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.

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.
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**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.
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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3. Once the area becomes active in the document, type the desired content on the first page.
4. 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.

1. Color should not be used as the only visual means of conveying information, indicating an action, prompting a response, or distinguishing a visual element.
   a. Example: graphs may need textured patterns to represent data sets. Or important information should have an additional textual representation such as an asterisk (*).
2. Verify the text color provides enough contrast against the background color. There must be a minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1.
   a. 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.
1. Navigate to the Layout ribbon and in the Page Setup group select Columns.
2. Choose the desired number of columns.
3. To separate content at a specific point, place the cursor at the point where a Column should end.
4. 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.
1. Navigate to and select File > Info > Properties
2. Select Show Document Panel or Advanced Properties
3. Enter a meaningful title in the Title field.
4. 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.

1. Navigate to File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility
2. The Accessibility Checker pane will appear with inspection results.
3. Select a specific issue to see Additional Information and steps to take to remedy the issue.

Additional Hints
1. Avoid using text boxes when possible. Users of AT will not be informed of their contents.
2. Use Line Spacing (Home > Paragraph) and Page Breaks (Layout > Breaks > Page Break) to create the appearance of white space.
3. 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.
4. Use san-serif fonts (Arial, Verdana). Times New Roman or Calibri (serif fonts) are also commonly accepted.
6. Avoid the use of Drop Caps.