

MULTILINGUAL DESKTOP PUBLISHING (DTP) BEST PRACTICES

Multilingual desktop publishing (DTP) can be very challenging – even when using the right software, platform, and with the help of an experienced DTP specialist.

Many problems may be avoided if the person handling the original design and layout utilizes a few simple guidelines and rules when designing documents intended for translation and localization.

Please see some of the Best Practices learned over the years by our DTP team.

- **Keep the design simple.** High quality photos and images add a great deal of visual interest to a design. But a heavy load of images in one document can present challenges in the DTP process. Images that are hundreds of MB in size take time to transfer.
- **Leave plenty of white space.** Non-English languages can, on average, take up 30% more space than English. If enough space has not been allotted, the DTP specialist may be forced to reduce the font size, or change character and line spacing. Also, new pages may even need to be added. As the text will be longer and flow differently, it's possible that some images will also have to be repositioned and the entire document will look a little bit different.
- **Use style sheets** with no overrides in your documents whenever possible. Not only will this make your work easier and more consistent, it will also help the DTP specialist handling the translated work.
- **Use simple fonts that can handle all the characters of your possible target languages.** Or, be prepared to see that we replaced a fancy font for one that does support all the characters (diacritical marks, etc.) of your target language.
- **Provide all the source files and fonts used for creating the document. If you used layers with text and images to create art effects,** make sure that the DTP specialist receives all necessary source files—not just the ones exported after merging the layers. In other words, provide all the graphs and charts in an editable format.
- **Avoid embedding text in graphics** (unless you're very sure it will not ever need translation). Editing graphic files is time-consuming and expensive.
- **Keep all text live in all files** (InDesign, Illustrator, Photoshop, etc.). If you must outline text for any reason, be sure to keep a copy of the live text version. Outlined text would have to be re-keyed for translation.



- **Keep the encoding of web files clean.** This has to do with the way the code is captured — was it typed out manually by an HTML/XML literate programmer (best case)? Or was it simply built by using the “save as HTML” function in MS Word (worst case). A proper web building program with a qualified programmer produces files that are much more functional from a segmentation standpoint. Poor segmentation = mis-translated text, and we spend a lot of front-end time scrutinizing and fixing files with bad code.
- **Consider cross-platform conversion issues.** Use OpenType fonts as much as possible. Most PC fonts do not match Mac fonts. Most translators will be using PC fonts, and the fonts they use may not be available in certain combinations of applications and platforms.
- **Get a proofreader for the translated text.** If you decide to do the formatting on your own, try to arrange a proofreader proficient in the language to check on punctuation, line breaking, and to verify that the text is placed in its proper places, etc.
- **Use a minimum number of columns.** In some languages such as German, words may be twice as long as English. If the columns are too narrow, you may end up with lines that only have one word or many hyphens. Documents formatted that way just aren’t as professional looking as they may otherwise be.
- **Plan for captioning.** Pictures with callouts may look great in English, but they often need to be readjusted after translation text expansion. Leave enough space for expansion, or use key letters with a legend.
- **Pay attention to cultural issues.** Choose your images and colors wisely. Certain gestures or symbols may not be considered appropriate in other cultures and will need to be replaced with an image or graphic with more global appeal. The meaning associated with colors is very important. Red is the color of love and Christmas in Western culture, but it’s also the color of Communism in East European countries and the color of mourning in South Africa. Green is the traditional color of Islam; but in Western culture, it is the color for money and ecology.
- **Unlock any password protected files** before submitting them for translation.

The CTS LanguageLink DTP team are industry veterans, with the expertise to work with any file format and the most complex character sets and fonts.

For more information about Multilingual Desktop Services, please contact us at **1 800-208-2620**.

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