

Large Print Materials in the Classroom: Creation and Sourcing Guide

When a student in your classroom is squinting at a worksheet or holding a book inches from their face, you want to help right now. Large print is often the first accommodation that comes to mind, and for good reason. It is one of the most common and effective supports for students with low vision.

Here is what surprises many teachers: large print is not just text made bigger. The right font, spacing, contrast, and size all matter, and the correct size is different for every student. The good news is that you do not have to figure it out alone, and you do not have to create every page yourself.

This guide covers what counts as large print, how to format it for real readability, how to make your own materials, and where to find ready-made large print textbooks, including free sources most teachers do not know about.

What Actually Counts as Large Print?

Standard large print starts at 18-point type. For classroom use, 20 to 24 point is common, and some students need 28 point or larger.

But a number on its own is not the answer. The right size comes from the student's functional vision assessment, usually completed with a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI). One student may read comfortably at 18 point, while a classmate with the same diagnosis needs 28 point or more.

The takeaway: ask what size this student needs, not what size large print is. Individual assessment drives every decision that follows.

How to Format Large Print for Readability

Enlarging the font is only half the job. Poor formatting can make even large text hard to track. The California Department of Education and the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) both publish detailed large print standards, and they agree on the essentials below.

Formatting Element	Recommendation
Font	Use a clean sans-serif such as Arial, Verdana, or APHont, a typeface APH designed specifically for readers with low vision. Avoid italic, decorative, or condensed fonts.
Size	18-point minimum; 20 to 24 point is common. The student's assessment sets the exact size.
Weight	Bold for headings, regular weight for body text. Bolding everything reduces contrast.
Line spacing	1.5 to double spacing so lines do not crowd together.
Margins	At least 1 inch to keep text away from the binding and edges.

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Formatting Element	Recommendation
Alignment	Left-aligned. Avoid justified text, which creates uneven gaps that make tracking harder.
Layout	A single column. Multi-column layouts are difficult to follow.
Contrast	Black text on a white or cream background gives the highest contrast. Avoid colored text on colored backgrounds.
Background	Skip watermarks, background images, and decorative borders behind text.
Paper	Print on matte paper, not glossy, to reduce glare.

Keep these choices consistent across every handout. When formatting is predictable, students spend their energy reading instead of decoding the page.

How to Create Large Print Materials Yourself

For everyday worksheets and handouts, you can make effective large print in minutes.

- **Reformat in Word or Google Docs.** This is the preferred method. Increase the font size, apply the formatting above, and reflow the text so it stays clean. You keep full control over spacing, alignment, and contrast.
- **Be cautious with copier enlargement.** Blowing up a page on the copier is quick, but it enlarges blurry images along with text, cuts off margins, and often forces awkward page sizes. Use it only as a short-term fix.
- **Watch out for PDFs.** A scanned PDF may zoom, but the text will not reflow, so students have to scroll side to side to read one line. When possible, rebuild the document from the original file instead of enlarging a locked PDF.
- **Give math and science extra care.** Equations, diagrams, and charts do not simply scale up. Rebuild them with clear spacing, high-contrast labels, and simplified visuals so the meaning survives enlargement.
- **Build reusable templates.** Save a large print template with your fonts, spacing, and margins already set. New materials then take a fraction of the time.

Where to Find Large Print Textbooks and Materials

You do not have to produce full textbooks by hand. Several organizations create accessible materials, and many are free for eligible students.

- **American Printing House for the Blind (APH).** APH produces large print textbooks and offers materials at no cost to students who are registered through the federal quota program. If your student qualifies, this is often the best place to start.
- **Bookshare.** Bookshare is a large digital library where students can adjust font size, spacing, and contrast on their own device. Membership is free for qualifying students with a documented reading barrier.
- **Learning Ally.** Learning Ally provides human-narrated audiobooks, a helpful supplement when a student's eyes tire during long reading sessions.

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- **State instructional resource centers.** Most states run a center that lends accessible textbooks and materials to schools. Your TVI or special education coordinator can connect you.
- **Publisher accommodations.** Some publishers offer large print editions of their titles on request. Ask early, since these can take time to produce.

One planning note: ready-made large print materials often need lead time. Request textbooks well before the unit begins rather than the week you need them.

When Large Print Is Not the Right Fit

Large print is powerful, but it is not the answer for every student, and pretending otherwise does no favors.

Watch for these signs that a student needs more: they tire quickly while reading, they read far slower than their comprehension suggests, they start avoiding reading tasks, or the size they need keeps climbing past 28 to 36 point. At that point, larger paper becomes clumsy and the accommodation stops helping.

The next steps are usually electronic. Video magnifiers and desktop CCTV systems enlarge material on a screen with adjustable contrast, and magnification software does the same on a computer or tablet. Text-to-speech and audio supplements can carry the load when a student's eyes need a rest. These assistive technologies support the same goal as classroom accommodations: independent living and learning, at school and beyond.

Moving beyond large print is not a failure of the accommodation or the student. It is a normal, expected step as reading demands grow.

Find the Right Fit for Your Student

Effective large print comes down to two things: proper formatting and an individual assessment of what this student actually needs. Get those right, and a simple accommodation can change a student's school day. For the complete picture, see our guide to classroom accommodations for students with low vision.

At New England Low Vision and Blindness, we help schools and families match students with the tools that fit their vision, from formatting guidance to the magnification technology that comes next. Every student is different, and the right plan starts with understanding their specific needs.

Ready to talk it through? Schedule No-Obligation Consultation and we will help you build a plan that works for your student.

Frequently Asked Questions

What font size is considered large print?

Large print starts at 18-point type. In classrooms, 20 to 24 point is common, and some students need 28 point or larger. The exact size should come from the student's functional vision assessment, not a one-size-fits-all rule.

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What is the best font for large print materials?

Use a clean sans-serif font such as Arial, Verdana, or APFont, which was designed specifically for readers with low vision. Keep body text in regular weight, use bold only for headings, and avoid italic, decorative, or condensed fonts that reduce readability.

Where can I get free large print textbooks for a student?

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) offers materials at no cost to students registered through the federal quota program. Bookshare provides free digital books with adjustable formatting for qualifying students, and your state instructional resource center can lend accessible textbooks to your school.

About This Document

This white paper was created by New England Low Vision and Blindness. Portions of the content were generated using AI technology and reviewed for accuracy. However, the information is provided “as is” and is not intended as a substitute for professional advice or a comprehensive assessment.

About New England Low Vision and Blindness

New England Low Vision and Blindness is a leading provider of assistive technology, training, and support for people who are blind or visually impaired. We serve individuals, schools, and organizations across the Northeast with personalized solutions that empower independence and improve quality of life. To learn more or schedule a no-obligation consultation, visit NELowVision.com or call 888-211-6933. You can also email us at info@NELowVision.com.