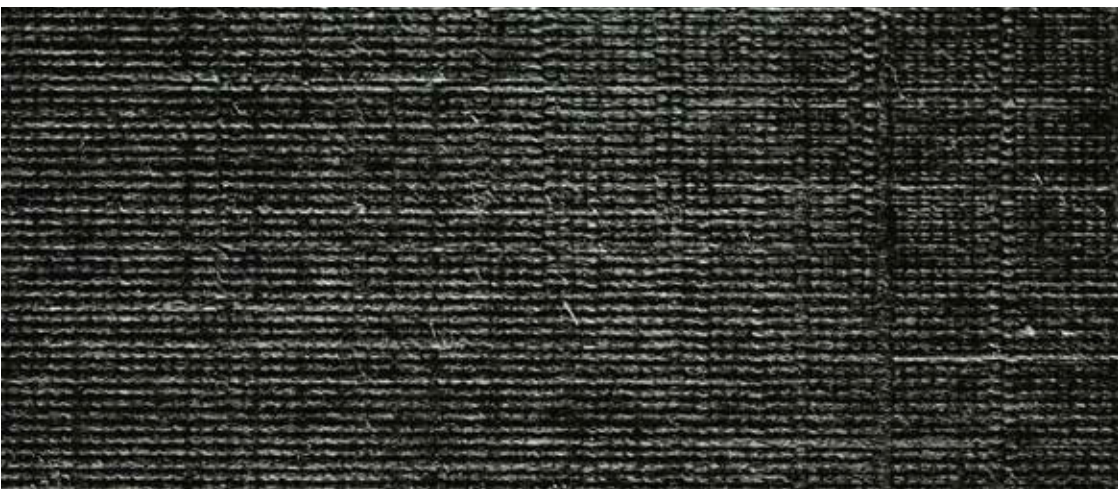


MAKE ACCESSIBLE TTRPGs!

A WORKING SET OF SUGGESTED PRACTICES FOR
DESIGNING & PRODUCING GAMES TOGETHER
FOR EVERYBODY



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IMAGE
DESCRIPTION:
PREVIOUS PAGE

*Details of a tightly
woven fabric in
shades of gray.*

IMAGE
DESCRIPTION:

*Wavy black surface
of water.*

GOALS

The primary audience for this guide is probably Tabletop Roleplaying Game designers, artists, and coordinators of crowdfunding projects, whether they are a one-person shop or they are managing it for or with others. As such, it is broken down into sections that represent roughly common project types, and formats commonly found in developing and crowd funding game projects, from initial steps through delivery. The guide considers both print and digital resources, approaches to make the products, site, and ephemera as accessible as possible, and suggestions for organizing to increase accessibility.

WHAT THIS IS NOT

This is not a guide to representation, content suggestions, or language. Nor is it a guide or checklist for sensitivity or inclusion. Such services can be found elsewhere, and we can point readers in those directions as needed.

DISABILITIES & ACCESSIBILITY

While there are multiple ways to ‘unpack’ the term, disability can generally be viewed in two major ways, through a medical or social model, with the medical model viewing disability as a physical or mental condition, change, or ‘impairment’ that substantially limits one or more major daily life activities. The social model views disability more from a personal or functional perspective, where accessibility can be seen as a social, physical, or programmatic adjustment that eliminates or mitigates the limit(s) that an individual encounters in their life.

This project generally takes a social model perspective and looks at the various kinds of barriers that exist as people support the creation of games through crowdfunding and then go on to play those games.

We also take a longer view; making something accessible is often easier to see as an ongoing process rather than a checklist which can be ‘finished’. An attitude of ‘we can make this thing we made work for you’ often goes a lot farther than ‘building a ramp’ and calling it done. Within a project, program, company, or organization, we refer to this as ‘building a culture of accessibility’.

No two disabilities are the same and the limits we experience as people with disabilities (PWD) differ dramatically. For many PWD what constitutes a limitation, or obstacle, depends on the constellation of functions that are ‘impaired’. In many cases, a person with a disability may bump up against accessibility issues in multiple areas, or in different areas in different ways. There are many ways to distinguish accessibility areas and disability, and we find this list helpful, though not comprehensive. Keep in mind that each is a general term with infinite nuance and for many PWD, they may be combined or mixed in a multitude of ways.

[SOME] DISABILITY CATEGORIES

- ◇ Visual Impairment
- ◇ Hearing Impairment
- ◇ Speech Impairment
- ◇ Coordination Disabilities
- ◇ Mobility Impairment
- ◇ Intellectual Disability
- ◇ Developmental Disability
- ◇ Emotional Psychological Disorders
- ◇ Learning Disabilities
- ◇ Life Threatening Diseases
- ◇ Chronic Illness & Conditions
- ◇ Missing Limbs

Given the range of potential accessibility issues in this list, and the range of ideas in game design, putting together a ‘completely’ accessible game is a daunting task. For some projects some of these disabilities do not present an obstacle, but for others, consideration of one or more categories may be an important part of the design and project journey. Some may prompt a different approach, while others may require an alternative version, while still others might need a new or different design solution altogether.

ORGANIZING FOR ACCESSIBILITY

- ◇ Consider the accessibility desired and the resources available. Some levels of accessibility may be out of reach for now. Be up front with your audience, team, and partners.
- ◇ Organize your team and workflow with the accessibility goals clearly expressed.
- ◇ Investigate the accessibility features and standards on the platform{s} you are using, from raising funds for the project to social media and marketing, to the production modes. Ask about back-end support when you initiate a project if you do not see features or if you are unsure how to set them up.
- ◇ Set expectations, standards, and style sheets or guides for all contributors, collaborators, and staff/partners. The earlier and clearer you set these, the less time and resources you will need later.
- ◇ Enter the accessibility discussion knowing you may need to alter course or adjust parameters and structures as you go.

IMAGE DESCRIPTION: LEFT PAGE

Blank notebook open to a two-page spread. The binding is off-center to the left of the page. The pages are white. Background is black.

CAMPAIGN PAGES & STRUCTURE

TEXT OF CAMPAIGN PAGE

- ◇ Should be clear, edited and tested against a screen reader to ensure terms are being pronounced and important information is not being skipped.
- ◇ Provide a clear link to a text only page that contains the full text and any image descriptions.

IMAGES ON CAMPAIGN PAGE

- ◇ Add, code or upload all images with alt text .

VIDEO

- ◇ Enable closed captioning on videos.
- ◇ Enable and provide audio description of images on videos.
- ◇ Avoid flashing lights, or provide a content warning at the front of the video.

TIERS

- ◇ Consider avoiding structuring tiers where more inaccessible material is sandwiched between more accessible add-ons (e.g. Tier A has a print version, Tier B has print and an audio asset, and Tier C has the print version, the audio asset and an additional print asset. A supporter who cannot access the audio asset but can access print, is in a position where they must acquire something they cannot use. Could the audio asset be an add-on instead?)
- ◇ The same holds for Art prints, posters and other visual assets that may be inaccessible to some supporters.

COMMUNITY COPIES

- ◇ People with disabilities make far less than those without, on average, almost without exception around the world. In addition to the wide variety of other social benefits of community copies, consider ways to build these into your campaign. This could include an add-on for a community copy, rounding up purchase into a pool to support community copies, or just a straight up donation button.



PRINT PRODUCTS (BOOKS, ZINES, PAMPHLETS ETC.) AND PDF VERSIONS

PRINT

- ◇ Evaluate color palette and font for legibility and visual accessibility. There are a number of good contrast check tools out there. Many are free!

IMAGES AND ALT TEXT

- ◇ As images are produced for the work, simultaneously produce alt-text for the eventual digital formats.
- ◇ Building alt-text inclusion into your workflow is more efficient than saving them all up to the end.
- ◇ Make sure the expectations for including alt-text are clear for all team members, contributors, and collaborators.
- ◇ There are also good alt text articles and guides available, but in general, the text should convey both image and meaning in the context of your project.

ALTERNATE VERSIONS (TEXT, PDF, ETC.)

- ◇ There are several automated ways to produce different formats, and many designers are conversant with one format or another. If you do not have the skills to generate an effective accessible digital version, ask a design community!
- ◇ There is no ‘magic’ format! Some formats work better for some and other formats work better for others. PDFs are the most common, with epub behind them. Text versions are perhaps the most flexible, but do not capture the design ‘feel’ or look, and so are less used as part of product development.
- ◇ The primary advantage for any of these is use on a digital device, which can facilitate speech to text, magnification, or other means of easing access.



CARDS AND PRINTED GAMEABLE ASSETS

- ◇ Most of the suggestions for Print Assets hold true here.
- ◇ If the cards are really an add-on (i.e. not essential for play) or are represented in other ways in the text or mechanics, then the creation of an alternate format may not be as high a priority.
- ◇ If the cards are part of a key mechanic, then consider the following
 - Make a roster of cards available in a digital format.
 - It is possible to make a web application that simulates card mechanics. This may or may not be within the skills or budget of the team and should be informed by Web accessibility standards (WCAG).

- If you are using a deck of standard playing or tarot cards, consider offering a commercially available braille or large print version or point customers to where they could access the tools you suggest.

STAND ALONE ART ASSETS

- ◇ Many campaigns and games offer stand-alone art prints, either separate versions of cover art or similar, often in a different format (larger size, different printing process, color vs B&W etc.)
- ◇ If the print is provided in a digital format elsewhere, then state this. Make sure that the advertising or marketing image has adequate alt text.
- ◇ If the print is not provided in a digital format elsewhere, state this and provide a robust description of the piece either in the marketing material or in the alt text in the marketing image.

STANDALONE RECORDED OR AUDIO ASSETS

- ◇ If there are lyrics, provide those in a text format that accompanies the recording
- ◇ Provide audio assets in multiple formats. If you are going for a retro cassette as an add-on, consider offering a digital version as well. As with many accessibility options, a digital version of an audio piece can be approached in a variety of ways, depending on a person's preferences.
- ◇ Provide resources for visualizers and haptic feedback technologies. These are often easier to interface with using digital music.

**IMAGE
DESCRIPTION:
PREVIOUS PAGE**

*Light gray
background with
faded black grid
lines.*

**IMAGE
DESCRIPTION:
BACK COVER**

*Details of a tightly
woven fabric in
shades of gray.*

UNIQUE PLAYING AIDS & COMPONENTS

- ◇ Game Design is a very dynamic space, and innovative techniques, components, and mechanics are constantly emerging. With each exciting development, it is useful to return to the broad types of access issues and disabilities at the start of the zine!
- ◇ Run through the various parts of your game and think about how people might interact with each, where potential access issues might pop up, and what kinds of accommodations or supports you could offer to broaden the number of people who can play and enjoy your game.
- ◇ This area starts to reach into the production of stickers, coasters, cut outs, cardboard figures, meeples, bespoke dice, chits and tokens, and many other tools, devices, decorations, and swag. As mentioned above, run these past the various access points and consider alternate formats when you start to bump into obstacles

THE LOST BAY STUDIO

thelostbaystudio.com



dnwml.org

SO, YOU ARE DESIGNING A GAME,

an adventure, a module, putting it up for sale, launching a crowdfunding campaign, and moving it towards publication and distribution AND you want to make your game as broadly available as possible. **This Zine gives you practical tools to grow the circle of people who can access and play your game.**

Starting with organizing your team (or yourself!), and touching on multiple aspects of design, production, and marketing, we hope that the contents will give you something to think about, consider, and enact in the spaces and communities you inhabit and play in.

This Zine is a collaboration between Lost Bay Studio and Disability Network Washtenaw Monroe Livingston (a disability advocacy organization in the Detroit metropolitan area). Lost Bay Studio included this publication as a stretch goal in their 2024 Kickstarter campaign after accessibility discussions around their design process and products and highlighted it as an essential part of the campaign conversation.

The contents were researched and put together by Will Purves and Zine design was done by Claire Moore. Editorial support was provided by Iko. Thanks go to numerous voices in the global disability and gaming communities. We would not be where we are without you!

Finally, this Zine and the creators do not have all the answers. We encourage people who make and play games to start accessibility discussions in their own workplaces, projects, hobbies, communities, and lives. Please reach out to join the various conversation

