

# Accessibility Checklist for MS Word

Use this checklist to guide you toward creating accessible MS Word documents. Start with practices that you find quick and easy, then build from there.

## Small changes can have a big impact

### GENERAL

- Describe the contents of the document clearly in the file name
- Add the document title to the Title field under Document Properties (i.e. Title, Author)
- Accept, decline, and turn Track Changes off after final changes have been made

### TABLES

- Use Tables for tabular data only--not for layout purposes (i.e. to create columns or sections)
- Create tables using Insert Table, as opposed to using tabs and spaces to create the look of a table
- Create tables that have a logical reading order (e.g., left to right, top to bottom)
- Do not leave any blank (empty) rows or columns in the table
- Do not merge table cells
- In Table Properties, ensure that the Allow Row To Break Across Pages option
- Specify header rows and columns using Table Style Options
- Repeat table headers at the top of each page
- Include a Table Caption that describes the content/purpose of the table.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

University of Washington, Creating Accessible Documents  
<https://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/overview/>

Microsoft Office, Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities webpage  
<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d>

### TEXT

- Use text that is at least 12-point font.
- Use a sans serif font (Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, or Verdana).
- Number pages using the built-in page numbering function.
- Create lists using the built-in bullet or numbering function (i.e. not typed characters, such as hyphens).
- Use style elements to organize and structure the document (Heading 1, Heading 2).
- Use the paragraph formatting function to add space between paragraphs or sections instead of using hard returns
- Hyperlink text should indicate the content of the destination link; do not use "click here."
- Colour should not be the only way to differentiate or emphasize information

### IMAGES AND OTHER VISUAL ELEMENTS

- Remove background images and watermarks.
- Include meaningful Alternative Text (i.e. a built in function in Word where the author can provide a short description of the nature and content of each visual).
- Use the Border tool, instead of line shapes or textboxes, to draw attention to a section of text
- Label decorative images are labeled as "decorative" in the alternative text
- Ensure sufficient colour contrast between the background and text and images using the Colour Contrast Analyser
- Complex images (i.e. graphs) are described in a caption near the image