Accessible Email with Constant Contact

It's required by federal law that all digital communications must be accessible to a diverse audience no matter their disability or impairment.

Most of these best practices apply to all your digital media. This guide shows you how it specifically applies to Constant Contact.

Use these high-impact best practices:

1. Give your content a logical reading order from left to right and top to bottom.
2. Use readable fonts with appropriate line spacing.
3. Use good color contrast (i.e., black text on a white background).
4. Describe images using alt text.
5. Use meaningful link text.
6. Create structure with headers.
7. Keep emails concise and use formatting to break up text.

*Note: All of the templates for creating emails are accessible.

1. Maintain a Logical Reading Order

Establish a logical order and maintain a hierarchy of your email content. Irrespective of their screen size, your subscribers should be able to view the content of your email in a logical reading order.

This is especially helpful for people with cognitive disabilities and subscribers using screen readers. A logical order will also help users to pull out the key information quicker by allowing them to scan the hierarchy you've set up by organizing your content.

2. Use Readable Fonts with Appropriate Line Spacing

- Make sure your font size is at least 14 or 16 pts for the body text.
- Don't use script-style fonts for the body of your email.
- Use sans serif fonts such as Arial. They are easier to read on the web.
- Avoid condensed fonts and lines.
- Use center-aligned text sparingly. Left-justified text is easier to read than center-aligned because the jagged left edge creates problems for people with dyslexia and other print disabilities.
- Use appropriate line spacing.

Figures 1 and 2 show the same content. The first one has poor color contrast and inadequate spacing between letters and lines. The second example has a good heading, good color contrast, and good spacing between letters and lines.

Which would you rather read?

As a result, poor status information can lead, indirectly, to impaired project performance, both in terms of the process and the ultimate outcome of the pro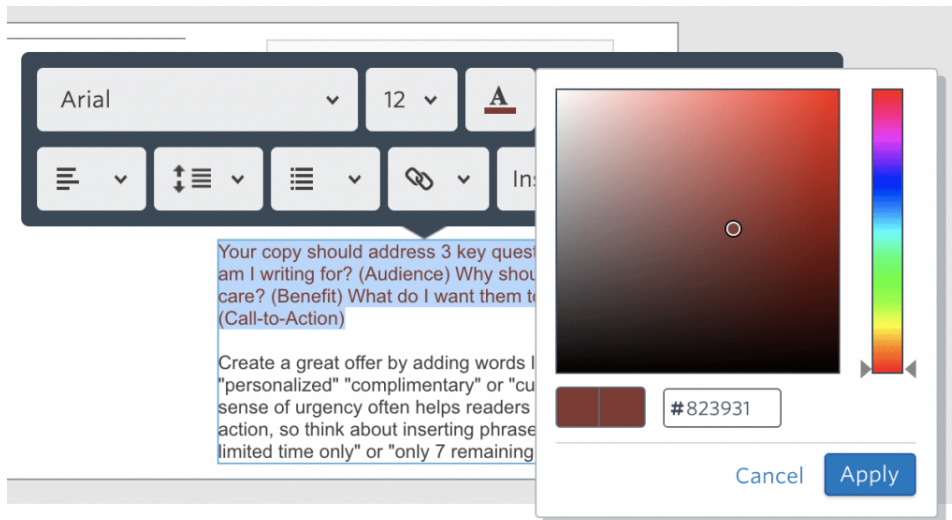ject itself. As a result, poor status information can lead, indirectly, to impaired project performance, both in terms of the process and the ultimate outcome of the project itself.

Figure 1: Not Readable

Project Performance

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Figure 2: Readable

3. Use Good Color Contrast

When changing the font color or adding graphics to your email, it is important to make sure the font color contrasts well with the background.

A recent design trend is to use a light gray font on white backgrounds, but it doesn't provide enough contrast for those with visual impairments. If you want people to read your content, don't make it hard to see. Using black font on a white background is the best option.
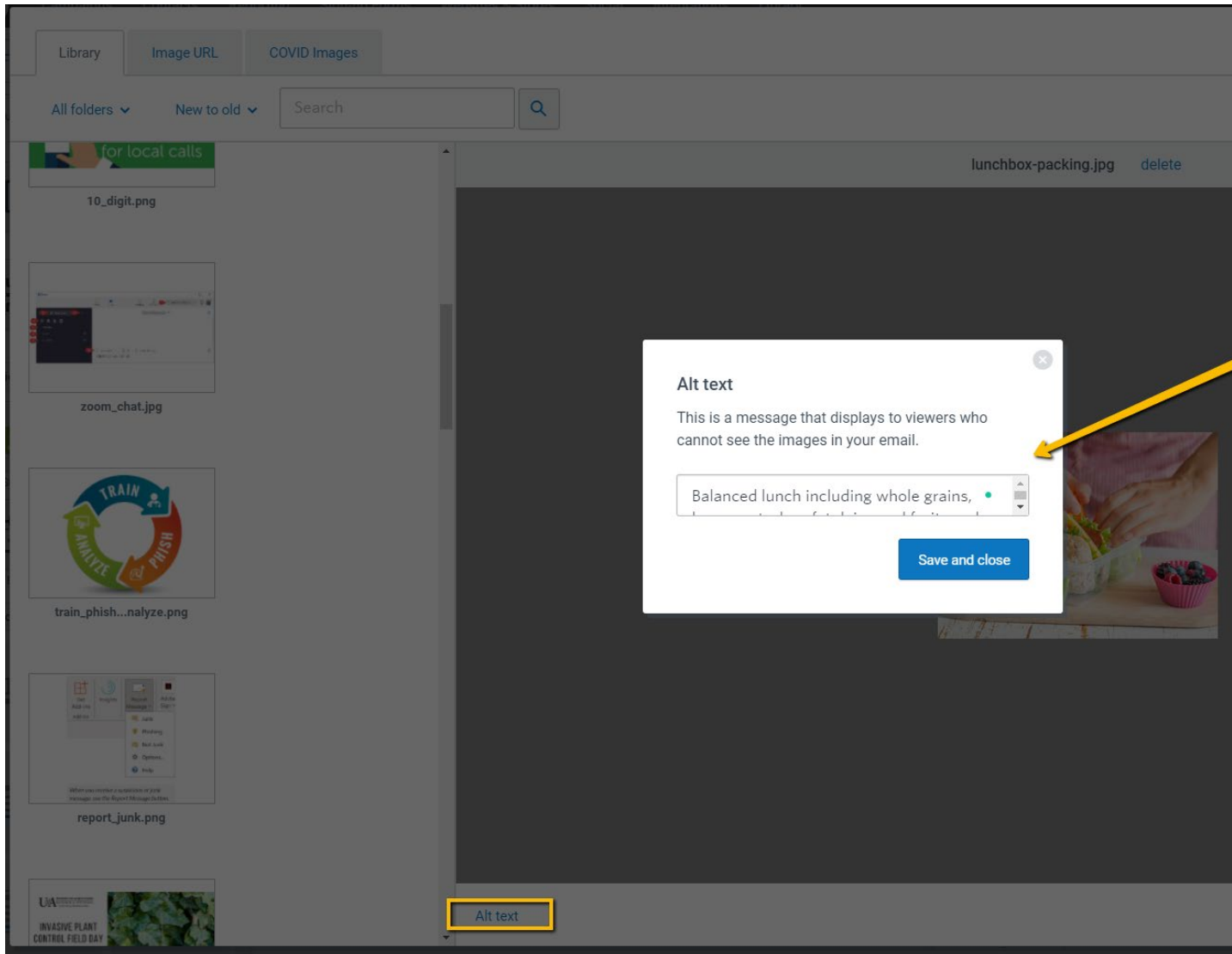

In Constant Contact, you can change the text color by highlighting any portion of text and selecting the **Edit font color** button. From here, you will be able to select and adjust the color.

Web accessibility guidelines state that the contrast ratio between any text and the background color should be at least 4.5:1. This is also true for adjacent colors in graphics.

But how do you know if the color you choose meets contrast standards?

If you want to use something other than black font on a white background, we recommend using a free accessibility checker tool like WAVE or the Color Contrast Analyzer. Both tools allow you to quickly check the contrast of any color and adjust it until it meets standards.
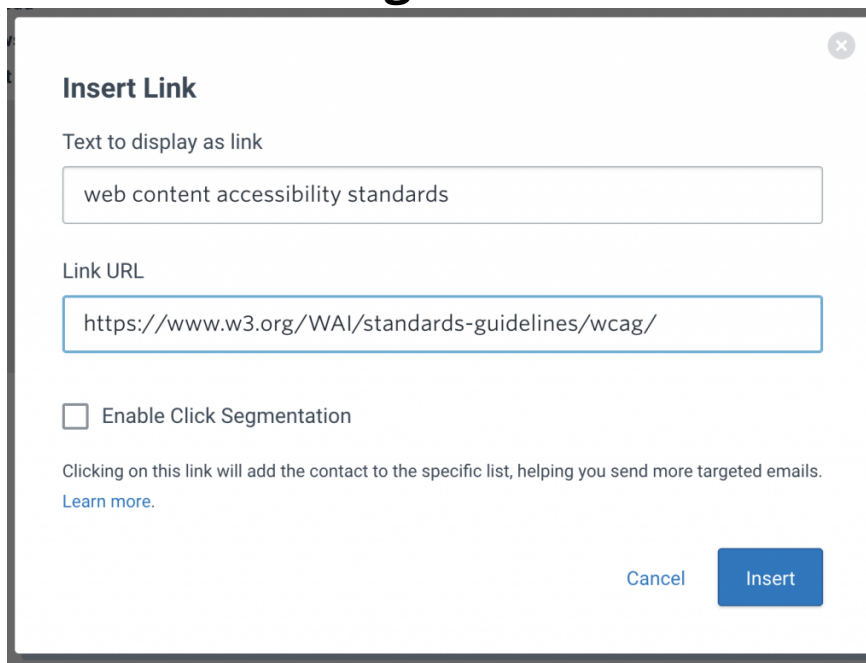
4. Use Image Descriptions (Alt Text)

Adding text descriptions to any graphics included in your emails is important not only for people who can't see or have low vision but also as a backup in case the image breaks or does not load properly for some users.

When uploading an image into Constant Contact, the alt text is by default the filename, which is not ideal. You can add alt text to an image while you are editing an email, or you can add alt text by editing an image in the library tab. Need help finding the alt text option? See Constant Contact's guide for a reference.

You will want to change the alt text to a concise description of the image. Be sure to include any information conveyed in the image that is relevant to the user. Visit our image accessibility webpage for tips on writing alt text.

5. Use Meaningful Link Text

When possible, you should replace all URLs with descriptive link text (also known as a hyperlink). For example, when you link to an article, the link should be the name of the article and not the website address or a vague term like "click here" or "read more." Visit our link accessibility webpage for more information.
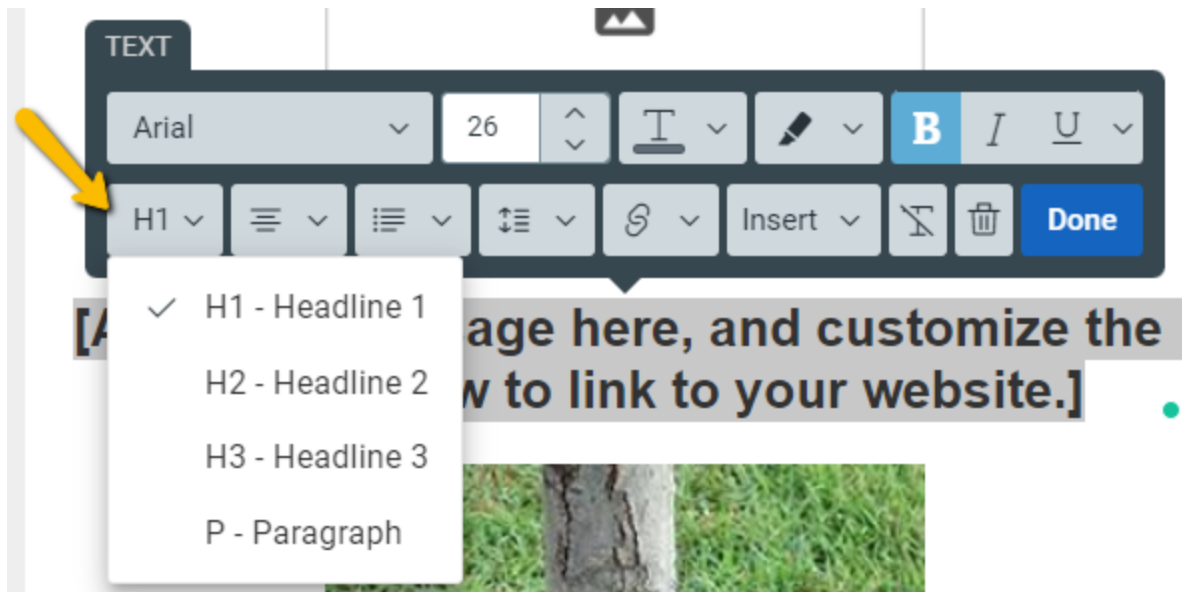
In Constant Contact, you can easily add the link text to replace the URL when you select the **Insert Link** button.

6. Use Heading Structures

Break up content with meaningful headings to make your email easy to scan. Constant Contact allows you to easily set header styles (H1, H2, H3, etc.), to identify a heading programmatically, which provides vital navigation for screen reader users with no usable vision. Once your header text is added, you will highlight the text

and use the text options pop-up to add header structure. (See the screenshot below for a reference.)

Sometimes it is referred to as header styles, header levels, or header tags.

The big take-aways with header levels are to use them in a logical order without skipping levels and to only use one H1 header. Visit our [webpage on header levels](#) to learn more.

You will still want to ensure your visual headers are formatted by enlarging and/or bolding text to create good visual headings, making it easier for sighted users to scan the content and find what's most relevant to them.

7. Keep Emails Short and Use Formatting to Chunk Information

Keep your email as simple and short as possible, use enough white space to chunk information for easy scanning, and never use tables to align or format your content.

Long chunks of text can be overwhelming for users, not to mention it's hard to scan. It is important to give proper spacing to the text using the **spacers** in the **build tab**. This will add white space and make it easy to read.

You can also use headers and dividers to break up your content. People who read your newsletter must be able to scan it and digest the information in manageable chunks. Remember, people don't spend much time in an email, so keep it concise!

In Conclusion

You are required to incorporate these best practices in your Constant Contact communications to meet accessibility standards. So, take the time to organize your content logically, use good color contrast, describe images, write meaningful link text, add headings, and use a readable font with good line spacing.

This will allow your message to be more effective and reach a wider audience—and you will be adhering to The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's policy. Remember, we all benefit from these best practices, and they are not optional. Luckily, Constant Contact makes it easy to achieve this!

Note: This guide is frequently updated to reflect changes to the software. Go to uada.edu/email-accessibility to download the latest guide. Visit uada.edu/accessibility to view all our resources.