Kids Websites: Where Fun and Accessibility Come to Play

Olena Sullivan, CBC Kids

OLENA SULLIVAN

(she/her)
Producer
CBC Kids & CBC Kids Olympics
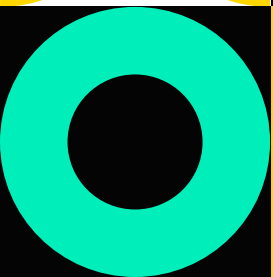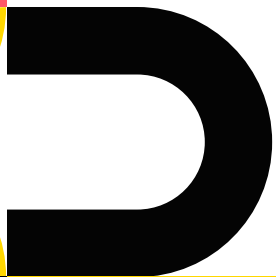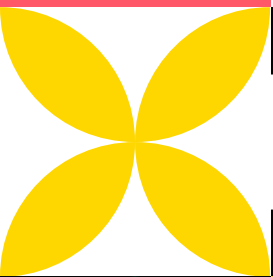
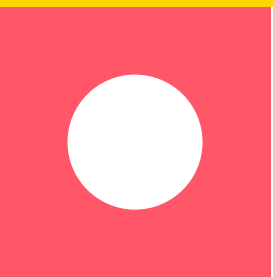olena.sullivan@cbc.ca
LinkedIn: olenasullivan

About Me:
Two cats 🐈
Love sushi 🍣
Axe throwing 🪓
Passion for travel ✈️

I am presenting virtually from Toronto, Ontario. The city resides on land that is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. I come with respect for this land that I am on today, and for the people who have and do reside here.
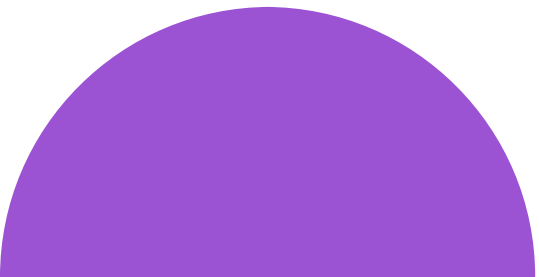
Land Acknowledgement

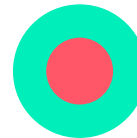# KIDS ON THE INTERNET

AGE GROUPS AND ABILITIES

3-5

Very limited motor skills ability. They prefer touchscreens and are more comfortable with a trackpad than they are with a mouse.

6-8

Partially developed gross motor skills. Prefer touchscreens and trackpads of laptops and can click with the mouse and trackpad. Also have simple keyboard us.
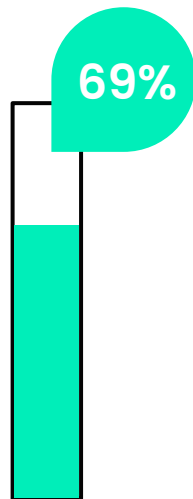
9-12

Well developed motor skills and prefer both laptops and touchscreens using both mouse and trackpad. Can do complex coordination between keyboard and mouse.
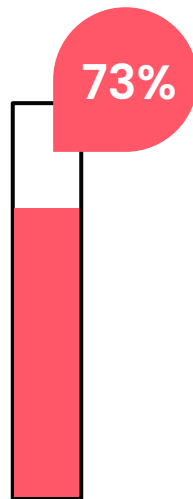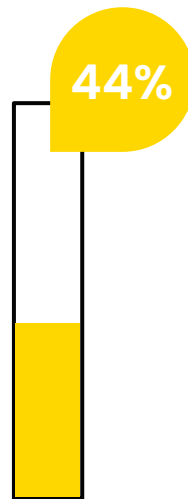
HOW MANY KIDS ARE ONLINE?

69%

73%
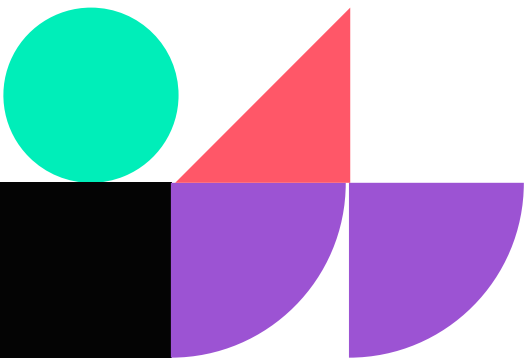
44%

COMPUTER

Child 2–11 uses a computer at home

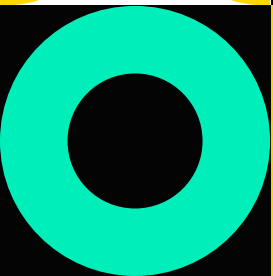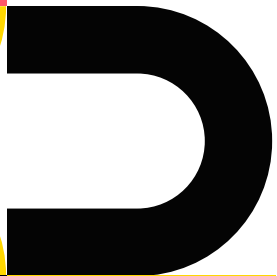## TABLET

Child 2–11 uses a tablet at home

CELLPHONE

Child 2–11 uses a cellphone at home

ADDITIONAL BARRIERS FOR KIDS ONLINE

KIDS' WEBSITES

DYSLEXIA

4-5 students in every classroom (1)

LANGUAGE

Young readers still learning to spell or English as a second language

INEQUALITY

Internet access, broadband, digital literacy. (2)

E-LEARNING

On and off e-learning during the Pandemic.
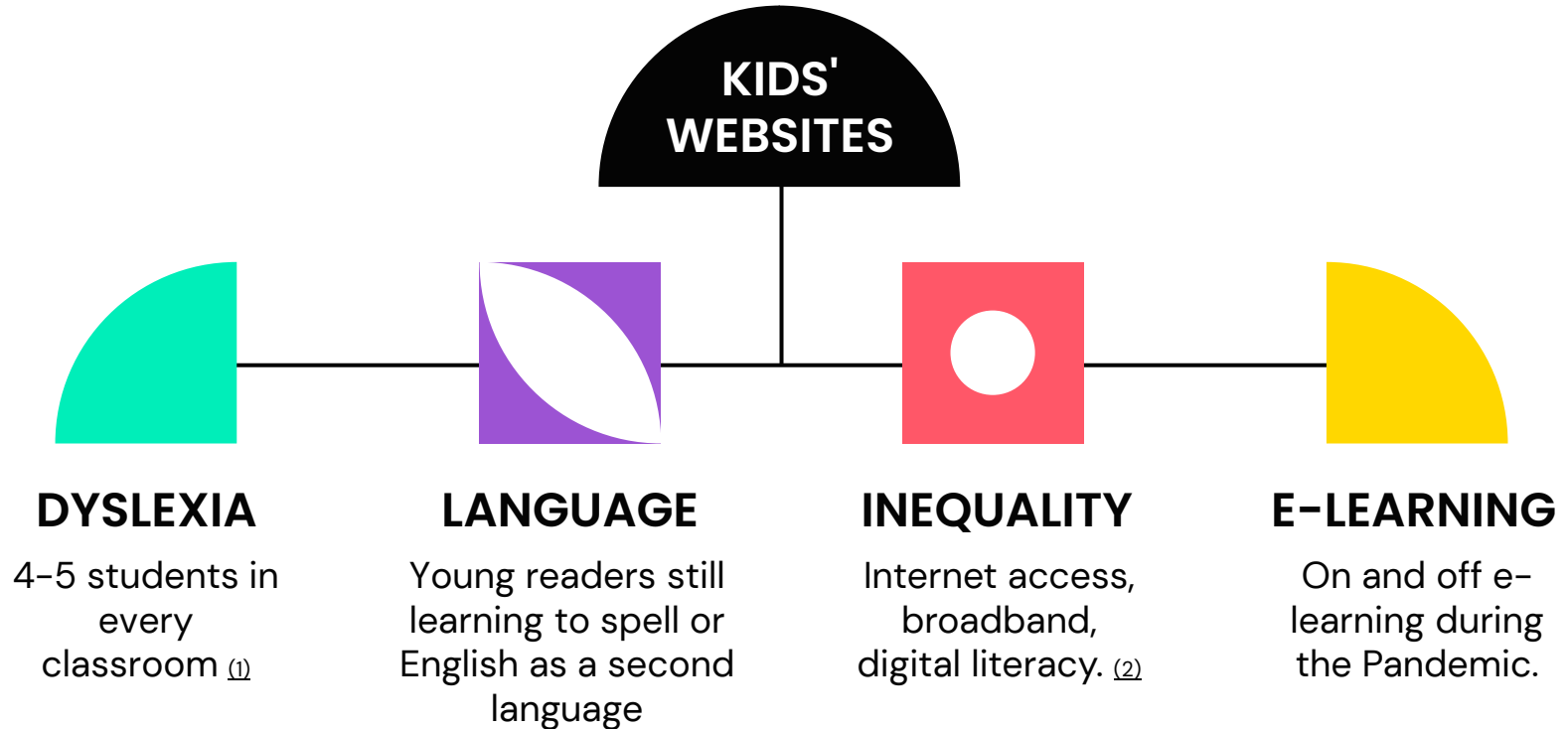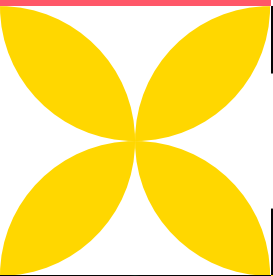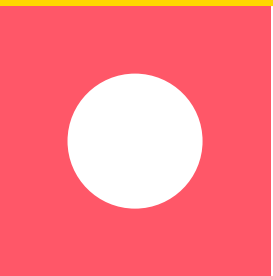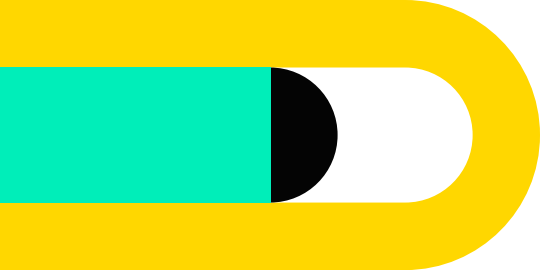
BEST PRACTICES

3 BASIC RULES OF DESIGNING FOR KIDS

01

EASY

The site needs to be easy to understand.
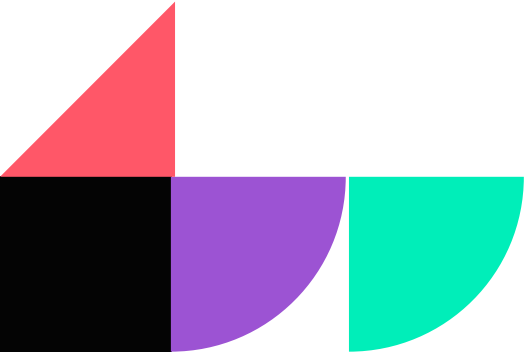
03

FUN

The site needs to be fun to look at so it grabs their attention.
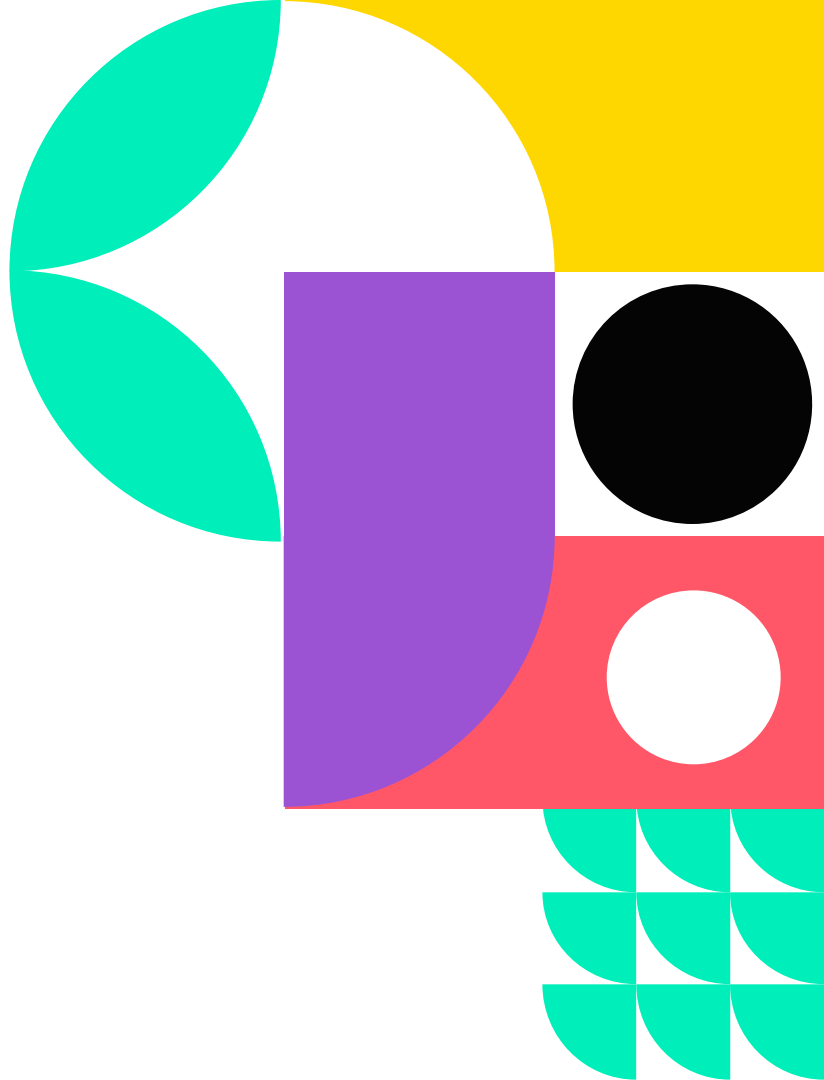
02

SIMPLE

The site needs to be simple to use.

01
FUN WITH ICONS

MAKE IT MEANINGFUL

Kids are very literal. Since they respond to images and icons, you need to think about how they will perceive them:

- Use icons and text that have a literal meaning.
- Make sure they are meanings that kids will understand at their age group (2-6, 7-11, tweens, teens).
- Don't assume that an icon is "universal." Kids may not be aware of it yet if they are only visiting children's sites.
- Depending on your location, think about cultural associations.
- Always include the text description with your icon. Don't rely on just the image.

It can be hard to not design icons in an adult mindset.
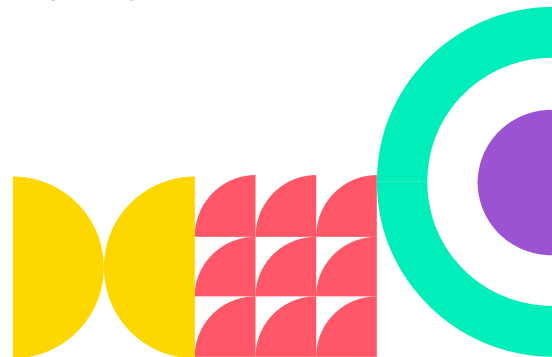
ICON EXAMPLES

❍ Storytelling games

❍ Rhyming games

❍ Animals games

❍ Videos

❍ Watch live

❍ Show schedule

❍ Food

❍ Recipes

❍ Share

ICON EXAMPLES

Rhyming Games

○ Storytelling games

○ **Rhyming games**

○ Animals games

Videos

○ **Videos**
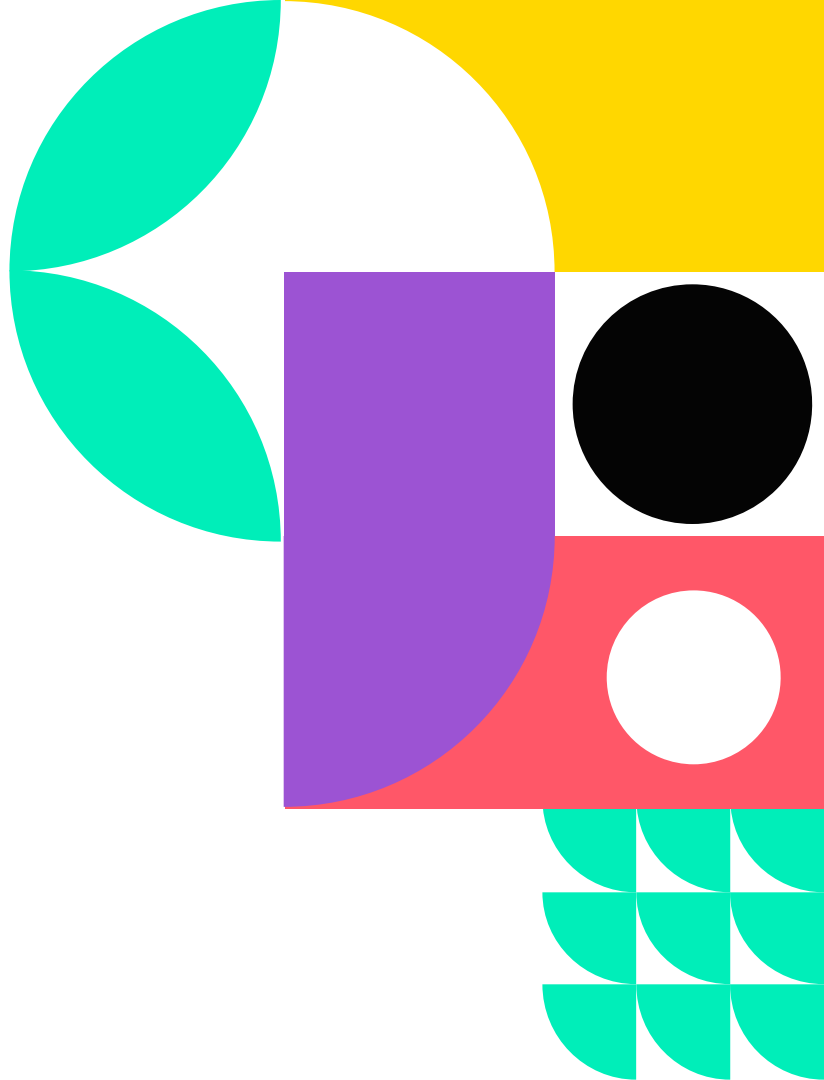
○ Watch live

○ Show schedule

Share

○ Food

○ Recipes

○ **Share**

02
FUN WITH FONTS

MAKE IT READABLE

It can be tempting to go a little wild with fonts when designing for kids, but there are some best practices for readability to help kids learning to read:

- 14 points minimum for readability. For our site, we use 18 points. It really depends on the X–height and design of your font.
- When choosing a font for the basic text and navigation, follow the best practices of reading shapes, imposter letter shapes, letter spacing, and simple shapes (more on next slide).
- When designing specialized graphics such as theme images and interactive elements, have fun with the fonts but keep in mind best practices for legibility such as colour contrast and amount of text. (And don't forget your alt text!)
- Sans serif fonts are easier to read.
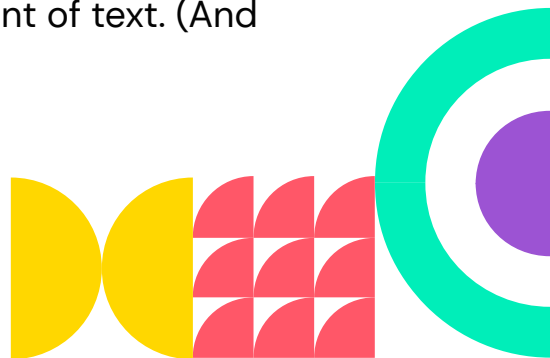
WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A TEXT FONT

**IMPOSTER
LETTER SHAPES**

Illustrate (Arial)
Illustrate (Trebuchet)

—

**LETTER
SPACING**

Savvy (Calibri)
Savvy (Montserrat)

**DISTINGUISHABLE
READING SHAPES**

COeoca (Comforta)
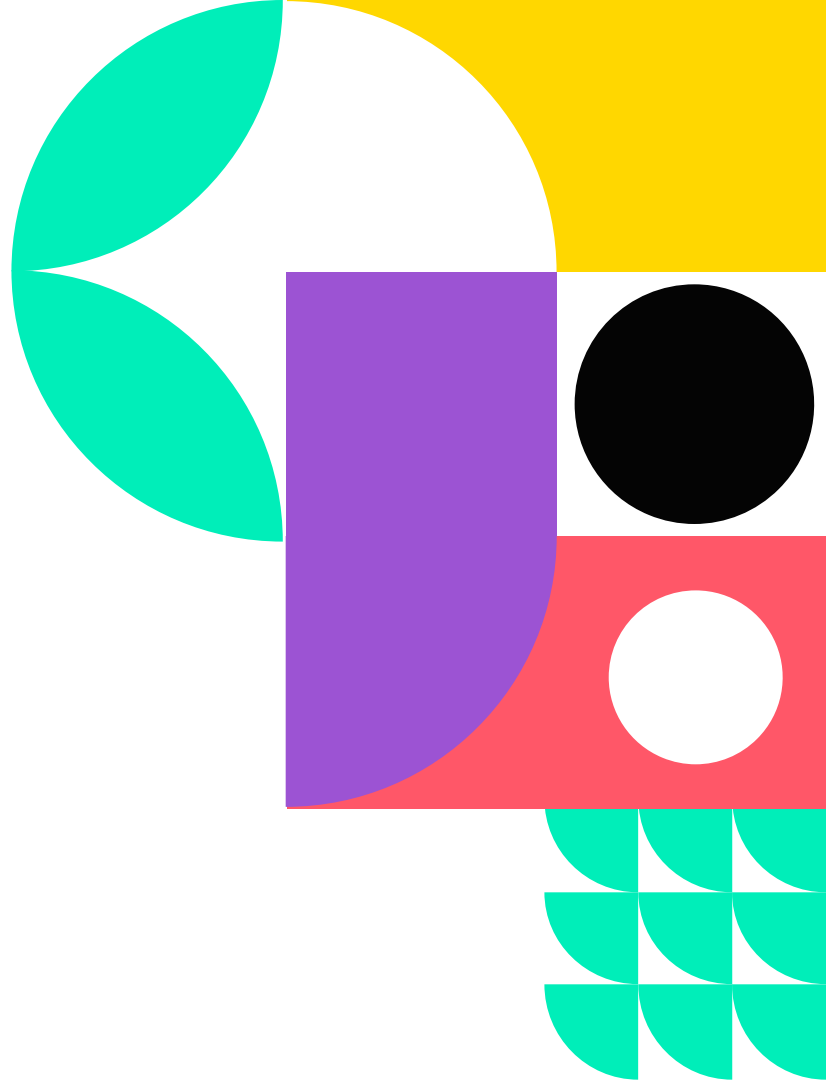COeoca (Calibri)

—

**SIMPLE
SHAPES**

simple (C. Gothic)
complex (Times New Roman)

In each of these best practices, the font that is highlighted is easier to read by children in general as they are still learning to read, those with dyslexia, and those with low vision.

03
FUN WITH COLOUR

COLOUR EVERYWHERE!

When you think of kids' websites, you think colour, colour, colour. And that's partially true:

- Vivid and bright colours catch their attention — they create a happy mood.
- Don't shy away from the use of primary colours, but as kids start hitting 10 and up, colours can get more complex.
- Popular colours combos of muted pastels or monochromes should be left for sites that adults go to.
- Have fun and break the rules, but keep in mind colour contrast and colour blindness!
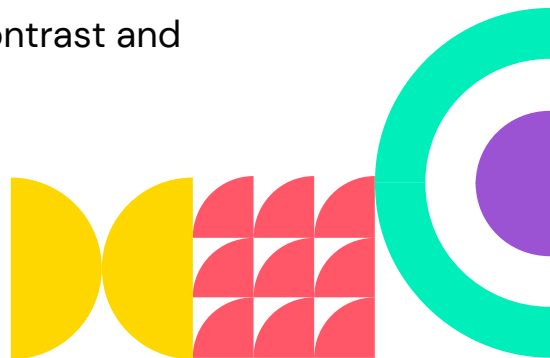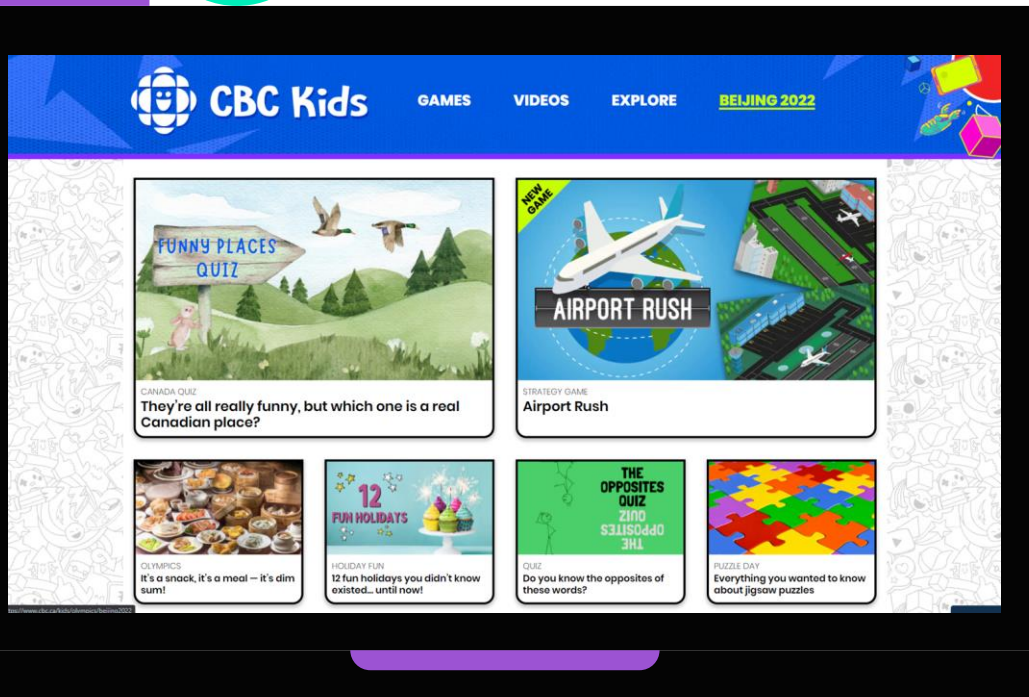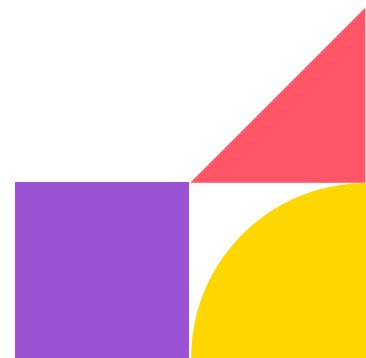
CBC KIDS

- Primary colour scheme.
- Happy feeling.
- Good colour contrast on navigation links: 5.19:1.
- Good colour contrast on text over images (they better be checking!).
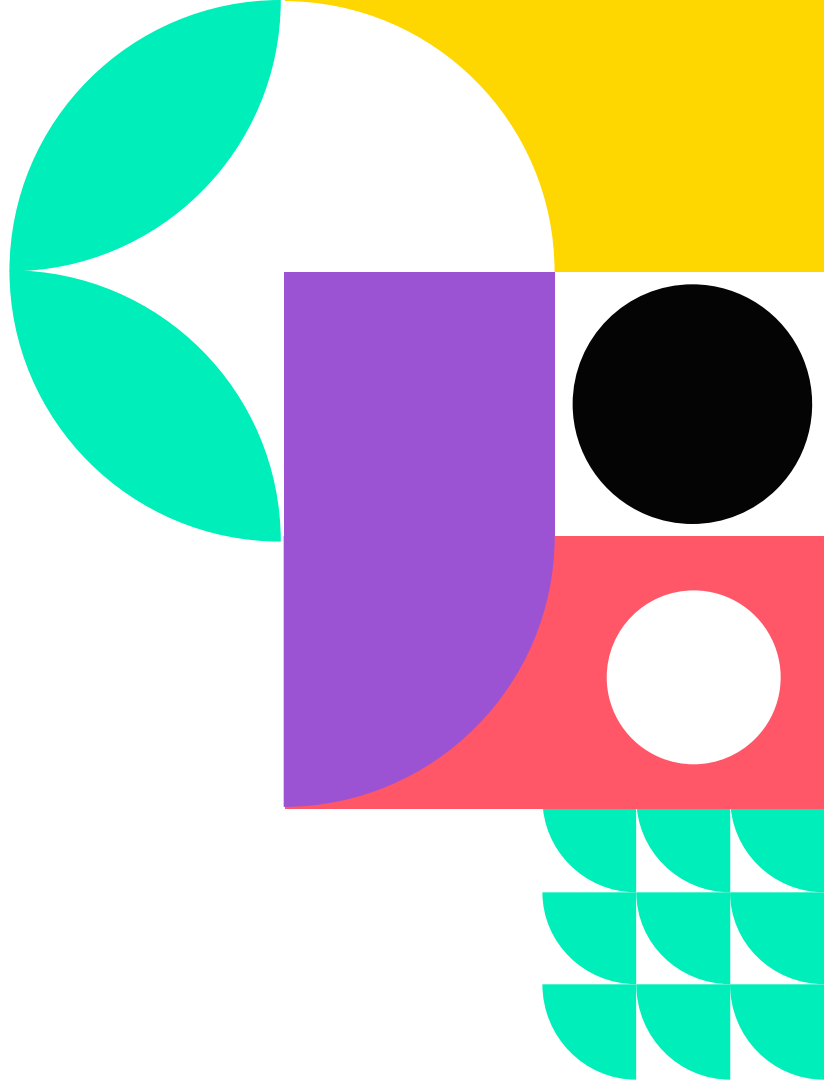- Addresses colour blindness.
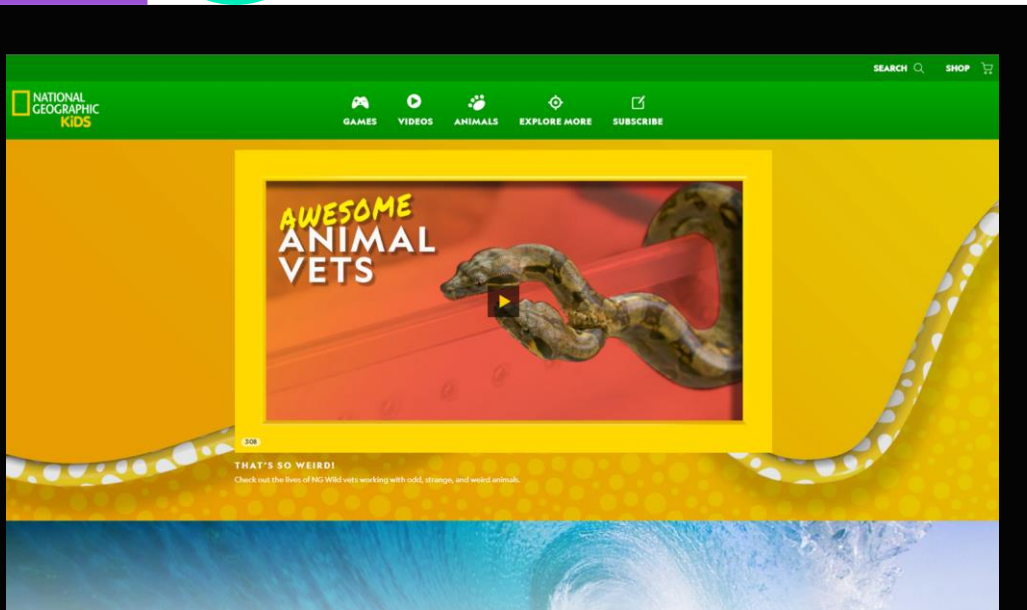
NAT GEO KIDS

- Primary colour scheme.
- Happy feeling.
- Great contrast on all type except the small video caption white on yellow which comes up as 2.03:1.
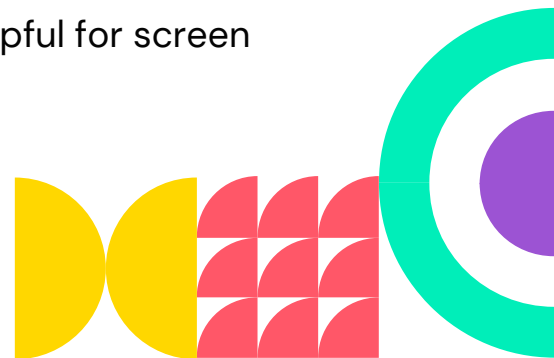- Addresses colour blindness.

04
FUN WITH IMAGES

GO FOR VISUALS

Kids websites are full of images. They help with and encourage the learning process:

- Using a lot of visuals helps those who have difficulty reading or understanding concepts.
- Use images of situations, objects and animals that are identifiable to kids.
- Ensure diversity in your images — kids should be able to see themselves in your content.
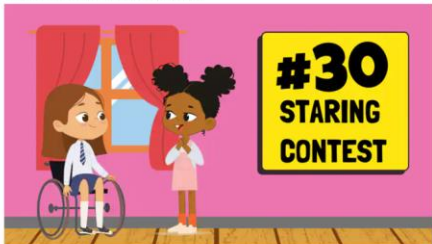- Make your alt text descriptive so that the visuals are helpful for screen readers.

CBC KIDS

- Relatable image of target age group.
- Diverse imagery.
- Text is duplicated and expanded within the post.

05
FUN WITH WORDS
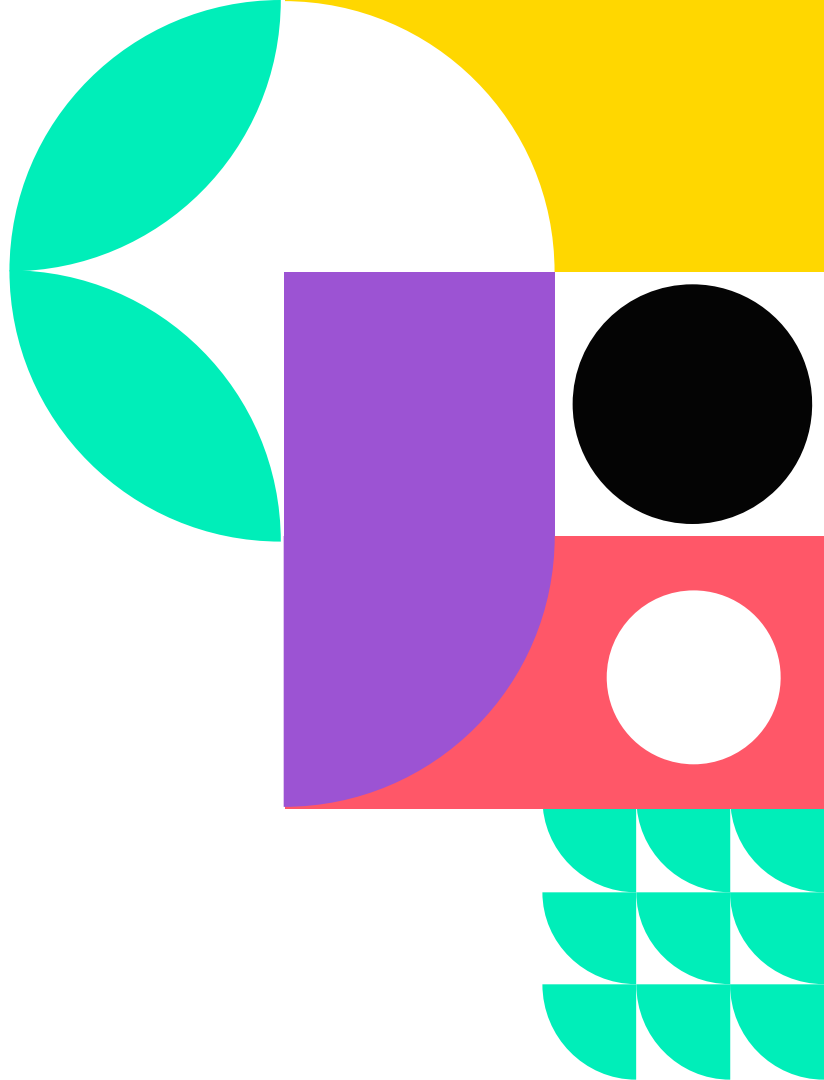
READABILITY AND INCLUSIVENESS

At the 6–8 age group, kids are working on their reading and word comprehension, especially those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. There may also be kids visiting where English is not their first language. Some considerations when working with content:

- Write to their grade level — for our site, we write for grades 4–5 as this age is getting better at reading.
- Break up your text into small chunks with headings that explain what the paragraph is about to help kids who skim.
- Keep your sentences short — about 8-10 words.
- Stay away from jargon or slang that kids either won't understand or will date the content when it goes out of style in a week.
- Don't use an adult word when a simpler one will do.
- Spell everything out!
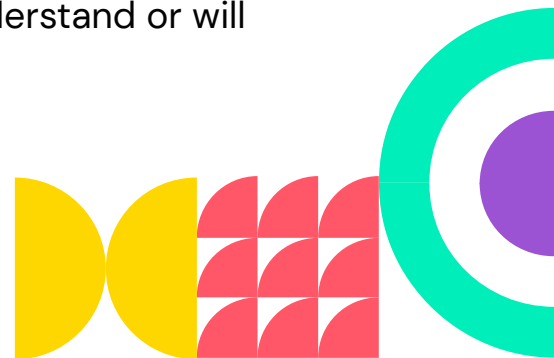
FUN WITH WIDGETS
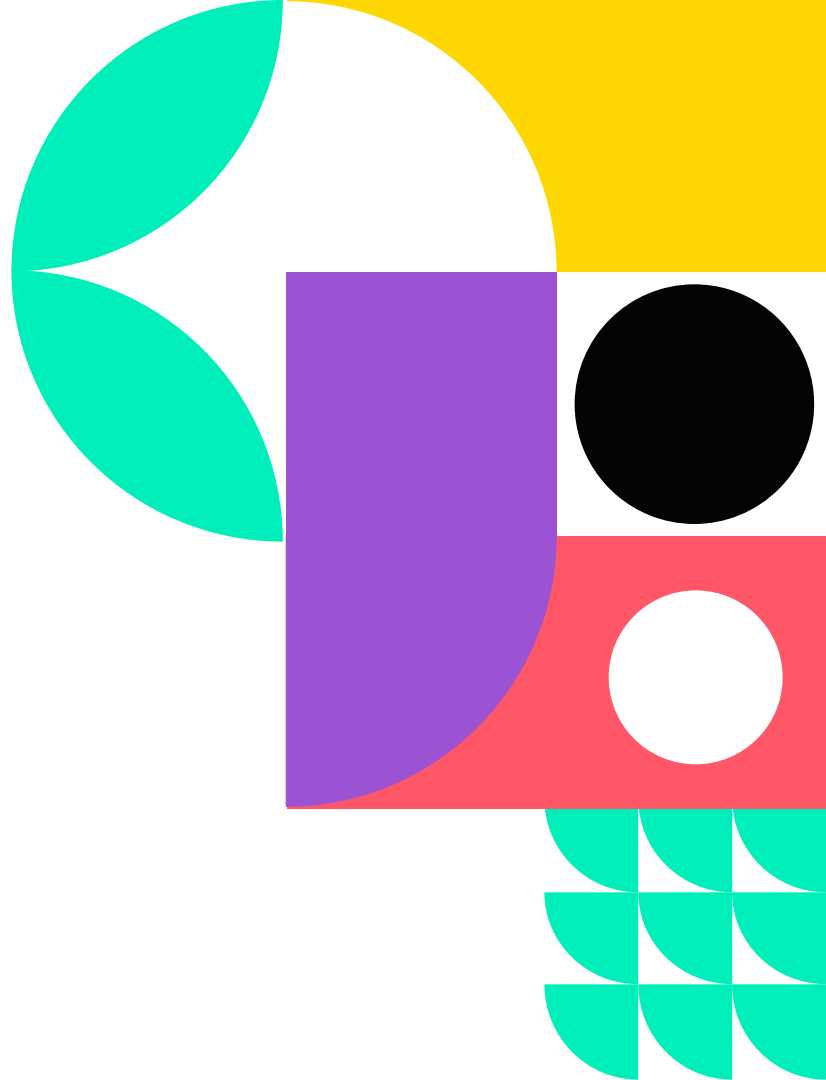
THINK LIKE A KID

Because of their developing motor skills and low reading and writing ability, there are best practices to keep in mind when designing and writing widgets, interactives and games. Ones for games could take up their own talk as well as accessibility for quizzes. I'll just mention three big ones:

- Kids type slowly, so you should account for this in widgets or games that have a time limit.
- Kids are still learning to spell, so you should account for this when requiring text input in a widget, game, or search.
- Kids have less mouse control so anything that needs to be clicked on/tapped, like a button, needs to be larger than what you would design for an adult and shouldn't be too close to other action elements.
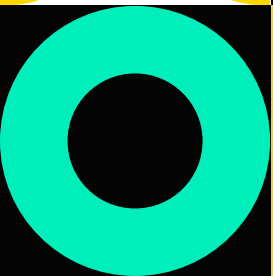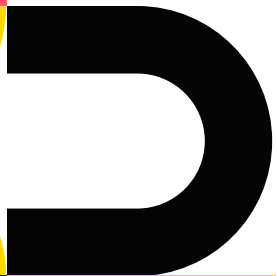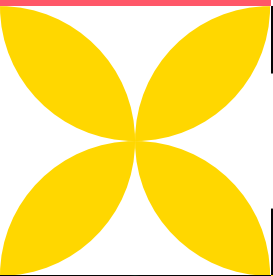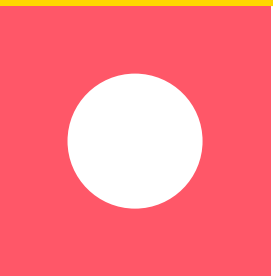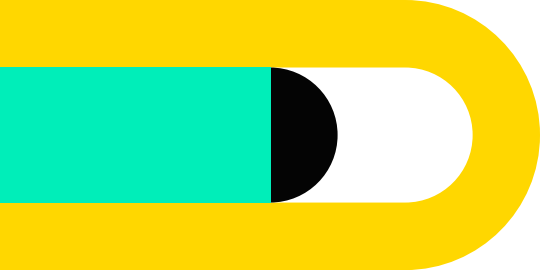
These best practices will not only help younger children, but will also help with overall accessibility.
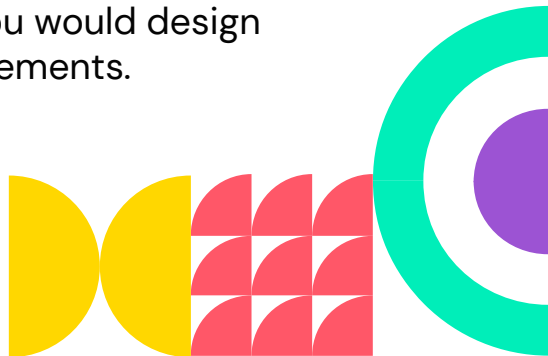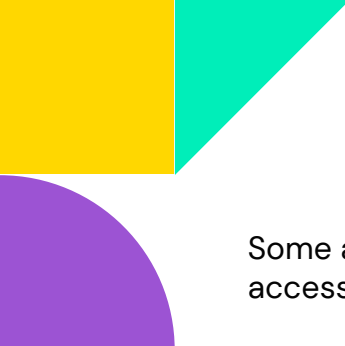
CBC KIDS

- One of our games.
- Big green pause button very visible.
- Long play duration.
- Large movable target.
- One negative is that it's not keyboard compatible.

RESOURCES

Some articles and plug-ins that you might find useful when designing and producing accessible sites for both kids and adults:

ARTICLES
- <u>A Guide to Understanding What Makes A Typeface Accessible</u>, The Readability Group
- <u>Children's UX: Usability Issues in Designing for Young People,</u> Nielsen Norman Group
- <u>UX Design for Kids: Key Design Considerations</u>, Paul Osborne, UX matters
- Educating 21st Century Children: Emotional Well-being in the Digital Age, <u>Chapter 2. Children and digital technologies: Trends and outcomes</u>

WEB TOOLS
- <u>Readable</u>
- <u>Contrast Grid</u>

PLUG-INS
- <u>Chrome Web Disability Simulator</u>
- <u>Chrome Stark Accessibility Tools</u>

THANKS!

If you'd like to chat about accessibility and kids websites, please feel free to contact me:

olena.sullivan@cbc.ca

Cbckids.ca

olenasullivan