How to Make Accessible Word Documents

Text is the most often used format for presenting/sharing information. Luckily, it's also the most accessible format, *if formatted correctly.* You will use this document to practice the steps involved in making Word documents accessible.

Objectives:

- Apply headings to a document.
- Use appropriate fonts, font size, and color to improve readability.
- Add alt text to an image.
- Use tables appropriately and format them accessibly.
- Apply other tools to format text.

Headings

Sighted viewers can scan a page and use visual cues like larger or bold text to find the section of a document that they want to read. However, for someone using a screen reader, these visual markups are useless - leaving them to navigate word by word from the start of the document or webpage until they find the section they want.

Using styles and headings will allow a screen reader to navigate from section to section, making for a more convenient experience for the user.

How to apply headings:

1. Highlight document title, select 'Heading 1'.
2. Highlight section titles, select 'Heading 2'.
3. Highlight subsection titles, select 'Heading 3'.

Document Title (Heading 1)

Section 1 (Heading 2)

Glossier hot chicken cronut enamel pin, vice celiac cray. Bitters farm-to-table tilde hoodie. Bicycle rights keytar meh godard synth, occupy wolf austin iPhone vice hella offal kombucha pop-up.

Section 2 (Heading 2)

Kogi brunch before they sold out chia paleo. Literally cliché irony venom. Forage fashion axe snackwave flannel, activated charcoal trust fund cornhole irony caliche lo-fi semiotics mlkshk cardigan bespoke. Ethical kufiyah +1, celiac activated charcoal PBR&B bushwick.

Sub-Section to Section 2 (Heading 3)

Distillery schlitz migas, chambray mixtape truffaut occupy vinyl flannel banjo kale chips literally readymade dreamcatcher. Roof party sartorial vinyl, 3 wolf moon trust fund plaid +1 PBR&B squid heirloom hammock pok pok.

Section 3 (Heading 2)

Banjo meditation kombucha, hashtag hell of looms la croix knausgaard ugh cornhole pok pok affogato ethical fingerstache.

Alt text

Alt text refers to alternative text. It is text associated with an image so that someone unable to see the image understands what the image conveys. Alt text should be under 100 characters and provide a short and sweet description of the image given the context in which it is presented.

How to add alt text to images:

1. Right click on the image.
2. Select 'Format Picture'.
3. Click on 'Alt-text' and type a description of the image.
4. If the image is purely decorative and you want a screen reader to skip over it, make sure to go in and check to make sure the file name is not listed as default alt-text. Instead, press the spacebar, then enter.

   Note: Enter your alt text into the description field, not the title.

Tables

Tables should only be used to convey data, never to control the layout of a document. Screen readers will read a table from left to right starting at the top. The relationship between the cells is not defined by a screen reader if it is not formatted correctly (the category that a piece of data falls into will not be identified by the screen reader). Use MS Word's Table Tools editor to identify the different types of rows and columns.
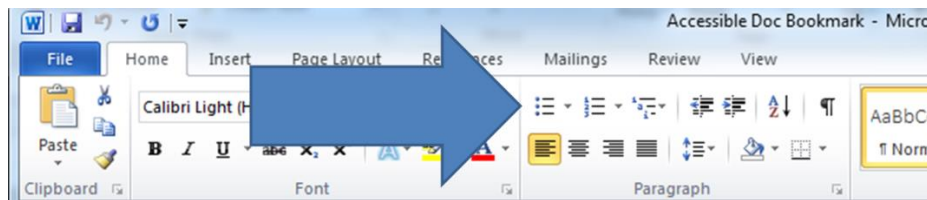
How to create an accessible table:

1. Add a caption for your table - select the table and right click to access the menu.
2. Highlight the row that includes the category titles.
3. Right click the row and select 'Table Properties'.
4. Click the *Row* tab, and check the checkbox that says "Repeat as header row at the top of each page" (unselect "Allow row to break across pages.").

County of Residence	Number of Employees	Average Commute Time (daily)
Thurston	120	10 mins
Mason	10	20 mins
Pierce	20	30 mins
Lewis	5	20 mins

Formatting Text

Lists

Use bulleted or numbered lists by using Word's formatting tools (not by typing the numbers or dashes yourself). Using the list formatting tool allows a screen reader to determine the length of the list and the reader can understand how the content is organized and how many items are on the list. When you click on what appears to be a list, the list icon will be selected. If it's not, then the "list" has not been formatted as a list.

How to reformat a list:

Step 1: Delete whatever is being used to define the item (a dash, a number, etc.)
Step 2: Highlight the list text.
Step 3: Click the bulleted or number list button (you can specify the type of list by clicking the dropdown menu option)

Spacing

Use page breaks, line spacing, and the increase/decrease indent keys to create extra space. Avoid tabbing over, hitting the space bar multiple times, and blank lines of text.

Columns of Text

I've seen many people use the tab key to create columns of text. Since a screen reader is going to read left to right, using tab to create columns will result in the screen reader

reading by line, not column. For instance, the columns below would be read as "Steve, Jess, Angela, Green, Brown, Blue, Pink, Red, Green…"

"Columizing" our favorite colors!

Steve	**Jess**	**Angela**
Green	Brown	Blue
Pink	Red	Green
Grey	Polka dots	Sparkles

Fonts

In terms of font accessibility, there are a number of principles to keep in mind:

1. Use real text rather than text within graphics.
2. Select basic, simple, easily-readable fonts.
3. Use a limited number of fonts.
4. Ensure sufficient contrast between the text and the background.
5. Avoid small font sizes.
6. Limit the use of font variations such as **bold**, *italics*, and ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.
7. Don't rely only on the appearance of the font (color, shape, font variation, placement, etc.) to convey meaning.
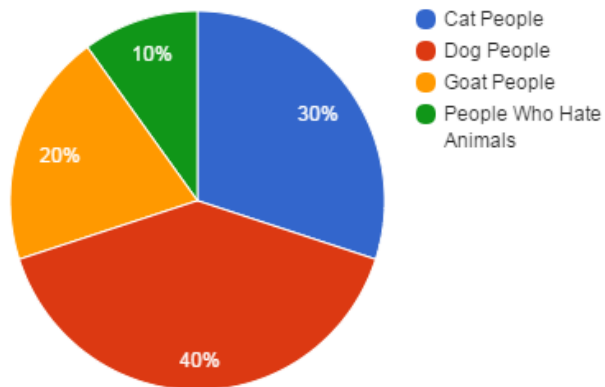8. Avoid blinking or moving text.

Content from http://webaim.org/techniques/fonts/

Descriptive Hyperlinks

When you want to include a URL in your document, you want to use descriptive hyperlinks. That involves embedding the URL into text. For a someone using a screen reader this is helpful by telling them where the link will take them and avoid having to listen to a screen reader read the full URL.

Color

Be careful with how you use color. Never use color alone to convey meaning (ex: "Items to edit are in red.") – if someone is colorblind they will miss those cues. For someone using a screen reader you should always have a text alternative available.
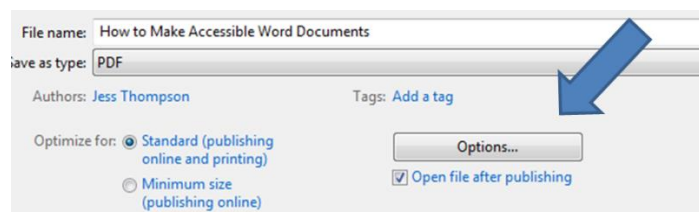
The Accessibility Checker!!

We aren't the only ones that want you to make your documents accessible, so does Microsoft – that's why they created the accessibility checker. You can go to file, then select "check for Issues" in order to get to the accessibility checker. Not only will it point out errors, but it will tell you how to fix them.

But, a few things to be aware of:

- ✓ the checker will not point out that you're not using headers
- ✓ the checker cannot determine if your alt text is appropriate
- ✓ the checker will not tell you anything in terms of font type, size, or color contrast
- ✓ the checker cannot determine if your headings are in the right order

Converting to PDF

Once you've created your accessible Word doc, you can save it as a PDF. After selecting the PDF file type, click on options.

Make sure "document structure tags for accessibility" is checked.

Options

Page range
● All
○ Current page
○ Selection
○ Page(s)   From: 1   To: 1

Publish what
● Document
○ Document showing markup

Include non-printing information
☐ Create bookmarks using:
    ○ Headings
    ○ Word bookmarks
☑ Document properties
☑ Document structure tags for accessibility

PDF options
☑ ISO 19005-1 compliant (PDF/A)
☑ Bitmap text when fonts may not be embedded
☐ Encrypt the document with a password

OK   Cancel