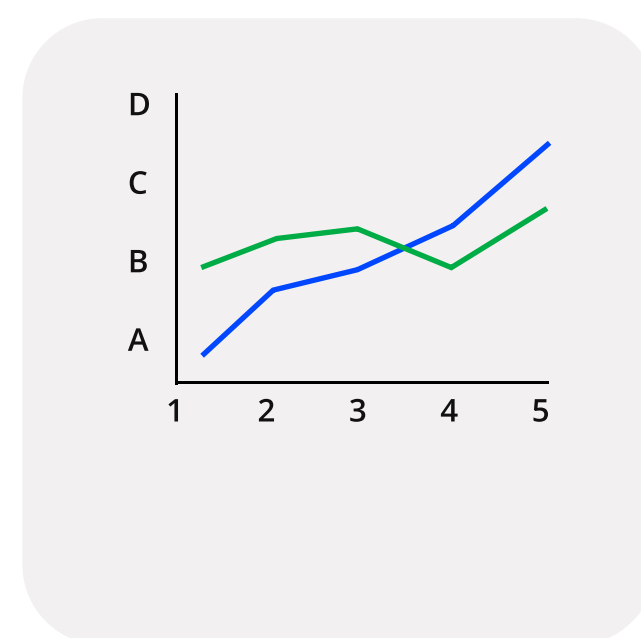
Try using a [color blindness simulator](#) to visualize how it looks to be colorblind.



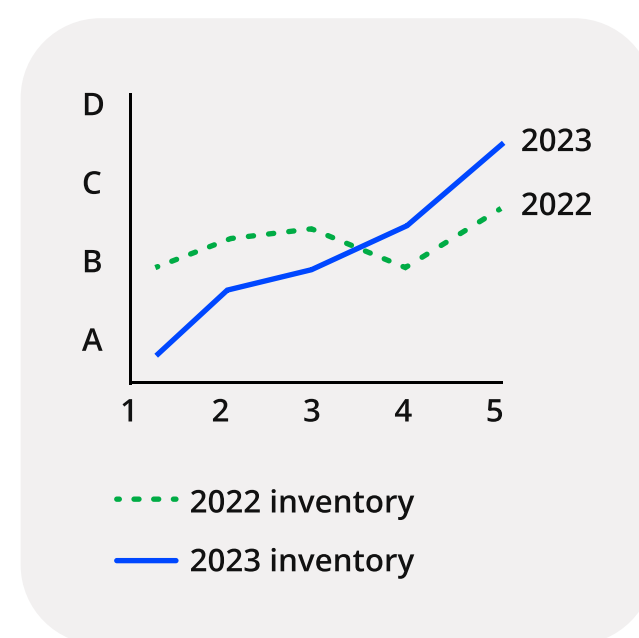
Source: *Visuals from UX Collective by designer Ivan Tuchkov*

Charts, graphs, and infographics may use different textures and efficient labeling to distinguish information.

Less accessible:

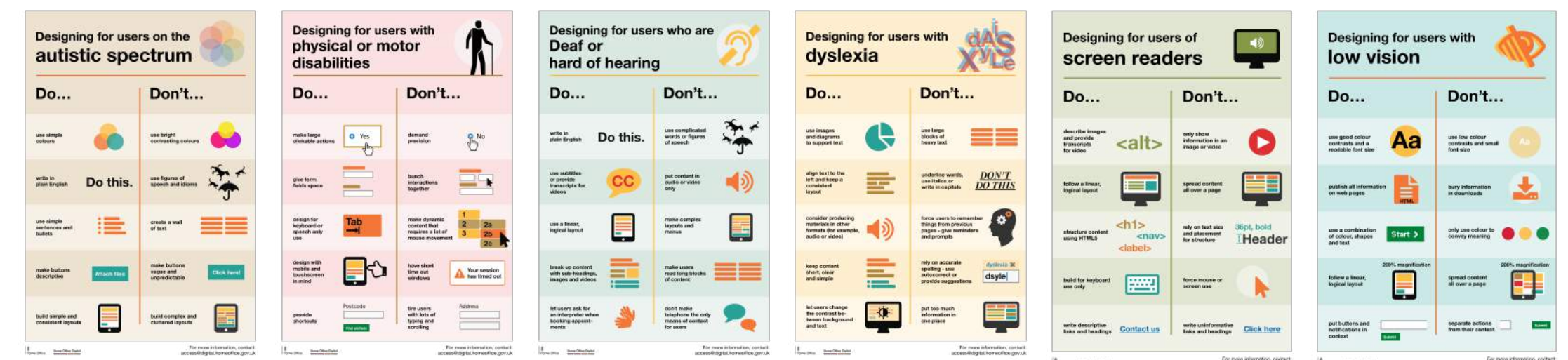


More accessible:



## Create, learn, & share

There are many tools and resources that help designers and writers create more accessible work. The [posters below](#) were created by an interaction designer “as a way of approaching accessibility from a design perspective.” Sharing what we find and creating resources for others is a great way to support the accessibility and creative community!



Source: *Accessibility posters designed by Karwai Pun for gov.uk*

# Credits & resources

## Credits

[Inclusive design](#) (Microsoft)

[Do's and don'ts on designing for accessibility](#) (Gov.UK)

[Web accessibility checker](#) (WebAIM)

[Improving the color accessibility for color-blind users](#)  
(Smashing Magazine)

Marilyn Loden's [Diversity Wheel](#)

[Disability inclusion](#) (The World Bank)

[Disability impacts us all](#) (CDC)

[Accessible Color in UI Design](#)

Stock photography websites:

[Pexels](#) (free), [Unsplash](#) (free), [Nappy](#) (free), [Tonl](#), [iStock](#)

## Credits

[Media Reference Guide](#) (GLAAD)

[NCDJ Disability Language Style Guide](#)

[The Diversity Style Guide](#)

[Conscious Style Guide](#)

## Additional resources & mentions

[AccessiBe](#) - Accessibility tool for websites

[Coblis color blindness simulator](#)

[Apple accessibility](#)

[Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#) descriptive text

# About Pono

We are Pono Design Studio, a group of designers and creatives who left the traditional agency world to build a company around the values and principles we care about. To “live pono” is to live with balance and to consciously and morally do right by yourself, by others, and by the world.

Our goal is to keep DE&I at the forefront of our minds. We are eager students continuing to learn, evolve, and grow through our research and lived experiences while sharing what we find. We encourage open discussions on creating work that considers all instead of most, and we understand and appreciate that views may differ.

The world is continuously changing and we will update this guide over time to keep it a relevant and helpful resource for our team and colleagues in the creative community.

Thoughts? Questions? We're here.

[hello@pono.design](mailto:hello@pono.design)

[pono.design](https://pono.design)