



To: Faculty & Staff
From: OIT & Accessible Technology Initiative
Date: May 15th, 2018
RE: Email for Everyone: Creating Accessible Email Messages (Revised)

Why Create Accessible Email?

We send email because we have a message that needs to be delivered, but not everyone can access information using vision alone. Email messages need to be readable for individuals with vision impairment/blindness, and anyone who relies on a screen reader to access the information.

What Are the Common Issues?

A common issue is sending messages that are designed as a flyer and pasted into the email message as an image. Screen readers cannot read the text in an image. If your message is designed and saved as an image, provide alternative text beneath the image that is readable by Outlook's screen reader feature.

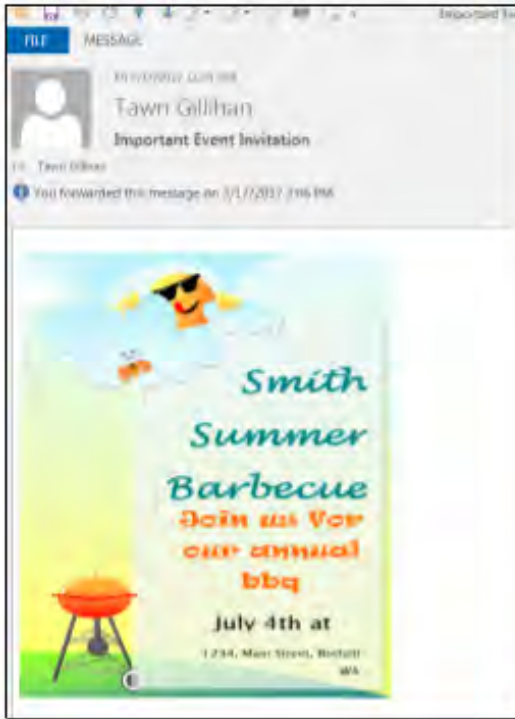
Steps for Creating Accessible Email Messages

1. Choose HTML format rather than plain text or Rich Text.
2. Choose easy to read fonts such as Arial or Verdana, and a point-size with a 10-point minimum (12 is best).
3. Use good color contrast such as black on white and do not convey information using color alone. Avoid background images.
4. Images must have Alt Text and text wrapping should be In Line With Text.
5. If the message is an image, such as a picture of a flyer, add alternative text that conveys the same information.
6. Always provide contact information with each message.
7. Use meaningful hyperlink text that briefly describes the link destination.
8. All attachments should be accessible.

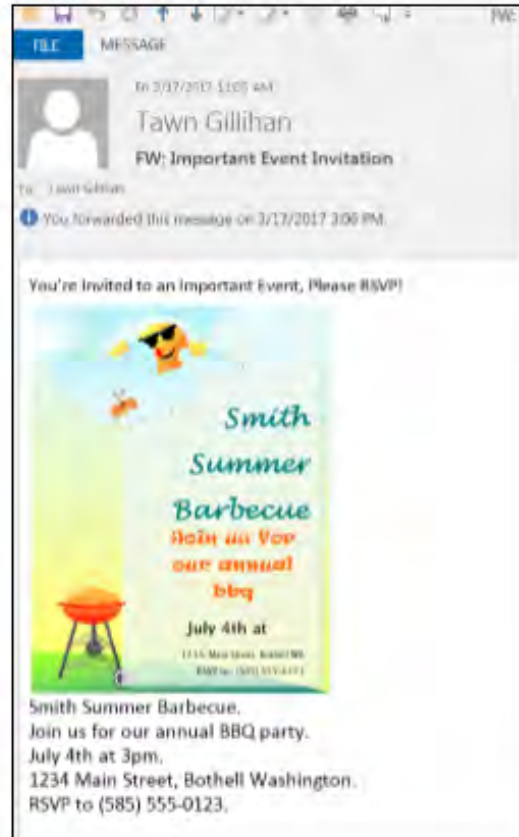


Examples of Inaccessible and Accessible Email Messages

This email message is an image only and cannot be read by a screen reader.



This email message includes alternative text beneath the image. This message can be read by a screen reader.

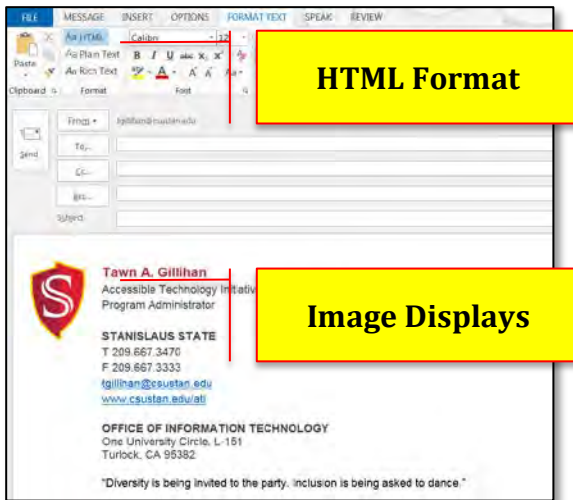




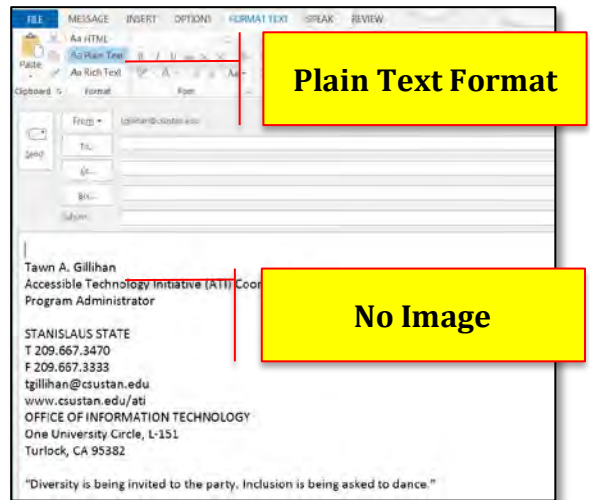
When sending email messages for distribution to the campus, please be sure to include readable text in the body of the message.

It is important that we design our messages with our audience in mind, including those who cannot rely on vision alone to access your message. If the message is sent in HTML format, images will display along with plain text. If the message is formatted as plain text, images will not display and formatted text becomes plain text. Ensure your email is readable in the plain text format.

Example of HTML Format:



Example of Plain Text Format:



Email and File Size Limitations

Another issue when creating accessible email is file size. The total size of the message body, **plus attachments**, must be less than 250 KB. Unfortunately, the server will not send a notice if it rejects a message because of size. This means that an email sent to faculty and staff must be accessible and not exceed the size limit. In practice, what typically happens is that a flyer is created and an image of the flyer is sent as the only message content (inaccessible).

As we have seen, screen readers or users with vision impairment cannot read an image alone. Include a text version of the message in the email body. If the image and text exceed the file size, remove the image and send a text only message. This ensures the largest number of users can read your message.



Distribution

There is a limitation on the number of times a message can be distributed. For example, if you have an event on the 15th, and you send an announcement on the 1st and the 8th, you will not be able to send a reminder on the 15th.

Further Information

For more information, or for assistance with creating accessible email, please contact Tawn Gillihan at (209) 667-3470 or tgillihan@csustan.edu.

- [Stanislaus State Accessibility Site](#)
- [Infographic on Creating Accessible Emails](#)
- [Video Tutorial for Creating Accessible Email](#)