

Quick Guide for Accessible Word Documents

Applying Heading Styles

Headings provide a hierarchy of the document and allow users of assistive technology (AT) to navigate to sections of the content.

1. Select the text to be a **Heading** (ex. document title, new section or chapter name).
2. From the **Home** ribbon in the **Styles** group, select **Heading 1**, **Heading 2** or another level through **Heading 6**.



3. Note the following:
 - a. Where possible, use heading levels in numerical sequence.
 - b. It is good practice to use **Heading 1** once, such as the document title. (The “**Title**” style is not a recognized element.)
 - c. Use of multiple **Heading 2**'s (or **Heading 3-6**) is common.

Modifying the Look of Headings

To change the look and feel of the default heading styles:

1. In **Home > Styles**, locate the desired style name.
2. Activate the context menu (or right-click) and select **Modify...**
3. In the **Modify Styles** dialog change the formatting properties to achieve the desired appearance.

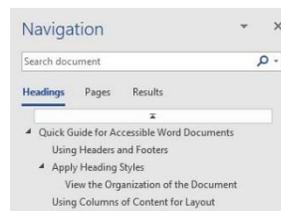
To use the formatting properties already applied to text:

1. Highlight the text that has the desired appearance.
2. In **Home > Styles**, locate the desired style name.
3. Activate the context menu (or right-click) and select **Update [Style Name] to Match Selection**.
4. Note the text in the document does not change but the style in the **Styles** pane reflects the properties of the highlighted text.

View the Organization of the Document

The **Navigation Pane** can provide a visual outline of the hierarchy of the document.

1. Navigate to the **View** ribbon and in the **Show** group select **Navigation Pane**.
2. In the pane that opens on the left side of the screen, ensure the **Headings** tab is selected.
3. Note the expanded items and the indentions notating their level.



Inserting Table of Contents

Table of Contents provide an outline of the document and allow users to quickly navigate within the document. Generally, large documents should contain linked **Table of Contents**.

1. Navigate to the **References** ribbon.
2. Locate and activate the **Table of Contents** control.
3. From the available options, select one of the **Built-In > Automatic Table** options.
4. Note a **Table of Contents** has been placed in the document using the **headings** of the document as the line items.



Updating a Table of Contents

If sections are added or removed from your document that are labeled by **heading styles**, then the **table of contents** can quickly and easily be updated to reflect the changes.

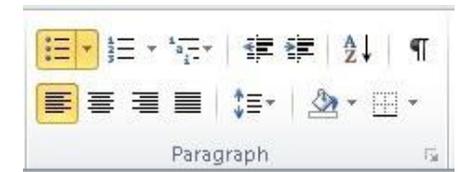
1. Locate the **Table of Contents** within the document.
2. Activate the context menu (or right-click) in the **Table of Contents** and select **Update Field...**
3. Within the **Update Table of Contents** dialog select the **Update Entire Table** radio button.
4. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
5. Note the changes within the **Table of Contents**.



Adding or Updating Lists

Lists group related items and can provide hierarchical information. Lists can be ordered (numbers & letters) or unordered (bullets).

1. Locate and select the desired text or place the cursor at the desired location for a list
2. On the **Home** tab, navigate to the **Paragraph** group and select **Bullets** or **Numbering**. Select the arrow next to **Bullets** or **Numbering** to change the list style
3. Note: Nested list items need to be a different list style than the parent. Example: From filled-in circle bullets, to hollow circle bullets.



Inserting Hyperlinks

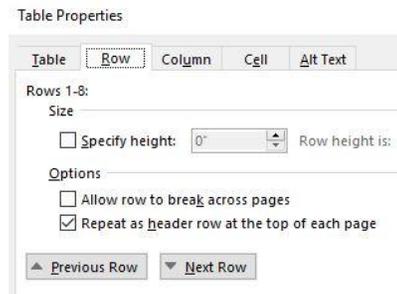
Where possible use unique, meaningful phrases as link text so that users understand the purpose of the link.

1. Place the cursor where the hyperlink should be added.
2. On the **Insert** tab, in the **Links** group, activate **Hyperlink** or press **CTRL+K** to open the **Insert Hyperlink** dialog box.
3. In the **Text to display** field, type the phrase that briefly describes the link destination or use the raw URL.
4. In the **Address** box, type the raw URL.
5. Navigate to and activate **OK**.

Check Table Structure

Tables should be kept simple. A data cell should only relate to one row and/or column header. There should not be any merged cells.

1. To insert a table, navigate to the **Insert** ribbon. In the **Tables** group, select the **Table** control and select the desired size of the table.
2. Locate the inserted **Table** and fill in all cells with content. No header cell (the first row of cells) should be blank. Data cells should also not be blank where possible (hint: enter a – or 0).
3. Select the content within the **first row** of the **Table**.
4. Activate the context menu (or right-click) on one of the **highlighted cells** and select **Table Properties**.
5. With the **Row** tab selected, ensure the checkbox for **Repeat as header row at the top of each page** is checked.
6. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
7. Select the contents of the **entire Table**.
8. Activate the context menu (or right-click) on one of the **highlighted cells** and select **Table Properties**. (This step must be done separate from the previous steps.)



9. With the **Table** tab selected, ensure **None** is selected under **Text Wrapping**.
10. Navigate to the **Row** tab and ensure the checkbox for **Allow row to break across pages** is not checked.
11. Navigate to and activate **OK**.

Add Alternate Text to Graphics

Alternate (ALT) text should be added to pictures, clip art, charts, and shapes. **Note: Alternate text** should *not* be applied to **tables**.

1. *Pre-step for Complex Images:* If there are multiple pieces of an image, select all the pieces of the image. From the context menu (or right click) select **Group > Group** to create one large image.
2. Activate the context menu (or right click) on the image or object and select **Format**.
3. Navigate to **Layout & Properties > Alt Text**.
4. Type a description of the image or object into the **Description** field. The image description should focus on the purpose of the image. Keep the description to 250 characters or less.
 - a. **Note:** For complex images such as process flows and charts, additional description needs to be added in surrounding text or in an appendix to convey data and hierarchical information.
 - b. **Note:** Where images of text cannot be avoided, the words within the image must be included in the **Description**.
5. Images must have a text wrap of **In Line with Text** for the ALT text to be read. Either:
 - a. Select the **Layout Options** control of a selected image and choose **In Line with Text**. Or,
 - b. Activate the context menu (or right-click) on an image and select **Wrap Text > In Line with Text**.
6. When possible, avoid the use of **SmartArt** as not all assistive technologies convey the provided **Description**.



Using Headers and Footers

Contents within the **Header** and **Footer** (top and bottom of a page) area of the document are not automatically available to users of AT. Important information (e.g. watermark contents, contact information, etc.) used in these areas must be provided at least once in the main body of the document, usually on the first page. (Page numbers do not apply to this practice.)

1. To access the **Header/Footer** area, navigate to **Insert > Header** or **Footer** on the ribbon.
2. Select the desired style.

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- Once the area becomes active in the document, type the desired content on the first page.
- Then navigate to the **Header/Footer** ribbon and in the **Options** group select the **Different First Page** checkbox. This will enforce only displaying the **Header/Footer** content on the following pages.



Use Effective Color and Contrast

Effective use of color will ensure that content is readable, accessible, and appealing.

- Color should not be used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.
 - Example: graphs may need **textured patterns** to represent data sets. Or important information should have an additional **textual representation** such as an asterisk (*).
- Verify the text color provides enough contrast against the background color. There must be a minimum contrast ratio of **4.5:1**.
 - Use the **Font Color** picker from the **Home** ribbon to choose an appropriate color against the background.

Using Columns for Layout

Columns can be useful to portray a specific layout, but the built-in features must be used rather than tabs or blank spaces.

- Navigate to the **Layout** ribbon and in the **Page Setup** group select **Columns**.
- Choose the desired number of **columns**.
- To separate content at a specific point, place the cursor at the point where a **Column** should end.
- Within **Layout > Page Setup > Breaks** choose **Column** to push content into the next **Column** area.

Enter Document Properties

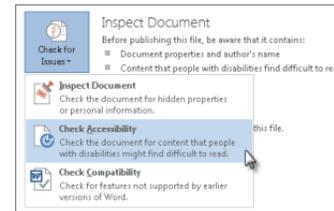
Document **Titles** help users know what document they are viewing.

- Navigate to and select **File > Info > Properties**
- Select **Show Document Panel** or **Advanced Properties**
- Enter a meaningful title in the **Title** field.
- Optional: Enter an **Author** (i.e. individual or organization name)

Running the Accessibility Checker

The **Accessibility Checker** can help identify some issues. However, it can only check for a handful of items.

- Navigate to **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**



- The **Accessibility Checker** pane will appear with inspection results.
- Select a specific issue to see **Additional Information** and steps to take to remedy the issue.

Additional Hints

- Avoid using **text boxes** when possible. Users of AT will not be informed of their contents.
- Use **Line Spacing** (**Home > Paragraph**) and **Page Breaks** (**Layout > Breaks > Page Break**) to create the appearance of white space.
- Avoid using **watermarks**. If a **watermark** must be used, ensure the contents of the **watermark** is contained elsewhere in the document and that the contrast of the **watermark** is sufficient against the document text over it.
- Use san-serif fonts (**Arial**, **Verdana**). **Times New Roman** or **Calibri** (serif fonts) are also commonly accepted.
- Keep text sizes between **12-18pt** fonts.
- Avoid the use of **Drop Caps**.