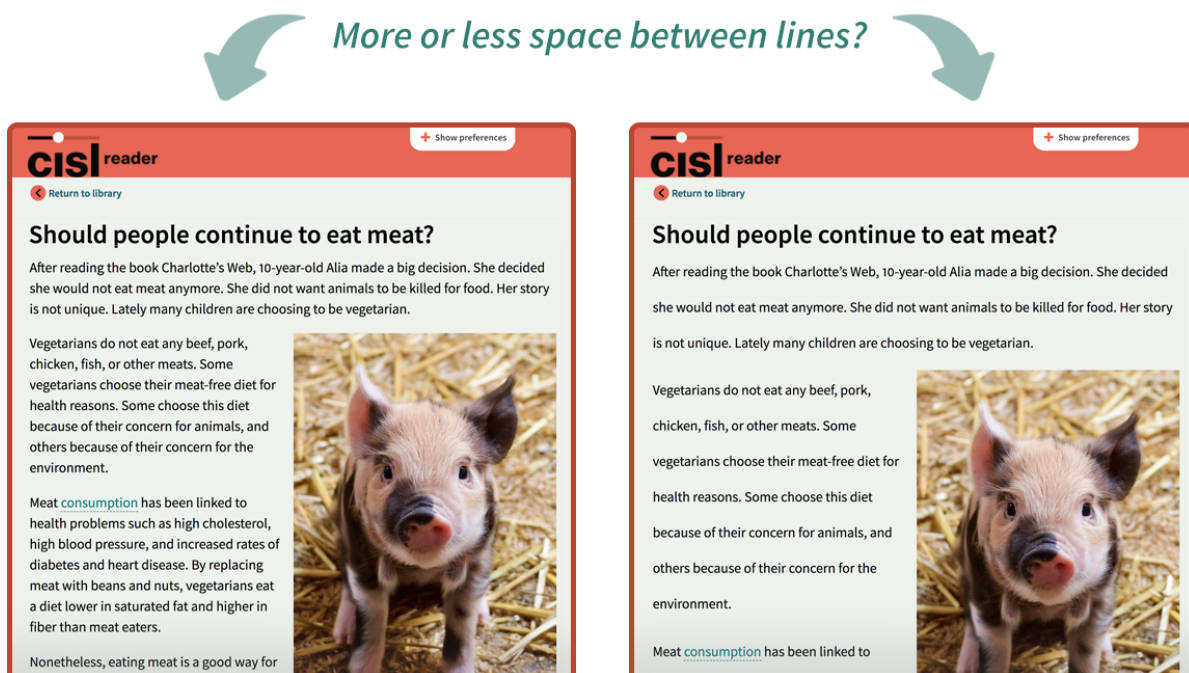# Adjustable Line Spacing

Options to adjust line spacing can impact the accessibility of text and the level of engagement a reader has with the text. Users of flexible digital reading environments such as CAST's Clusive have noted the value of being able to adjust the space between lines of text, choosing to have the lines of text closer together or further apart, depending on their personal preference. One user tester said, "When I read, I skip lines, so it's really helpful for me to have spacing between lines."

The example in the graphic shows the same text with different line spacing options selected.

More or less space between lines?

Research

The research findings on adjustable line spacing are mixed.

- **Some studies report that larger line spacing improves reading speed and accuracy for adolescents and adults with dyslexia**.
    - A study of 74 children with dyslexia, ages 8 to 14, found that extra-large letter and line spacing improves text reading speed and accuracy.
    Zorzi and colleagues, 2012

- A study of 22 individuals with dyslexia, ages 13 to 37, found that the narrower the spacing between lines, the longer participants took to read a passage. Participants' preferences were split between single line spacing and 1.4 line spacing.

    Rello, Kanvinde, & Baeza-Yates, 2012

- **However, another study contradicts these findings.** A study of 28 people with dyslexia, ages 14 to 38, found that line spacing did not have a significant effect on objective readability (measured by fixation duration), subjective readability, or subjective comprehensibility. The study also found that smaller line spacing (.8 compared to 1.8 line spacing) increased comprehension scores.

    Rello, Pileot, Marcos, & Carlini, 2013

- **Large line spacing may not be beneficial for the general population.** A study of 104 people ages 14 to 54 (disability status not specified) found no effect of line spacing on readability, as measured by fixation duration.

    Rello, Pielot, & Marcos, 2016

See other sources at Raising the Floor.

Related Guidelines

Adjustable line spacing is a feature related to existing accessibility guidelines and best practices, including the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Guidelines. Connections include:

- UDL Guidelines Checkpoint 1.1: Offer ways of customizing the display of information
- WCAG has two levels of compliance criteria for line spacing. To meet level AA, you need to design your content to still be usable if the user configures their system to increase the spacing to line-and-a-half (WCAG 2.1 AA Criterion 1.4.12). But to meet level AAA, you have to provide a way for users to increase the spacing (WCAG 2.1 AAA Criterion 14.8).

Adjustable Line Spacing Examples

Want to find out what other projects are doing with adjustable line spacing? Visit the Raising the Floor website, where they have compiled resources on adjusting text font, including size and spacing.

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