ASCII Art

What is it for?

ASCII art is the practice of arranging punctuation and symbols to create a picture, like the 'shrug' ¯_(ツ)_/¯ or drawings of animals.

While sighted users see a picture, a screen reader reads the content linearly. It cannot 'see' the image. Instead, the user hears a chaotic string of punctuation names: "Slash, backslash, underscore, vertical bar, colon..." It is noisy and blocks them from getting to your actual content.

Screen readers read many symbols and punctuation marks out by name. Grouping punctuation to make pictures creates a 'wall of noise' that is difficult to skip past.

How to support it

You can still share these visuals, but you should change the format to be inclusive.

- Take a screenshot of the ASCII art you want to share.
- Upload the screenshot rather than pasting the text directly.
- Write a description of the image as alt text (e.g. "A line drawing of a rabbit made of text characters").

Useful links

- How screen readers read special characters
- RNIB - Making social media accessible