Microsoft Word®

Follow these best practices to help make Word® documents accessible.

Use document styles

Use heading and paragraph styles with logical hierarchy to structure the document.

Use short headings

Keep headings short so readers can quickly navigate the document.

Avoid using repeated blank characters

Extra spaces, tabs, and empty paragraphs add confusion to content for assistive technology users. Use built-in formatting tools to adjust layout elements like columns, white space, and page breaks.

Use simple table structure

Avoid using nested tables, merged or split cells, or blank cells for formatting and layout. Always use header rows to provide context to the table data. Do not put the table title inside the table.

Name hyperlinks appropriately

Links should contain meaningful text that describes the link's destination or subject. Do not use generic language, such as "click here."

Align images with text

When possible, insert images in line with text. When inserting an image with text wrap, the anchor icon indicates when assistive technology will read the alt text for the image. Do not place it in the middle of a sentence or paragraph.

Add alt text to images and objects

Use informative and concise alt text descriptions for important graphics and objects. This includes photos, illustrations, charts and graphs, and infographics. Use the **Mark as decorative** checkbox for objects that are only used for visual design.

Check color contrast

Color contrast must meet standards throughout the document. Normal text to background ratio is 4.5:1 (for DHS, this standard is 7:1). Non-text elements and large text (a minimum of 14pt bold or 18pt) ratios are 3:1 (for DHS, this standard is 4.5:1).

Fill in document properties

Enter title, subject, and author in the document's properties.

Use the Accessibility Checker tool

This built-in tool in **Review** > **Check Accessibility** provides details on potential accessibility issues and gives suggestions on how to correct them. However, it can't find everything. Do manual checks in addition to the automated accessibility checker.

"Save As" a PDF

If the document will be converted to a PDF, always use the **Save As** option and choose PDF as the file type. Never use **Print to PDF**.

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