

# Creating Accessible Packaging

## An Inclusive Design Toolkit

[aka.ms/AccessiblePackagingToolkit](https://aka.ms/AccessiblePackagingToolkit) >



# Hello

Almost immediately after publishing the first edition of our guide to [Creating Accessible Packaging](#), we started thinking about creating a shorter, more focused version, concentrating on just the hands-on technical details that we could refer to in our day-to-day work. This toolkit is the result.

They say that one of the best reasons to write is to figure out what you think. That was certainly the case when we sat down to write the original guide. Putting words together to describe the principles and elements that we had gathered in our work designing packaging for

Microsoft Surface and Xbox products helped us focus and crystallize our thoughts as designers and product makers. But the real growth came after publishing the guide. Publishing the guide put us in conversation with our peers across the industry and led to many fascinating and challenging discussions which not only helped clarify our thoughts but brought us brand new ideas and areas of exploration. We are grateful to everyone who has engaged with us in the effort to design packaging that is as accessible as possible for as many people as possible.

## How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be used in parallel with [Creating Accessible Packaging: An Inclusive Design Guide](#). That companion guide reflects our principles and intent, while this toolkit shares how those principles are applied in our day-to-day packaging development at Microsoft. This toolkit brings together practical best practices for creating packaging that is intuitive, easy to use, and designed for people across a wide range of abilities.

Use this toolkit as a working reference as you design. You might keep it open while exploring concepts, return to it when refining a structural detail, or bring it into reviews to help frame discussions around access and interaction. Not every solution will apply in every situation. In those moments, this toolkit is meant to support judgment and identify avenues for exploration rather than to supply a finished blueprint.

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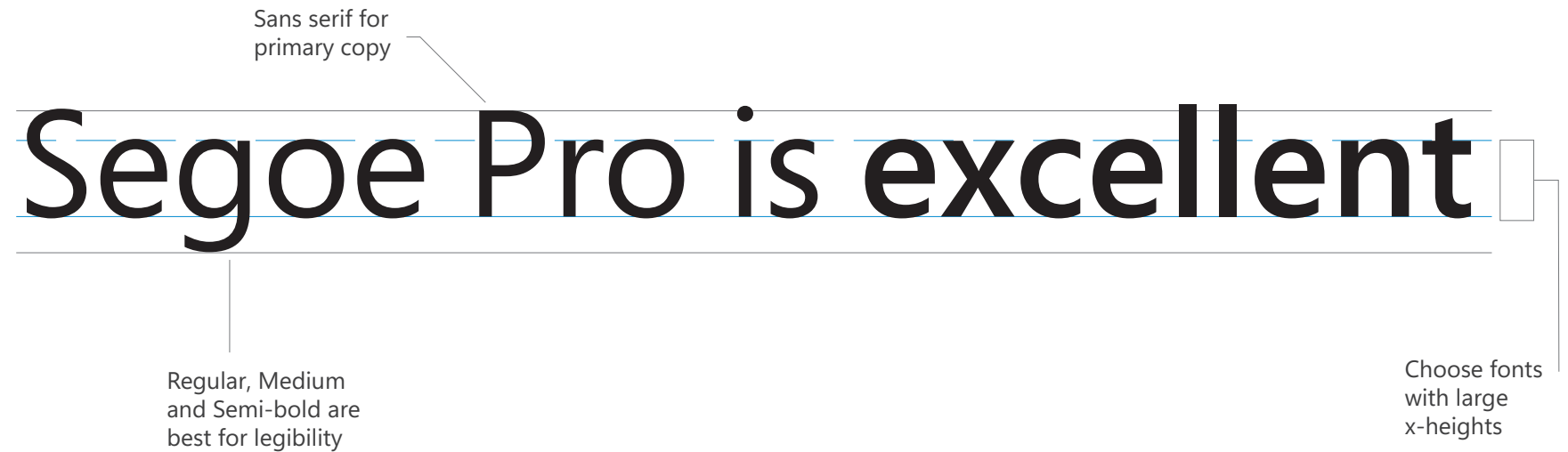
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# Accessible graphics

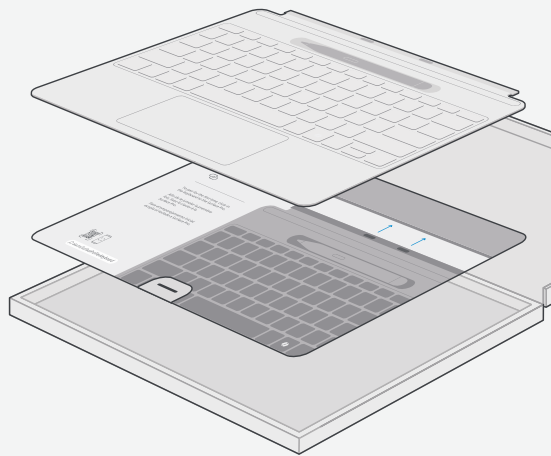
## Typography

Typography should be legible, easy-to-scan, and consistently applied to support comprehension. Microsoft uses its proprietary Segoe Pro font for print, which is a sans serif font with a clean, open structure.



# Spacing and layout

Consider text and paragraph styles to support comfortable reading and clear communication of information. Keep text in straight, horizontal lines and avoid hyphenation for optimal legibility.



*Pictured: Surface Pro Flex Keyboard*

Reduce visual density with plenty of negative space

Line length should not exceed 60 characters

Use left-aligned text (for western languages)

Keep leading spacious, up to 150%



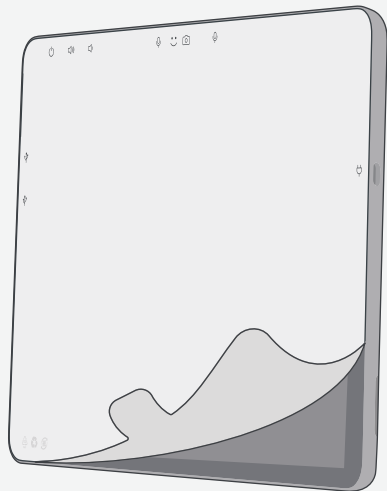
To pair for the first time, click-in the keyboard to the Surface Pro.

Afin de le jumeler la première fois, fixez le clavier à la Surface Pro.

Para el emparejamiento inicial, acoplae It ecladoa Surface Pro.

# Iconography

Icons help communicate meaning clearly and consistently, without relying on written interpretation.



*Pictured: Surface Pro screen cling*

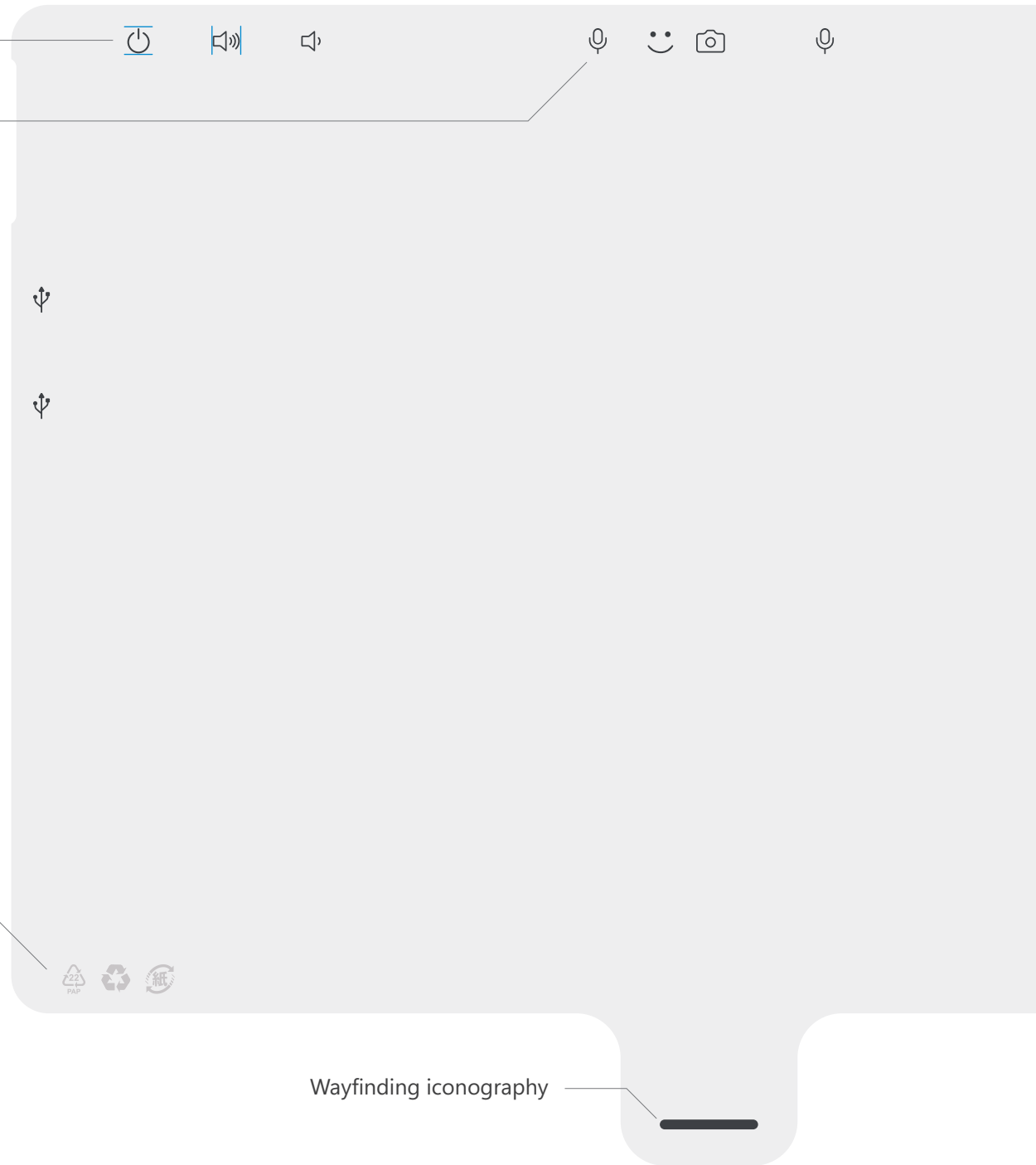
Minimum size of icons is 5mm

Icons should be simple, high-contrast, and visually distinct

Icons work best when applied consistently across the portfolio

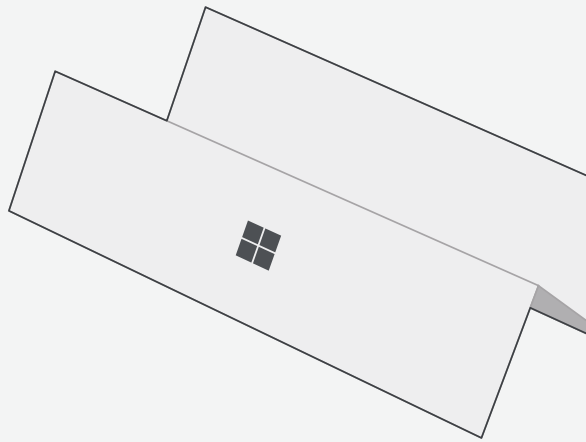
Contrast levels help define information hierarchy

Wayfinding iconography



# Illustrations

Illustrations should be simple and clearly defined. Avoid excessive detail, fine lines, and low-contrasting colors.



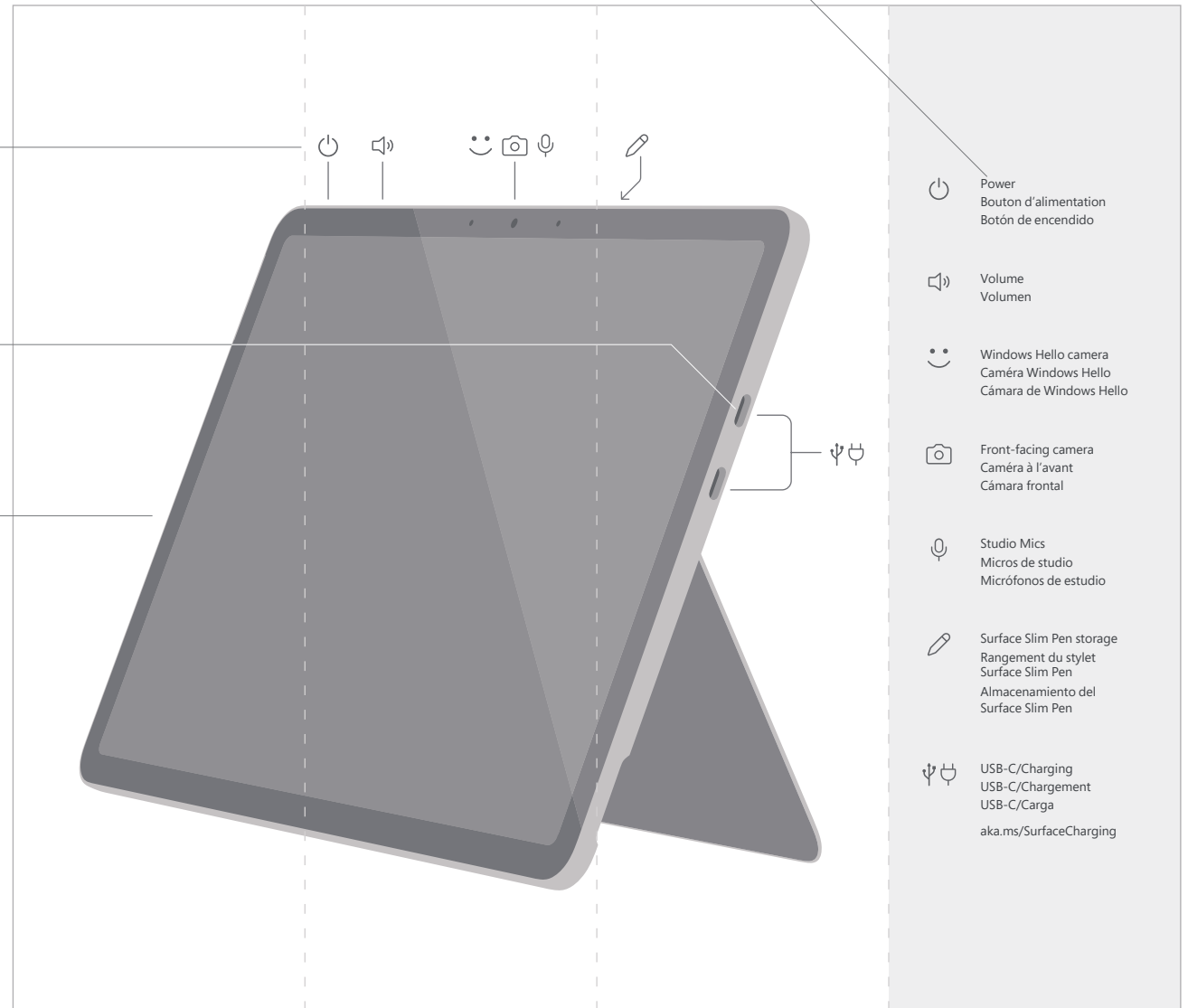
*Pictured: Quick start guide*

When space allows, pair icons with text

Use established, widely recognizable symbols

Illustrations support comprehension, orientation, and instruction

Illustrations should be clear, high contrast, and informative

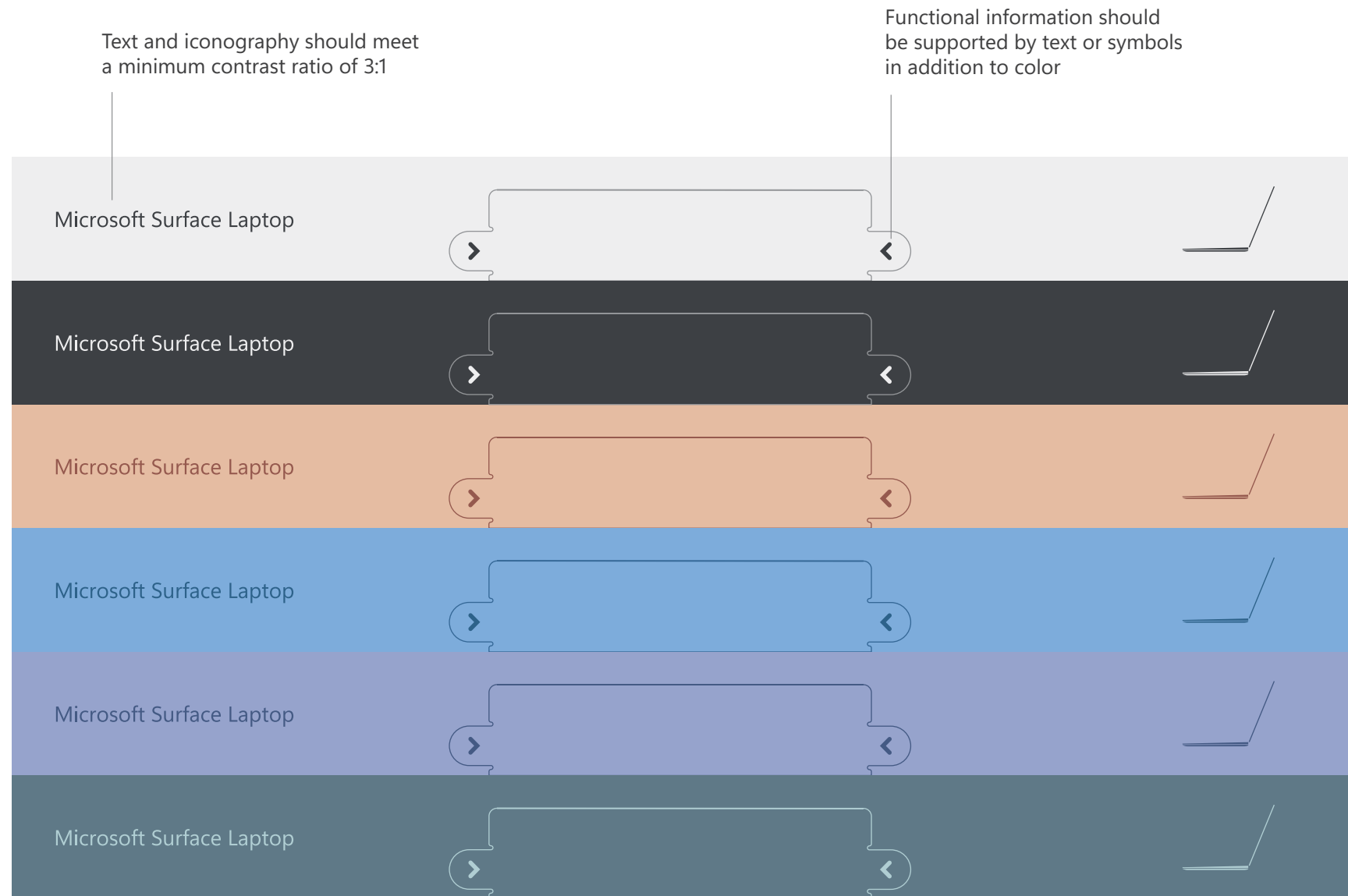


-  Power  
Bouton d'alimentation  
Botón de encendido
-  Volume  
Volumen
-  Windows Hello camera  
Caméra Windows Hello  
Cámara de Windows Hello
-  Front-facing camera  
Caméra à l'avant  
Cámara frontal
-  Studio Mics  
Micros de studio  
Micrófonos de estudio
-  Surface Slim Pen storage  
Rangement du stylet  
Surface Slim Pen  
Almacenamiento del  
Surface Slim Pen
-  USB-C/Charging  
USB-C/Chargement  
USB-C/Carga  
[aka.ms/SurfaceCharging](https://aka.ms/SurfaceCharging)

# Color and contrast

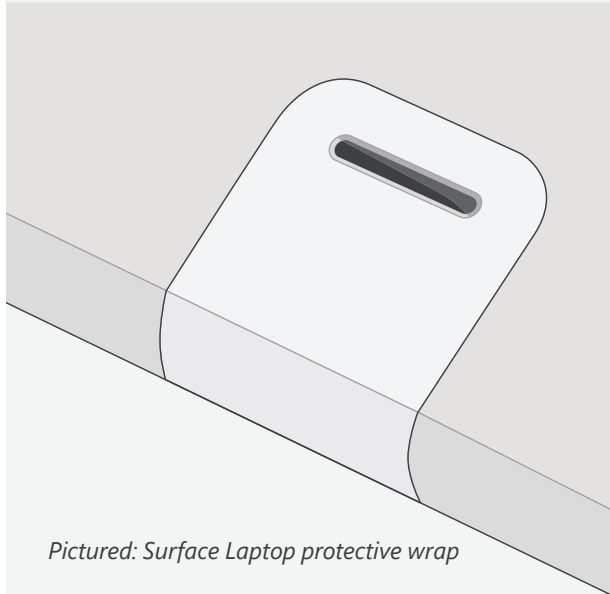
Color should not be the sole means of conveying meaning. Maintain sufficient contrast between foreground and background elements.

*Pictured: Surface Laptop packaging*



# Tactile wayfinding

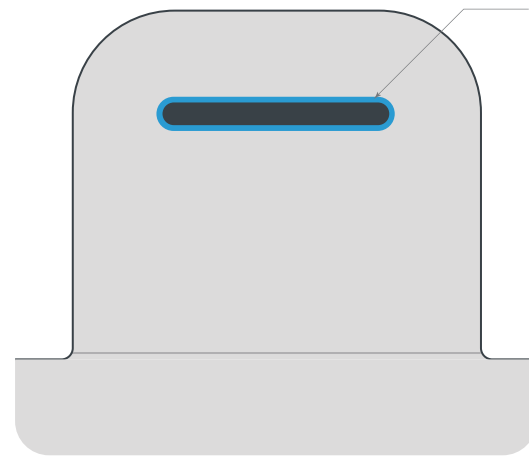
Tactile elements help indicate actionable or important features through touch.



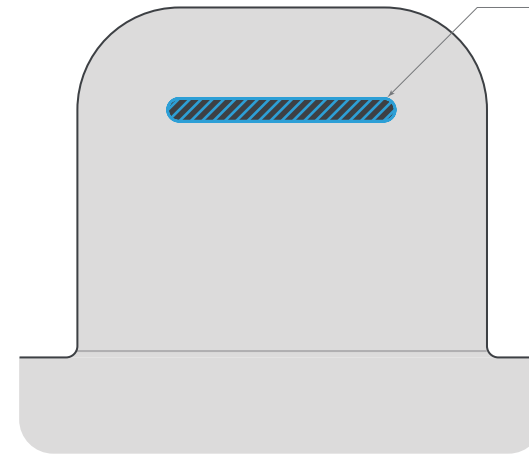
## Dimensions

Spot UV ●

Emboss ●

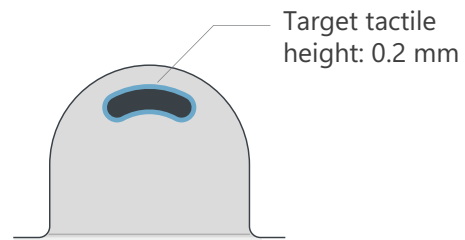


Extend UV +0.5 mm for print tolerance

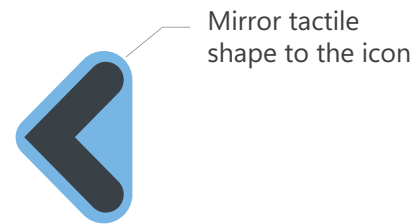


Die-registered emboss aligns to artwork

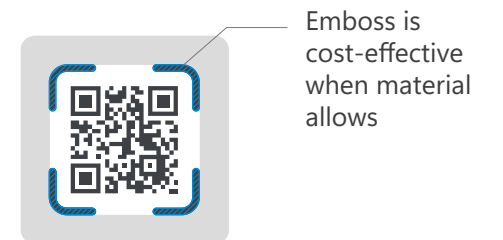
## Guidance



Target tactile height: 0.2 mm



Mirror tactile shape to the icon



Emboss is cost-effective when material allows

# Braille

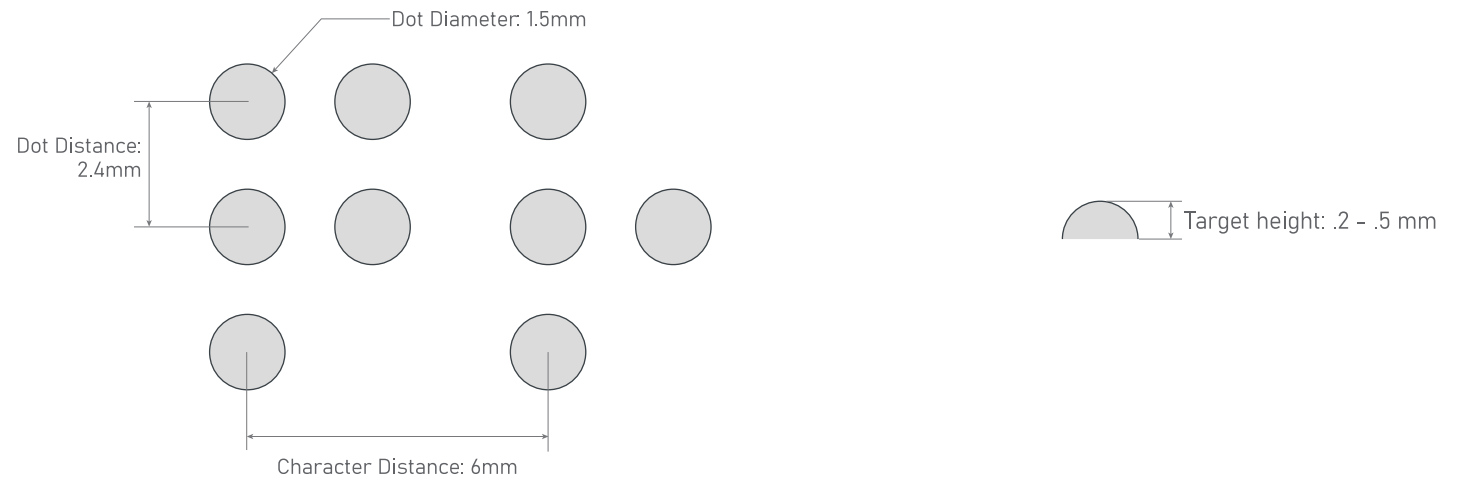
Braille must meet dimensional and spacing requirements defined by [The Braille Authority of North America](#). Braille must remain consistent regardless of packaging size or shape.



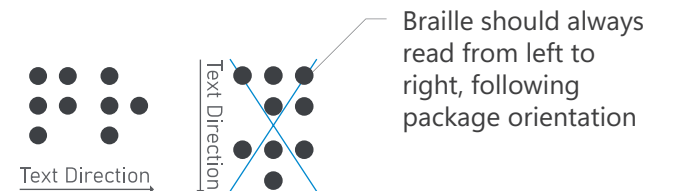
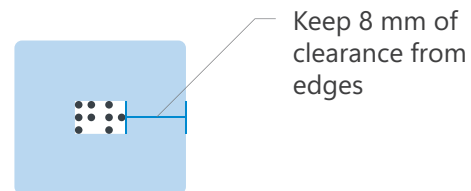
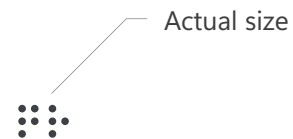
*Pictured: Surface Adaptive Mouse*

## Dimensions

Q R

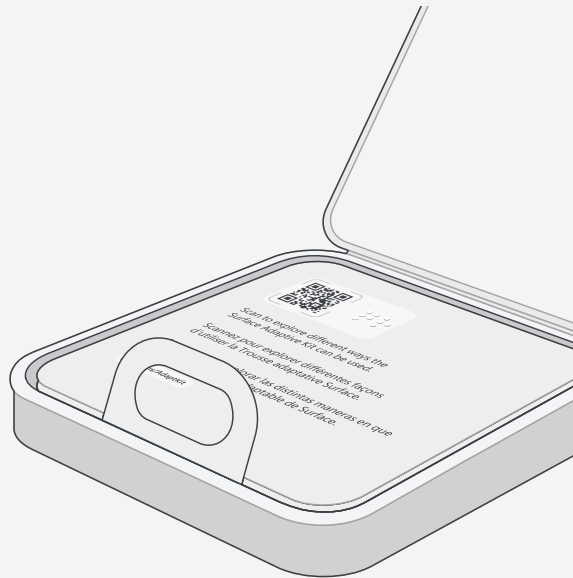


## Guidance



## QR Codes

QR codes should be perceivable, discoverable, and usable by a wide range of users.



*Pictured: Surface Adaptive Kit*

There is no standard size for QR codes. Always test from a printed sample

High contrast is best for visibility and ease of scanning

Support discoverability with tactile wayfinding elements or braille

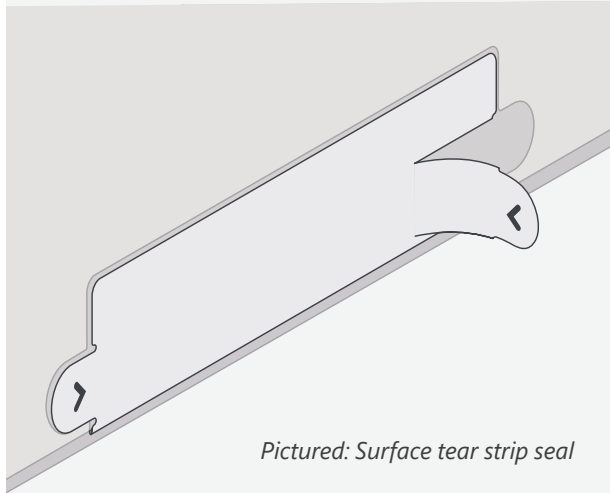
Provide a readable text URL near the QR code



# Accessible structures

# Outer box seals

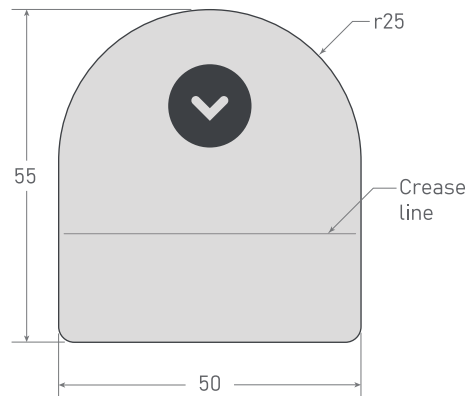
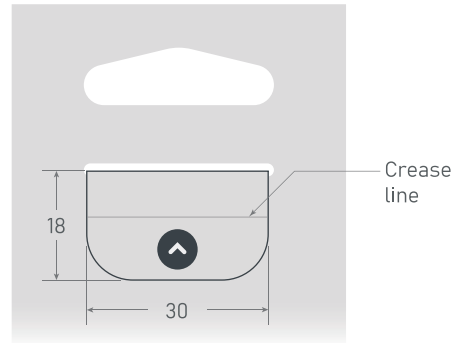
Seals with tabs secure the box and eliminate the need for hard-to-remove shrink wrap, allowing for opening without tools.



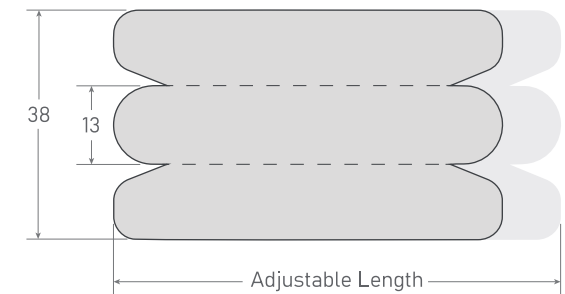
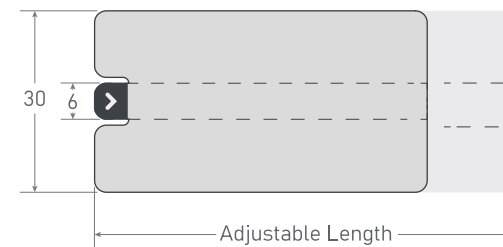
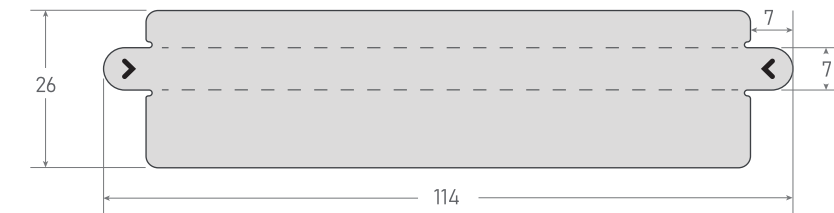
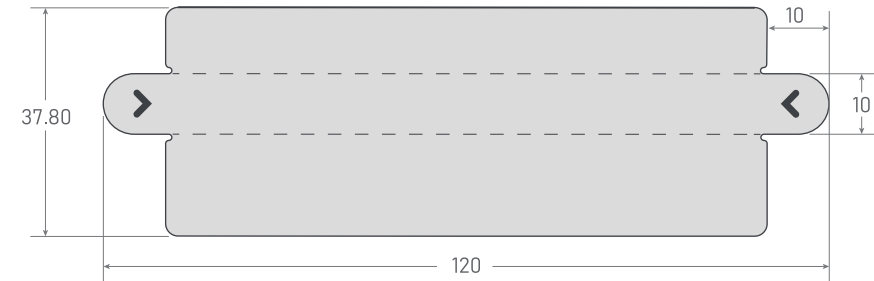
## Dimensions

Units: mm / Scale: 80%

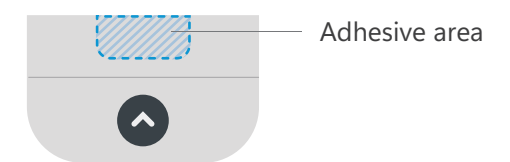
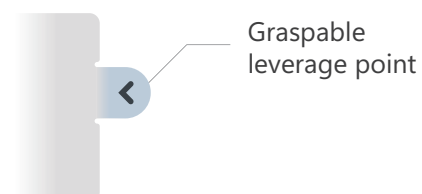
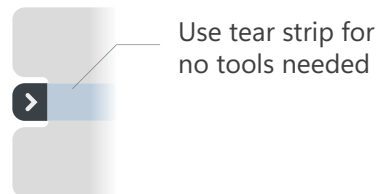
### Integrated tab (Top) Pull tab (Bottom)



### Tear strip

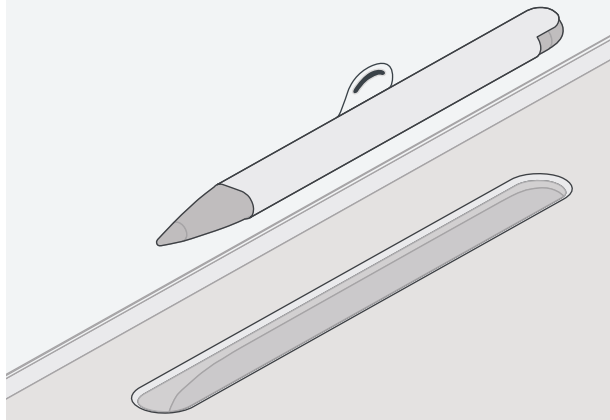


## Guidance



# Tabs

Tabs must be easily graspable and structurally robust enough to perform their intended function smoothly and without require excessive effort.

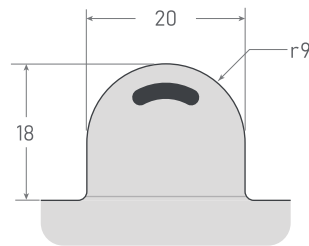
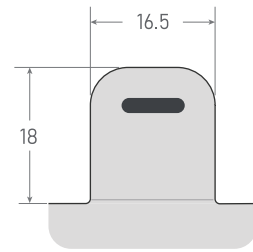


*Pictured: Surface Slim Pen 2 wrap*

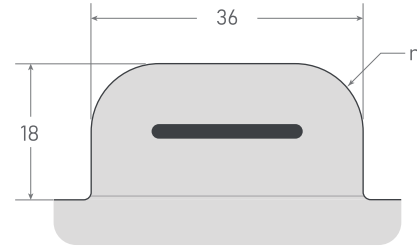
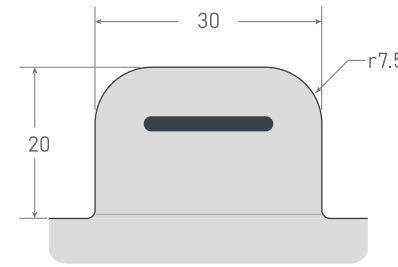
## Dimensions

Units: mm / Scale: 100%

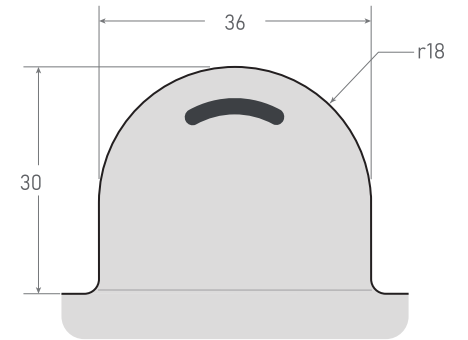
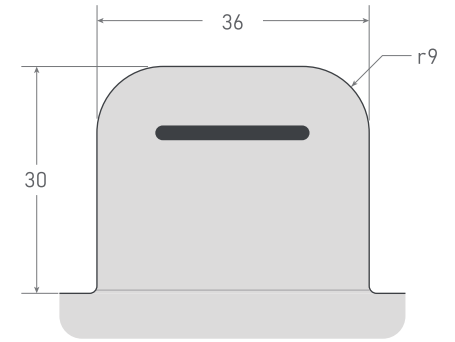
### Small



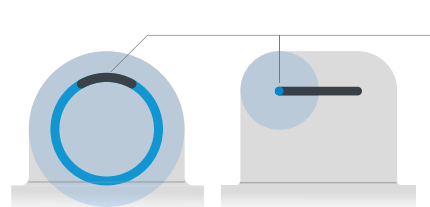
### Medium



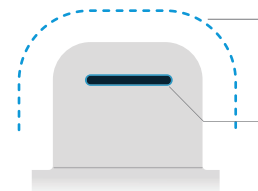
### Large



## Guidance



Concentric alignment of tabs with wayfinding iconography



Leave space around tab for access

Tactile elements enhance grip

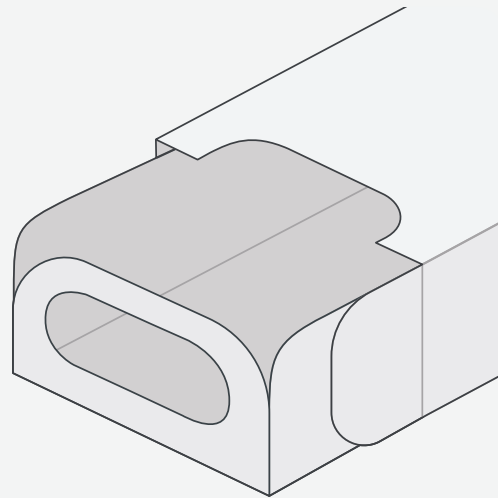


Size the tab based on the effort needed to lift

Adjust radius for strength

# Loops

Loops support both fine motor actions like pinching and gross motor actions like hooking or pulling, reducing effort and improving control. Use materials that are tactile and durable.

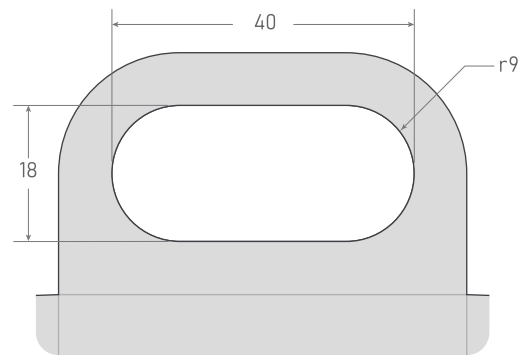
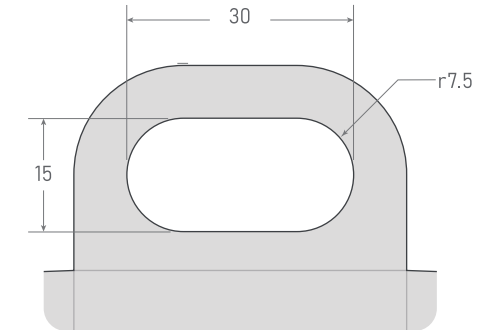


*Pictured: Loop on sleeve and tray*

## Dimensions

Units: mm / Scale: 100%

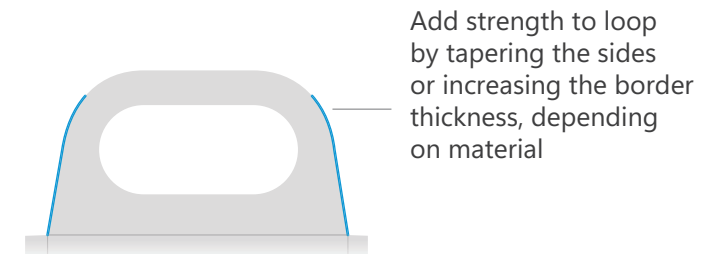
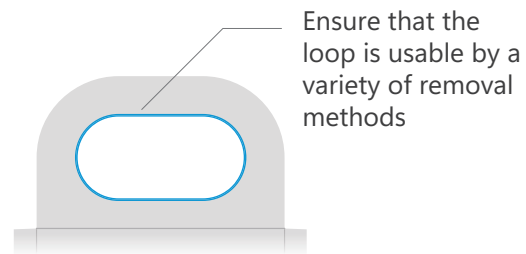
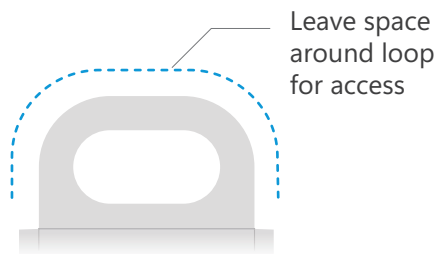
### Small



### Large

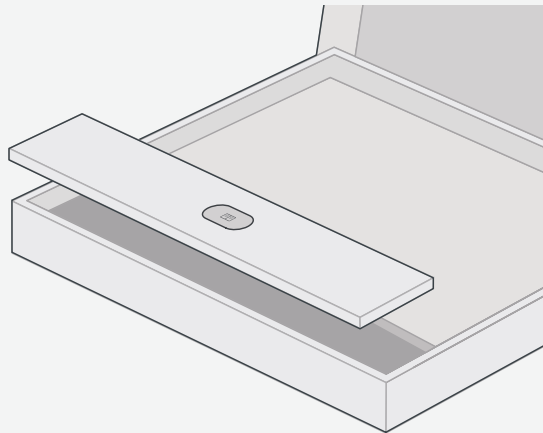


## Guidance



# Die cuts

Die cuts should be sized appropriately to be usable by a wide range of users.

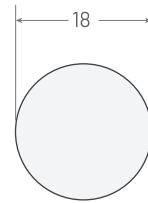


*Pictured: Surface documentation folio*

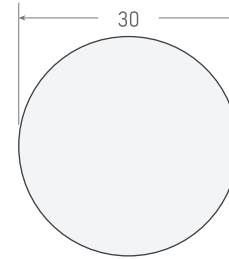
## Dimensions

Units: mm / Scale: 100%

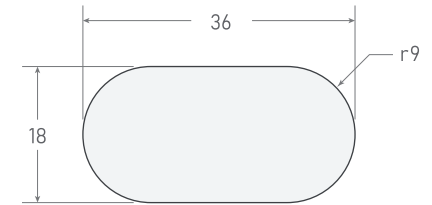
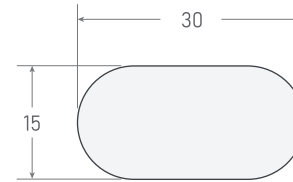
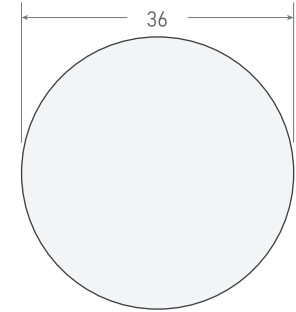
Small



Medium



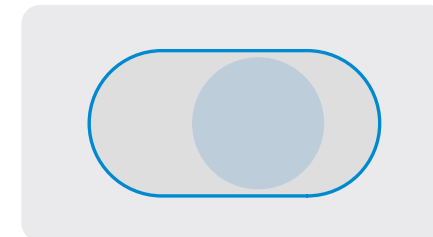
Large



## Guidance



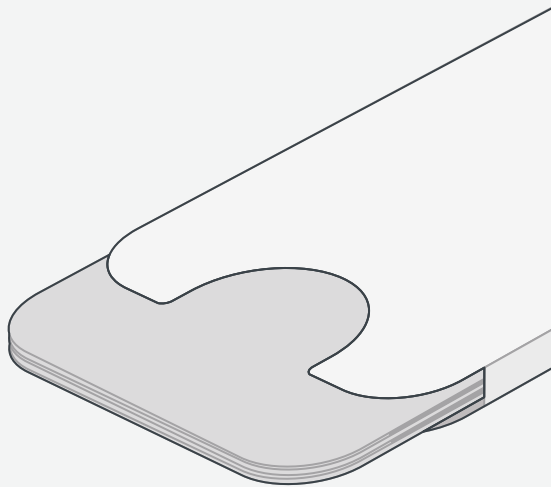
Add iconography below die cut to indicate contents or wayfinding cues



Keep the die cut sized to ensure that it is usable to a variety of removal methods

# Notches

Notches provide access along a component's edge for lifting elements and grasping documentation.

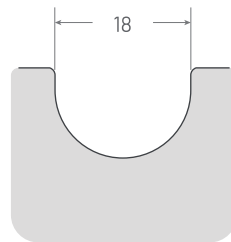


*Pictured: Notch on documentation folder*

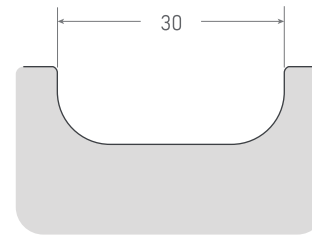
## Dimensions

Units: mm / Scale: 100%

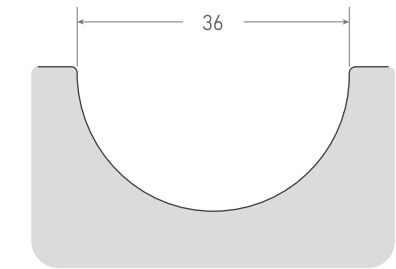
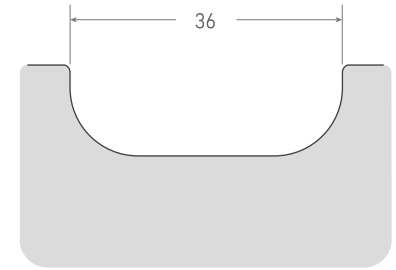
Small



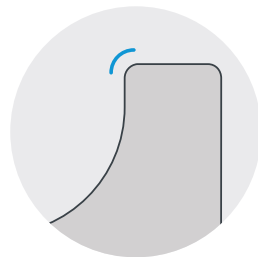
Medium



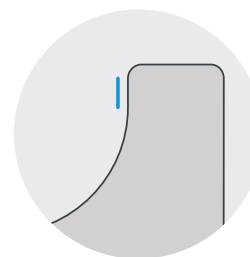
Large



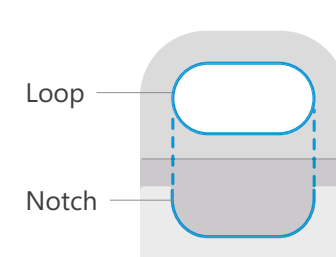
## Guidance



Rounded corners improve usability and comfort during use



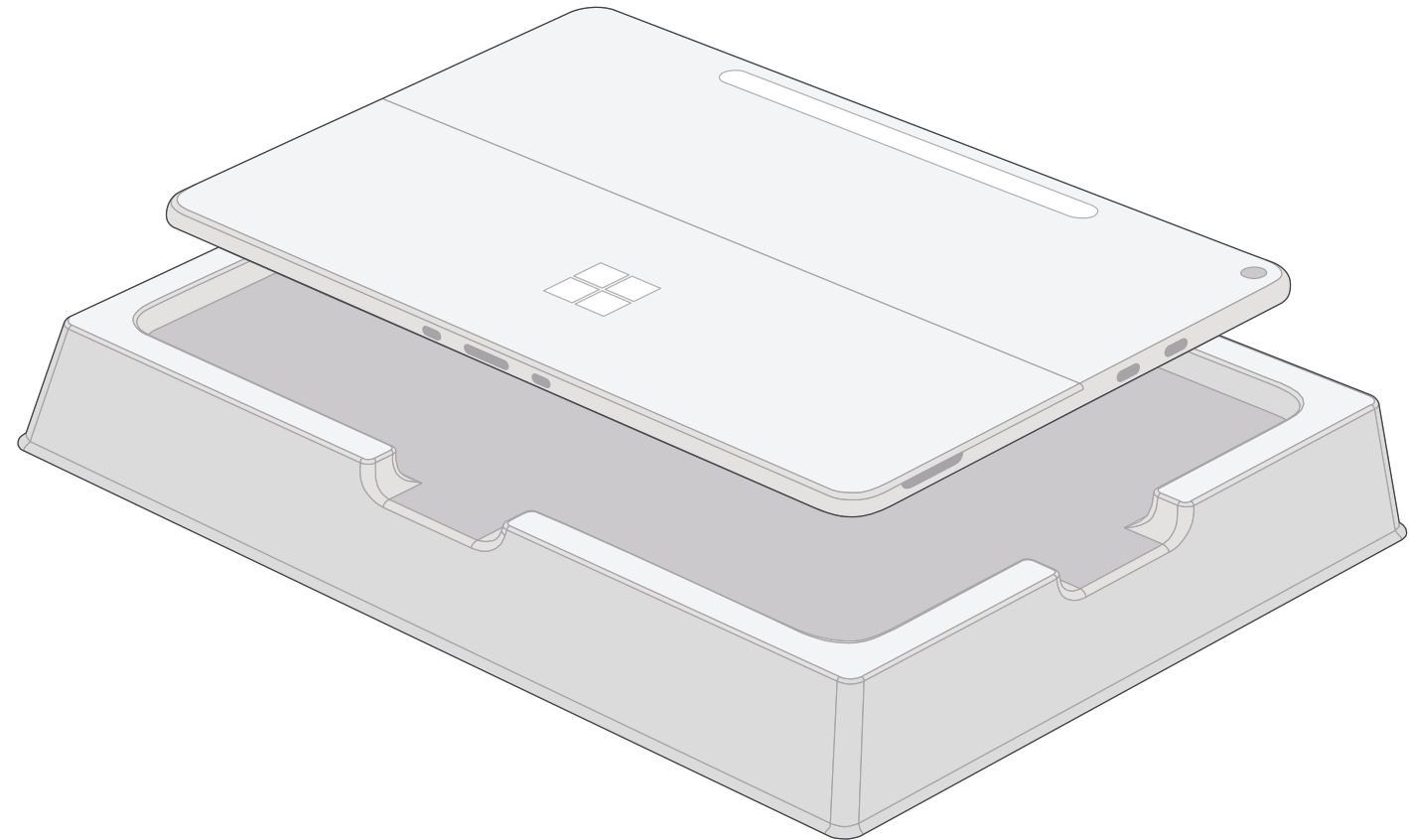
Increase notch depth to allow easier access for users



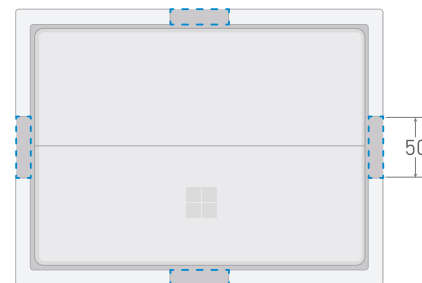
Mirror notch and loop widths to maintain visual consistency

## Channels

Channels make it easy to remove the product by letting you lift it from underneath, without requiring inverting the packaging, shaking, or prying.



### Guidance

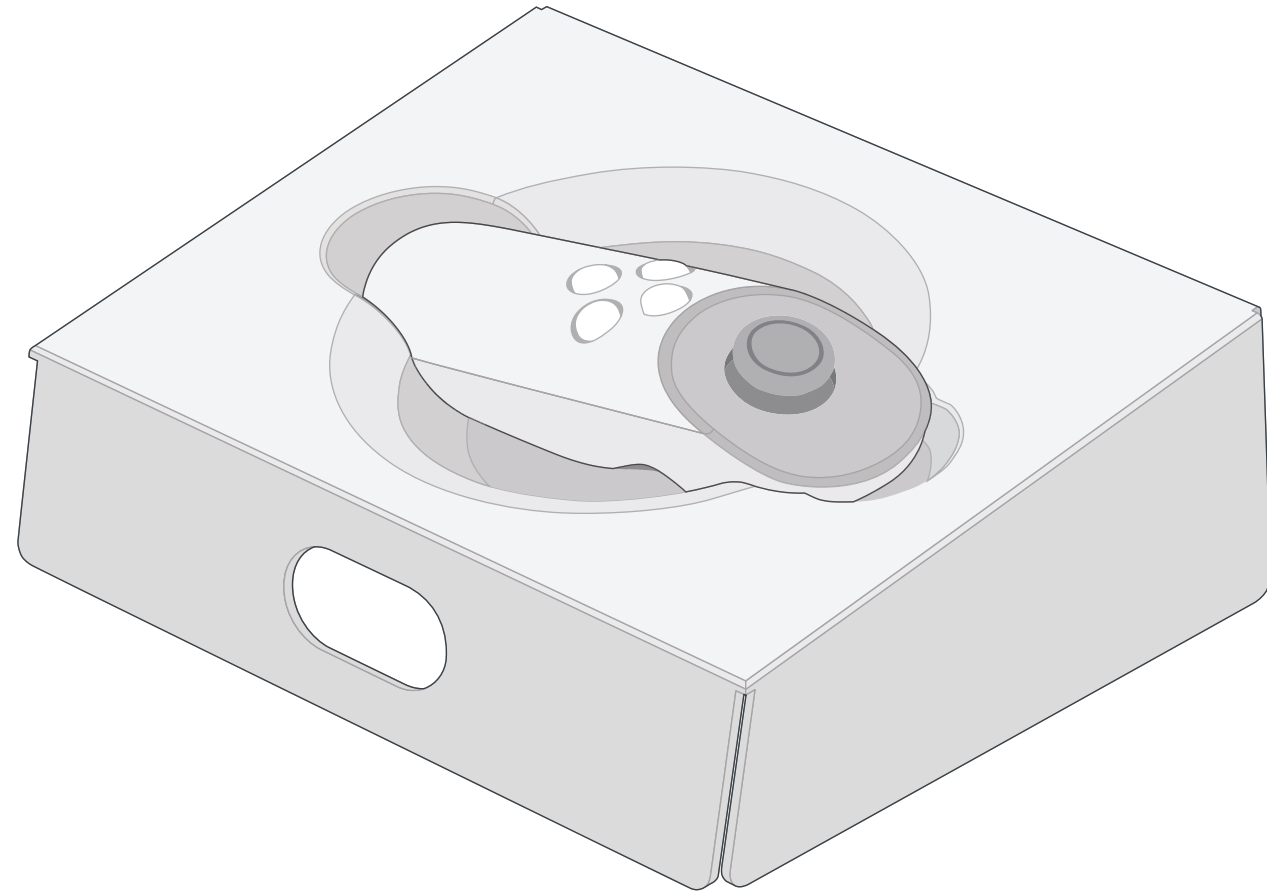


Size channels to guide the user naturally into position

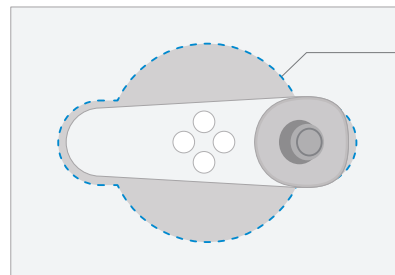
*Pictured: Surface paper pulp tray*

## Cavities

Cavities provide ample space around the product to grasp and remove the item.



### Guidance



Cavities must allow adequate finger clearance to remove the product

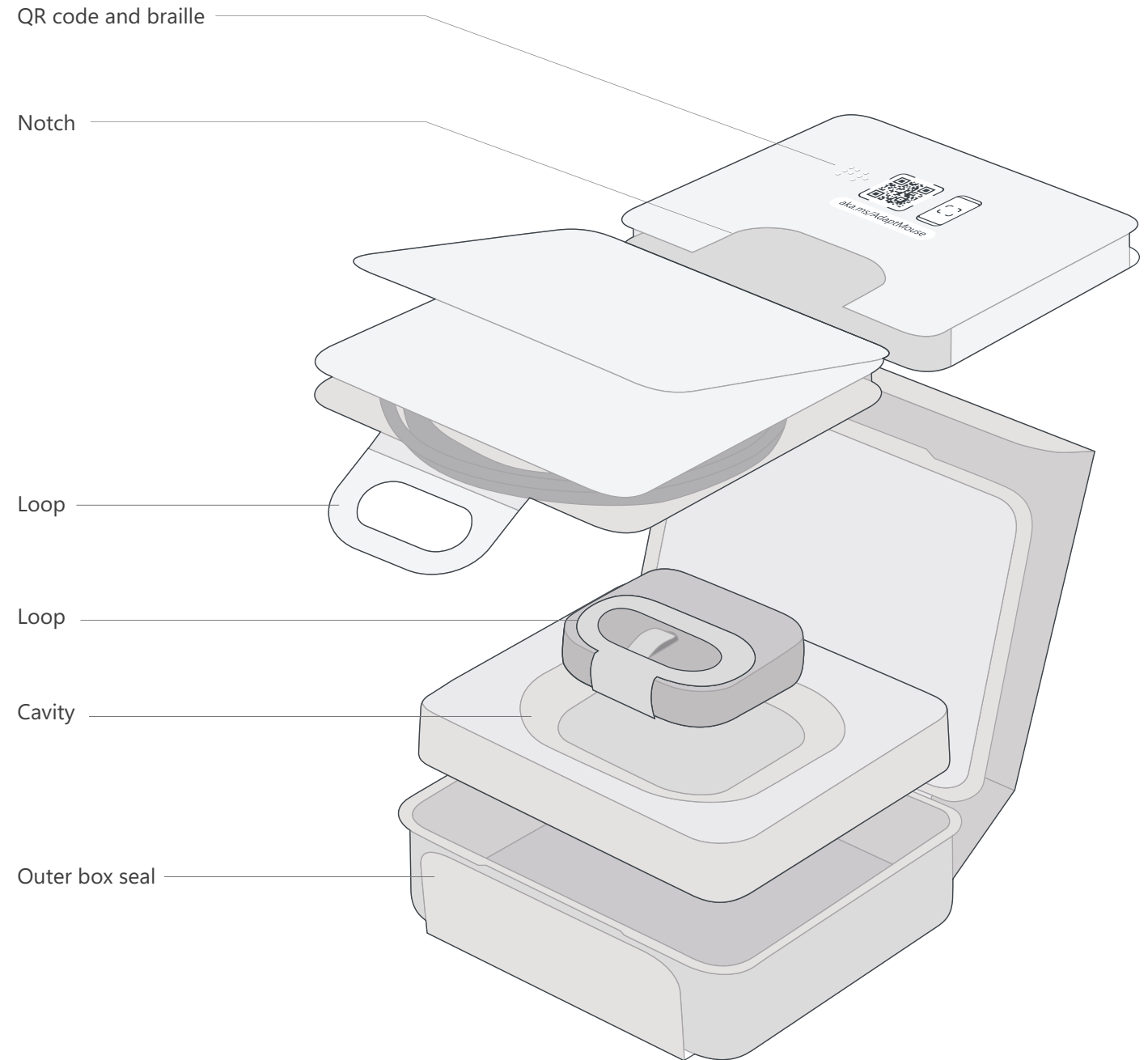
*Pictured: Xbox paper pulp tray*

Combined  
elements

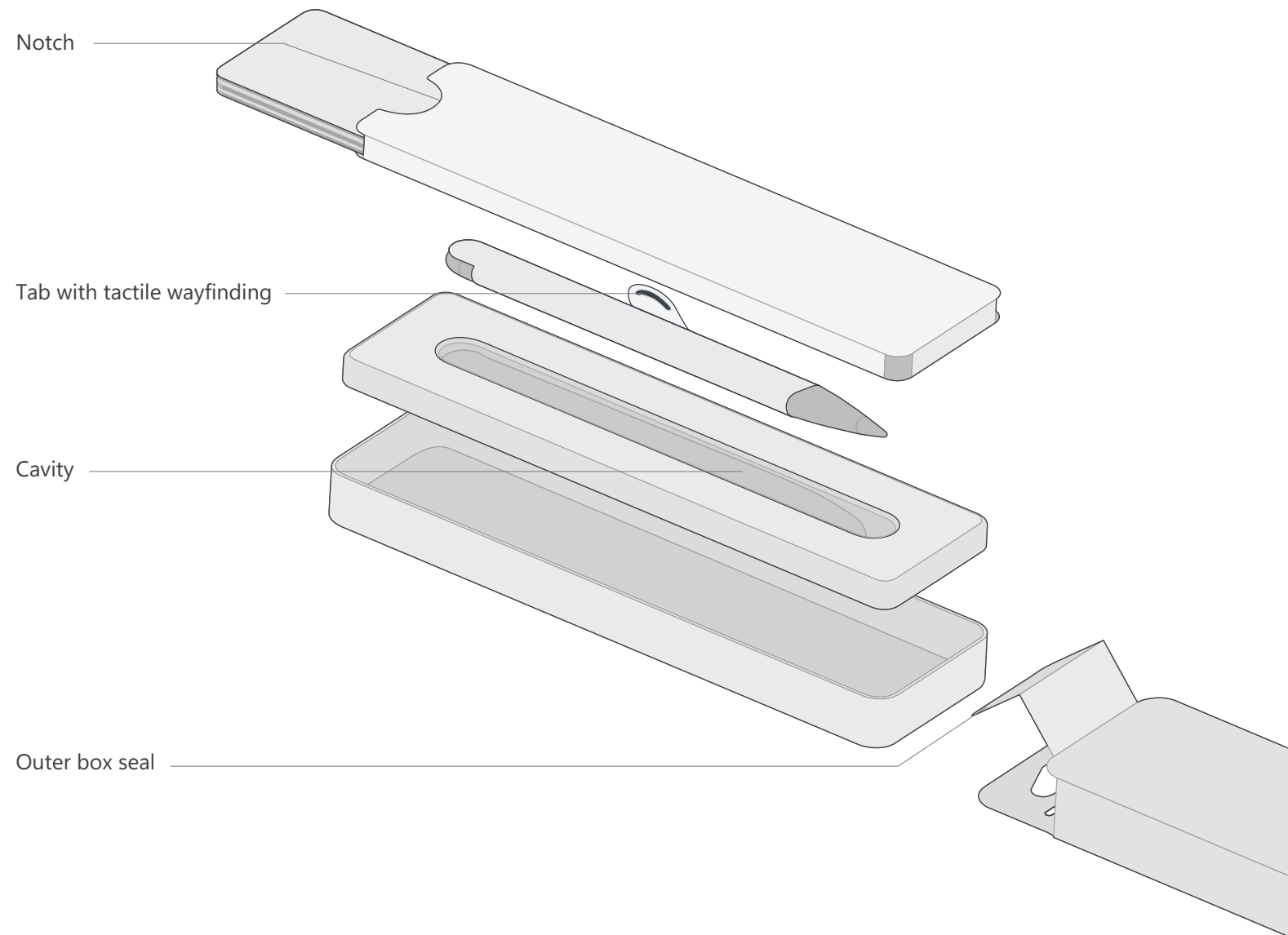
## Combined elements

The effectiveness of individual elements is heightened when combined as part of the packaging as a whole. Accessible elements reinforce one another to provide a wholistic experience.

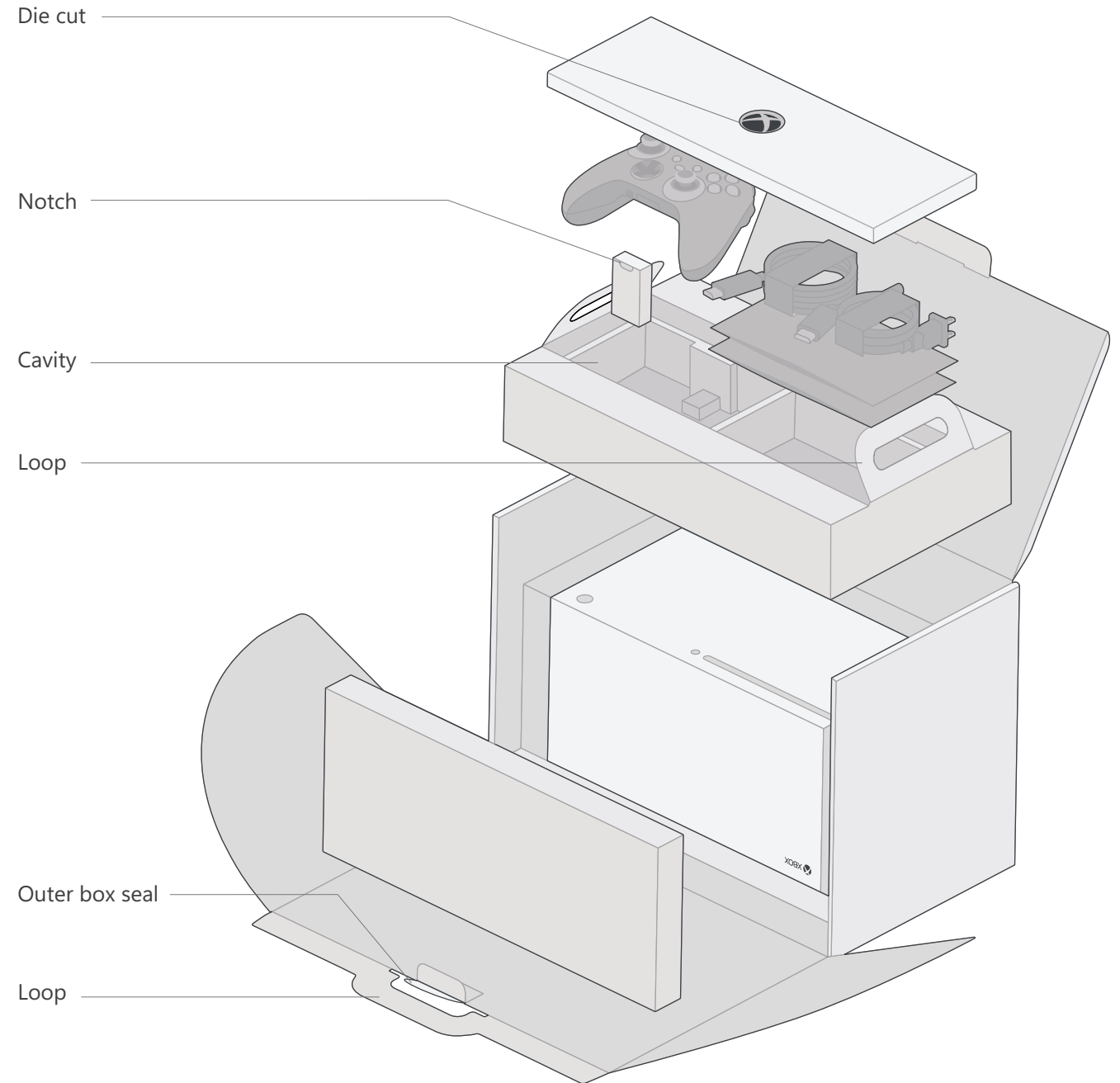
# Microsoft Adaptive Mouse



# Microsoft Surface Slim Pen 2



# Microsoft Xbox Series X



# Toolkit resources

## Common terms

**Accessibility** | *A design attribute*

The qualities that make a product, experience, or system usable by as many people as possible, regardless of ability.

**Affordance** | *A design cue*

A physical or visual characteristic that suggests how an element should be used.

**Braille** | *A tactile reading system*

A standardized system of raised dots used by people who are blind or have low vision to read text through touch.

**Contrast Ratio** | *A visual measurement*

The difference in luminance between foreground and background elements, used to evaluate text and image legibility.

**Digital Extension** | *An offpackage experience*

Content accessed through digital means, such as QR codes, that supplements information provided on the physical package.

**Discoverability** | *A usability condition*

The ability for a user to locate an element or feature without instruction.

**Fine Motor Control** | *A physical capability*

The ability to make small, precise movements using fingers and hands, often required for pinching, twisting, or manipulating small components.

**Force of Operation** | *A physical requirement*

The amount of physical effort required to open, pull, lift, or manipulate a component.

**Functional Information** | *Critical content*

Information required to understand, use, or access a product, as opposed to decorative or expressive content.

## Common terms

**Graphic Accessibility** | *Communication feature*

Visual design choices that support legibility, comprehension, and reliable interpretation across a range of visual abilities.

**Gross Motor Action** | *A physical capability*

Larger, less precise movements involving the hand, arm, or body, such as pulling, lifting, or hooking.

**Grip Zone** | *A functional area*

A region of a package intended for grasping, pulling, or holding during interaction.

**Inclusive Design** | *A design methodology*

A practice that considers the full range of human diversity and intentionally removes barriers to participation through design.

**Interaction** | *A user action*

The physical act of engaging with a package, such as opening, removing, unfolding, or handling.

**Structural Accessibility** | *A packaging feature*

Physical features that support intuitive handling, opening, and access without requiring fine motor control, excessive force, or specialized ability.

**System Consistency** | *A design principle*

The repeated use of similar forms, behaviors, and cues to support learnability and predictability.

**Tactility** | *A nonvisual cue*

Raised or textured elements that communicate information or support interaction through touch.

**Wayfinding** | *An orientation system*

Design cues that help users locate, identify, and navigate points of interaction or information.

# Accessible packaging checklist

## For people with low vision:

- Text has a contrast ratio of at least 3:1<sup>a</sup>
- Graphics have a contrast ratio of at least 3:1<sup>b</sup>

## For people with low vision or color blindness:

- Color is not the sole means of communicating information<sup>c</sup>

## For people with low or no vision:

- Packaging provides tactile (non-visual) wayfinding
- Braille is used to provide key information

## For people with learning disabilities:

- Content uses common, everyday language understandable to non-technical users<sup>d</sup>

## For people with limited mobility or strength:

- Opening the package does not require force of operation more than 3lbs (1.36kgs)
  - Packaging can be opened with only one hand
  - Packaging can be opened without ability to pinch
  - Packaging can be opened without ability to twist the wrist
  - Packaging can be opened without the ability to grasp with the hand
  - Packaging includes instructions for accessing instructions digitally, e.g. online or in an app
  - Packaging contains a single, clear point of entry
  - Packaging provides multiple access points to the product
- If opening the box requires multiple actions, the actions can be performed sequentially (one at a time)
  - Heavy boxes (over 5.0) pounds allow grasping with two hands
  - The width of the graspable area does not exceed 3"
  - Packaging does not require the use of a tool to open
  - For tear strips and BTS labels, a portion of the pull tab is free for grasping
  - Pull tabs have friction surface to make them easier to pull

# Accessible packaging checklist

In the end, data is only useful if used in meaningful ways.

Establishing and socializing our accessible packaging metrics has helped us legitimize investment, improve our elemental tool kit, baseline innovative efforts, and most importantly provide a measures-based platform on which to continue to evolve our work.

## Checklist notes

<sup>a</sup> Making sure text has sufficient contrast to its background makes it easier to read for people with low vision. This benchmark is leveraged from the *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)*. There are currently no recognized standards for print contrast ratios equivalent to the WCAG for digital content. Since there is no agreed upon formula for measuring print contrast, we use the digital source file to take our measurements. Keep in mind that different inks and substrates will combine to affect the final appearance when printed.

<sup>b</sup> This guidance is intended for instructional diagrams or other illustrations that help customers understand and use a product. It is not necessarily intended for logos or decorative illustrations.

<sup>c</sup> Approximately 4.5% of the world population have some form or color blindness, more than 350 million people worldwide. In addition, people with low vision and many older users can experience reduced color vision. Wayfinding symbols and instructional icons should include a secondary method for

indicating meaning such as text labels or differing shapes.

<sup>d</sup> Instructional content should use clear, concise language. Short sentences and paragraphs, bulleted lists, and descriptive headings all help keep content focused and easy to navigate.

## Keep the conversation going

Inclusive design is a never-ending journey. We hope this toolkit is useful to you in your work. We would love to hear how you have used it, if it has helped spark ideas, or helped get you unstuck.

Also, we would love to hear your thoughts on how to make it better.

We know we have much more to learn, and we learn best in conversation.

We can be reached at [\*AccessiblePackaging@microsoft.com\*](mailto:AccessiblePackaging@microsoft.com).

We can all grow better together.

Packaging & Content Team: **All In**

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