ADA Accessible Word Document

Any electronic document that you post to the web and/or send out through email or other forms of communication must be ADA accessible. This QRD will cover best practices for ADA accessibility, how to use the Word accessibility checker, and how to convert to PDF.
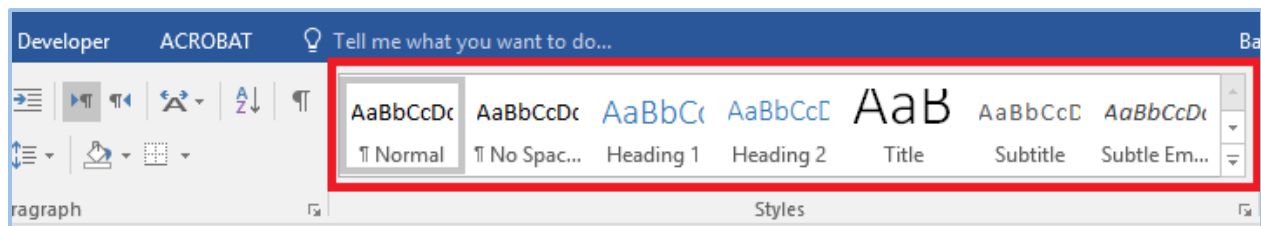
Best Practices

Headings

Use headings and make sure you properly order them. It is important to use headings appropriately to convey document structure. For example, a heading 2 should follow a heading 1, a heading 3 should follow a heading 2 and so on. You should not "skip" levels, for example, heading 1 directly to heading 3.

To insert a heading:

1. Type and then highlight the words that you want to be the **title** of your document. If we use this document as an example, "ADA Accessible Word Document" would be the title.

2. Click **Heading 1** in the styles section.
   Important Note: The first heading in your document should always be the title of the document and it should always be styled as a Heading 1. There should only be one Heading 1 in a document.

3. Each section heading should be styled as a **Heading 2**. Again, using this document as an example; "Best Practices", "Word Accessibility Checker", and "Convert to PDF" are all styled as a **Heading 2**.

4. If any of the heading 2 sections have subsections, they should be styled as a **Heading 3**. Using this document as an example; "Headings", "Alt Text", "Tables", "Hyperlinks", "Identify Document Language", "Headers and Footers", "Color Contrast", and "Visual Styles" are all styled as a **Heading 3** because they are subsections of the Heading 2, "Best Practices".
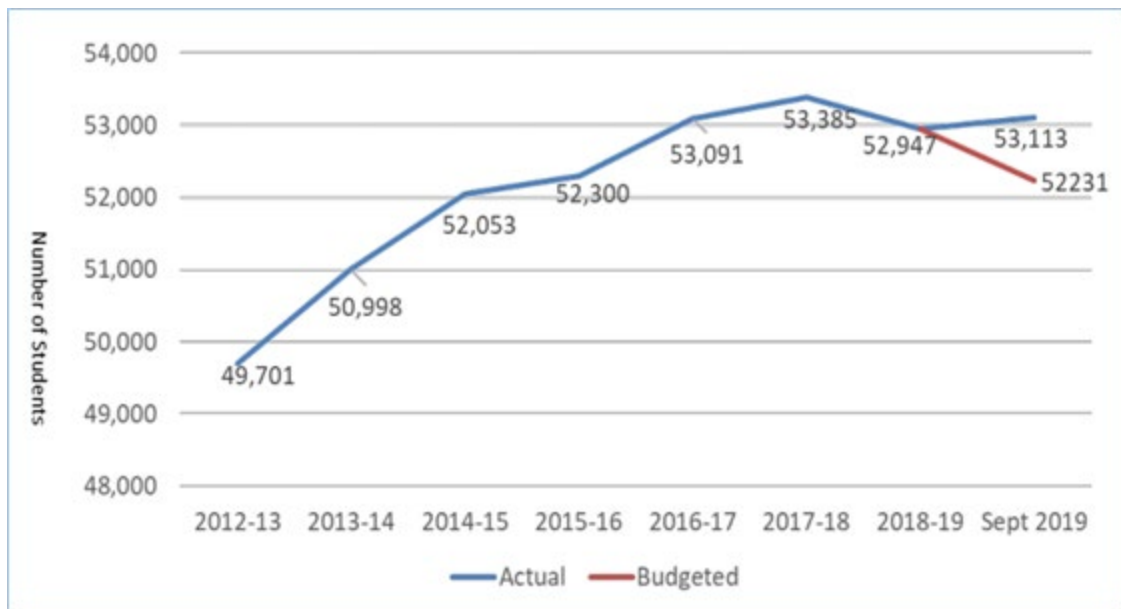
Alt Text

It is very important that any image, shape, chart, graphic, table, or other object in a document has alternate text. Provide accurate text descriptions that give a sight-impaired person enough information to understand the object and its purpose in the document.

To add alt text:

1. Right click on the object and then click **Edit Alt Text**. The Alt Text pane opens on the right. Enter a detailed description of the image in the text box.

   Important: Images are only ADA accessible if there is alternate text that describes what is in the image. For complex graphs or charts, all the data points must be described. For example, the Alt Text for the graph below would be:

   "A line graph showing the number of students enrolled at SPS as of October of each school year, starting with 2012 and ending with 2019. 49,701 students enrolled in October 2012. 50,998 students enrolled in October 2013. 52,053 students enrolled in October 2014. 52,300 students enrolled in October 2015. 53,091 students enrolled in October 2016. 53,385 students enrolled in October 2017. 52,947 students enrolled in October 2018. 53,113 students enrolled in September 2019. SPS budgeted for 52,231 students for 2019."

2. Once you have entered Alt Text, you can either close the Alt Text pane or click on another image/object to add alt text.

Links

Keep in mind two things:

- First, write meaningful link text that gives an indication of the purpose of the link. Avoid phrases that do not make sense out of context, such as "click here", "here", or "read more".

- Second, include the full URL in the document as well. This allows users to copy and paste if necessary. In addition, if the document is printed people can still type the URL. (http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/web/links/)

To insert a link:

1. In the ribbon bar, click the **Insert** tab and then click **Link**.
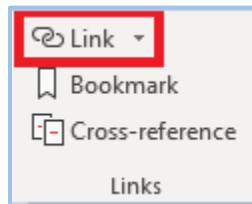
2. In the **Text to display** field enter meaningful text that explains what kind of information a person will find when they click this link.

3. Click the **ScreenTip** button.
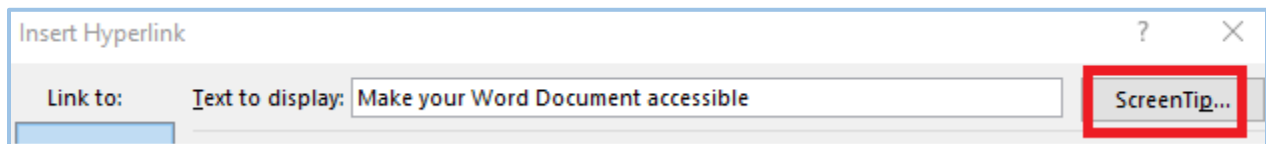
4. Enter a **ScreenTip text** that tells a person what website the link is pointing to (i.e. "Microsoft Support website").

5. Click **OK**.

6. Paste the URL into the **Address** field.

7. Click **OK**.

8. Paste the full URL into the document for the users who print it out.

Tables

Avoid tables as much as possible. Do not use tables for layout. Tables can be very difficult for screen reader users to understand unless they include markup that explicitly defines the relationships between all the headers and data cells. You can make a simple table accessible in Word if it meets the following conditions:

- The table has only one row of column headers at the top.
- The top row is marked as a header row.
- There are no other header cells.
- There are no merged cells.
- There are no nested tables within the table.
- The table was not created using the "Draw Table" option in Word.

To make a simple table accessible:

1. Right click on the top row and then click **Table Properties**. A dialog box pops up.

2. Click **Row** tab and then check **Repeat as header row at the top of each page**.

3. Uncheck **Allow row to break across pages**.
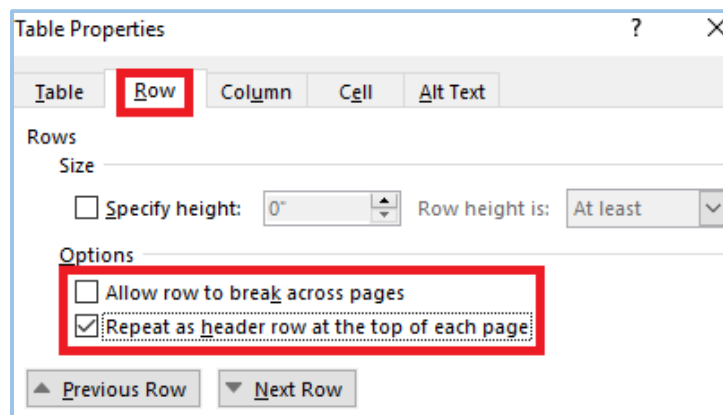
4. Click **OK**.

Identify Document Language

To identify the document's language:

1. Select all the text in your document (Ctrl + A) and then click the **Review** tab.

2. Click **Language** (you may have to click **Language** twice) and then click **Set Proofing Language**.

3. Select the correct language from the list and then click **OK**.

4. To define a different language for part of the document, select each foreign language section individually and go through the same process.

Headers and Footers

Do not put vital information in headers and footers because most screen readers do not even announce the presence of headers and footers. If you do have important information in the header or footer make sure to repeat that information at or near the start of the main content area.

Color Contrast

Avoid using light colored text on white or light backgrounds and avoid dark colored text on darker backgrounds. If the contrast is not high enough a person with low vision will not be able to distinguish between the text and the background. If you are not sure if your contrast is high enough you can check with this Color Contrast Checker. It needs to pass both **WCAG AA** standards. It does not need to pass the WCAG AAA standards. (http://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/)

Visual Styles

While you are building your document keep in mind screen readers ignore visual styles. They do not read or announce colors, backgrounds, font styles, borders, visual layout, or font size. You should not rely on any purely visual aspect of your document to convey meaning. Ensure to always include a text-based method of conveying meaning that screen readers can speak out loud.

Important! For example, if there is a bolded or highlighted sentence in your document people with sight will know to pay special attention to that section. However, a screen reader will read that sentence the same as any other sentence. So, to convey that this is an important section to a screen reader we need to put the word "important" or "warning" in front of the sentence. Screen readers also do not describe italics and underline.
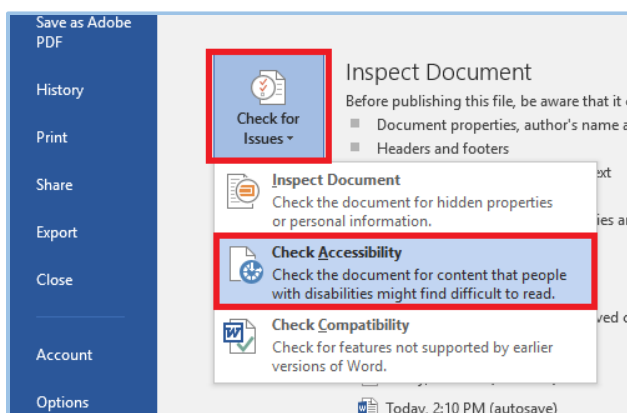
Word Accessibility Checker

Once you are done building your document, it is time to use the Word accessibility checker.

To open the Word Accessibility Checker:

1. Make sure you have saved your document by clicking the floppy disk icon.

2. Click **File > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**. The Accessibility Checker pane will appear to the right.

3. The Accessibility Checker will tell you what the issue is, where you can find it, and how to fix it. If you click on an issue in the list, it will highlight the object or section on the document where the issue exists.

4. Under the list of issues is a section titled **Additional Information**. This section tells you why you should fix the issue and how to fix the issue. Remember to **Save** often.

Microsoft Office Support is also a great resource for Word Accessibility: https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d

Convert to PDF

Once you have fixed all of the accessibility issues and saved it is time to convert to PDF. If you have a pro version of Adobe Acrobat installed on your machine there is an ACROBAT tab on your ribbon bar in Word. If you do not have a pro version of Adobe Acrobat you need to get it before moving on to the next step because the free version of Acrobat does not have an accessibility checker.

To convert to PDF:

1. Click the **ACROBAT** tab.

2. Click **Create PDF and Run Action**. Click it a second time and a drop-down menu appears.

3. Click **Make Accessible**.

4. You will be prompted to save a PDF version of this document. Save it in your OneDrive so that it is in the same place as the original Word document. Once you have saved, Adobe Acrobat will open.

Important! Remember, anytime you want to make a change to this document you should always make the changes in the original Word document, rerun the Word accessibility checker, convert to PDF, and then rerun the Acrobat accessibility checker.