Creating Accessible Word Documents

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Structure

Headings
In the Home ribbon: Select text, select a heading level (and modify if needed)

Customizable Headings
Right-click on a Heading to update or modify

Lists
In the Home ribbon, use Paragraph settings: Select bulleted or numbered lists.

Text alignment
It is best to use left-align text as justified text has additional spaces that make it more difficult to read.

Landmarks
Insert page numbers in documents to help your readers find their way through a document. For longer documents, include a Table of Contents. If you are using styles, it will pick up the headings. To insert a Table of Contents, select Table of Contents on the References ribbon.
Table Tools

**Identify Header Rows**: Select the top row of the table (or rows that will be in header row) and then right-click and select **Table Properties**.

In the **Row tab**, make sure that the box is checked that says, *Repeat as header row at the top of each page*. Then click **OK**.
Provide Table Alt-Text: Select Table using your mouse, right-click within the table, select Table Properties from the menu, then select the Alt Text tab. Provide a title and in the description area add a summary of the table. Click OK.

Columns
In the **Page Layout ribbon**, select the dropdown arrow next to the **Columns** icon and select the number of columns or select the **More Columns** options to apply columns to particular text.

In the **More Columns pop-up menu**, you can select the number of columns, whether or not a line appears between columns, whether or not columns are of equal width, and whether you want the columns applied to the whole document or just to text that you selected. Click **OK**.
Hyperlinks

The text for a hyperlink should be descriptive of the information or page name that the link refers to. Avoid hyperlinks that are raw URLs (these are difficult for screen readers or text-to-speech assistive technology) or that say, Click here. Our office can be found in the Old Auditorium vs. https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BwfgGodvzzPBMFNTUE3eVFUbUk/view?usp=sharing
Can you imagine listening to a screen reader trying to read that? Also, try to save underlined text for URLs and use words like, “Important” to emphasize material.
Pictures and Color

Pictures

Alt-text

Select an image and Right-click on it, and select Format Picture.

Then on your screen 4 icons will show up in the Format Picture sidebar. Select the third icon, Layout and Properties, and then select ALT TEXT. For short or long descriptions, just add description information, not a title. Only description information is included if document is saved in another format.
Color
Color should not be the sole indicator of any type of information. To indicate importance, add an asterisk (and a key indicating that an asterisk indicates important information). Try to be conscious of the fact that some people are color blind, thus they cannot make distinctions between various colors.

If you have color in your documents, make sure that the contrast is high and that the color of the font (and the font type) do not make it difficult to read.

Textboxes

Textbox and WordArt cannot be read by screen readers. However, there are other options to set off a quote or paragraph or to make your text more visually appealing, like this, using Intense Quotes.

Select text that you want to emphasize, then click on Styles from the Home Ribbon and select Intense Quotes (you may have to use the down arrow or the expansion arrow to see all the styles available).

You can modify what an intense quote looks like by right-clicking on Intense Quote and select Modify.

Use the formatting window to change as you desire. Or, modify text first, then right-click on Intense Quote and select Update (so that new Intense Quote will look like the text you just created. After modifying, select OK.)
Word Art

Screen readers cannot read Word Art. Instead, use text effects. In the **Home Ribbon**, in the font area, select **Text Effects**. You can then select a text effect from the options provided or select Outline, Shadow, Reflection, Glow, Number Styles, Ligatures (connecting letters into one character), or Stylistic Sets to modify those options. Since Word does not test for color contrast, make sure any word art that you use has high contrast and is clearly visible.
Accessibility Checker
To check your document for accessibility, select **File** on the Home Ribbon, and then click on the Inspect Document icon, which says, **Check for Issues**. Select **Check Accessibility** from the dropdown menu.

The **Accessibility Checker** will list the **Errors**. Clicking on an **Error** will highlight it in your document and describe what is wrong down at the bottom of the Accessibility Checker window, where it says, **Additional Information**. Warnings are less serious issues that, none-the-less, make it more difficult for some users to access the document, such as blank spaces or non-descriptive URLs (like the one used as a bad example). You can also **Read more about making documents accessible** by selecting that link at the bottom of the Accessibility Checker.
Proofing Language

To make your document more accessible, select the proofing language by going to the Review ribbon, select Language and then Language again. Then, select Set Proofing Language from the dropdown menu.