



Creating Accessible Documents - Quick Guide

This guide supports the [Creating Accessible Documents](#) course. For fuller instructions, either attend the course or see further resources on the [Digital Accessibility website](#).

Contents

Word	2
Styles.....	2
Page Layout	2
Paragraph Formatting.....	2
Character formatting.....	3
Tables.....	3
Accessibility Checker.....	3
Word and All.....	4
Images.....	4
Hyperlinks.....	4
Metadata and more information.....	4
Printing	4
Templates.....	5
Text Content.....	5
Use of Colour.....	5
Charts.....	5
PowerPoint.....	6
Slide Layout.....	6
Formatting text.....	6
Shapes, SmartArt and other Visuals.....	6
Checking reading order	7
Backgrounds.....	7
Excel	7
Worksheet tabs and view options	7
Formatting	7
Lists	8
Visuals	8
PDF.....	8
Converting to PDF	9

Word

Word Category	What	How
Styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Apply Heading styles. <input type="checkbox"/> Modify Heading styles. <input type="checkbox"/> Modify Normal style to Arial font. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the Navigation Pane. <input type="checkbox"/> Create a Table of Contents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apply a style to selected text: Home tab, Styles group, choose one of the inbuilt Heading styles series, e.g. Heading 1, Heading 2. • To modify a style: Right click style name, select Modify. • To create a table of contents: References tab, Table of Contents command.
Page Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use wide margins. <input type="checkbox"/> Apply page numbering. <input type="checkbox"/> Insert page breaks rather than using paragraph returns. <input type="checkbox"/> Use Show/Hide to identify unnecessary returns. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid footnotes and endnotes if possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To insert page numbering: Insert tab, Page Number. • To insert a page break: Ctrl+Enter on keyboard. • To identify repeated blank characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use Accessibility Checker. - Use the Show/Hide command located on the Home tab.
Paragraph Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use 1.5 line spacing. (TIP: apply to Normal style) <input type="checkbox"/> Apply the spacing after paragraph (or before paragraph) where necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> Use bullets and numbering to make your document more readable. <input type="checkbox"/> Use full stops or semi colons at the end of bullet or numbered items. <input type="checkbox"/> Use left alignment and avoid justification. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep with next option so titles are not left separated from rest of text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apply spacing after a paragraph: Layout tab, Paragraph group, Spacing After. TIPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modify the Normal style to have 12 points spacing after each paragraph. - Modify the Heading styles to have a larger amount of spacing before the paragraph than spacing after the paragraph. • To apply Keep with next: Right click on the paragraph, select Paragraph, Line and Page breaks tab, Keep with next.

Word Category	What	How
Character formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use a sans serif font e.g. Arial, Calibri, Helvetica. (Not Times Roman). <input type="checkbox"/> Use font size minimum of 12 points. <input type="checkbox"/> Use bold but avoid italics, underline and all caps. 	
Tables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Apply formatting to the table via Table Styles. Use one of the banding styles when appropriate. <input type="checkbox"/> Format the column and row headings using the Table style options checkboxes. <input type="checkbox"/> Specify the row headings for screen readers. (i.e. Set the header row to repeat on every page.) <input type="checkbox"/> Add Alt Text. Describe or summarize the whole table. Highlight the most important thing about the table and mention the most significant value(s). <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use colour alone to convey meaning. You could use an extra column to add the data. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use merged cells or table within a table. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid blank rows and cells 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To apply a Table Style: Click in the table, click the Table Design ribbon tab, select the Table Style. Also, click in the Header Row and First Column checkboxes to switch on special formatting for those areas. • To specify the row headings, (for screen readers): Select the header row in the table, click the Table Layout ribbon tab, click the Repeat Header Rows button. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This needs to be redone every time you select a style. • To add Alt Text: Right click the table, select Table Properties, Alt Text tab and enter text into the Description area. (Note: the most recent version of Word does not have the title option). • To test how a screen reader will navigate your table: Click in the first cell, then press Tab key on keyboard to navigate cell by cell.
Accessibility Checker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use the Accessibility Checker to identify anything you may have missed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To start the Accessibility Checker: File tab, Check for issues button, Check Accessibility.

Word and All

All Category	What	How
Images	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Format all images and other content to be Inline with text so you can avoid floating objects. (Word only). TIP: If you click on an image and see an anchor icon this indicates that it is not inline. <input type="checkbox"/> Apply Alt Text to each image. If the image is decorative add the word 'decorative' as the Alt Text. <input type="checkbox"/> Choose images for relevance. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid text within images. If text is used in an image include the text in the Alt Text. Also, use a plain background behind the text so it is easily seen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make an image inline: Right click image, Text wrap, Inline with text • To apply Alt Text: Right click image, Format Picture, Layout and Properties tab (third icon), Alt Text. • Use the Poet tool for writing alternative descriptions of images. • To check an image for good colour contrast: Print in black and white or set image to greyscale. • Use the Accessibility Checker to help you identify additional images that are not accessible.
Hyperlinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use descriptive, unique and meaningful text for the hyperlink instead of the URL. <input type="checkbox"/> Never use 'Click Here' or similar for the hyperlink text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To add a hyperlink: Select text, right click, Hyperlink.
Metadata and more information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Add metadata (document properties) to the file so it's easier to find. For example, add descriptive title, more authors, tags, comments. <input type="checkbox"/> Depending on audience, add contact details into the document to enquire about alternative resources or request an alternative format. <input type="checkbox"/> If the file you have shared is in hard copy or PDF, make it available in editable electronic format, e.g. Word, PowerPoint or Excel, so people can adapt it to their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To add metadata: File tab, look in the main Info pane and edit items in the Properties area on the right.
Printing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid using shiny white paper, use pastel if possible. 	

All Category	What	How
Templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consider setting up templates or modifying the Normal template to ensure consistency and save time. For example, set the font, font size, margins and styles. <input type="checkbox"/> Use prebuilt accessible templates. E.g. in Excel they have lots of white space, larger font and descriptive headings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create a template: File tab, Save As, from Save as type select Template option. • To find accessible templates: File tab, New, type 'accessible' in the search box at the top.
Text Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use clear and simple language. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the active voice. (For example, 'he arranged the chairs' rather than 'you will be given...' or 'the chairs were arranged'.) <input type="checkbox"/> Explain jargon and acronyms. Know your audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hemingwayapp.com can be used to check content.
Use of Colour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use colours that contrast. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid red/green (the most common form of colour blindness). Also avoid pinks and oranges. Avoid using a range of shades of the same colour. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use colour as the only way to convey meaning. Use a Colour Contrast Analyser to check suitability of colours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessing the Colour Contrast Analyser (CCA).
Charts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use words carefully in headings, series/category labels, axes. <input type="checkbox"/> Adjust spacing in Labels if needed. <input type="checkbox"/> Format axes, increase units. <input type="checkbox"/> Add data labels. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider adding a data table. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid font sizes less than 12pt. <input type="checkbox"/> Add Alt Text. Summarise what the chart is about, what it is displaying against what, what has the most impact, the biggest values, i.e. summarize the conclusion. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid 3-D charts unless data is 3-D 	

All Category	What	How
	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't use colour alone to distinguish data series. Use stippling or dashing or label the chart with values.	

PowerPoint

PowerPoint Category	What	How
Slide Layout	<input type="checkbox"/> Use slide layouts for your slides instead of starting with blank slides. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding adding extra text boxes. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't put too much text into one slide. <input type="checkbox"/> Give each slide a unique title. <input type="checkbox"/> Apply slide numbers. <input type="checkbox"/> Use the Notes pane to add extra notes as screen readers can read these.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply or change a slide layout: Home tab, Slides group, Layout command. To apply slide numbers: Insert tab, Slide number button, tick the Slide number checkbox and Apply.
Formatting text	<input type="checkbox"/> Use sans serif font. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use text shadow. <input type="checkbox"/> Use font size minimum of 24 and 45 for titles. <input type="checkbox"/> Check that the line spacing and spacing after a paragraph is sufficient.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To apply paragraph spacing: Home tab, Line spacing button, Line spacing options, see spacing section.
Shapes, SmartArt and other Visuals	<input type="checkbox"/> As in Word, use Alt Text for shapes, charts, flowcharts, images etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Use visuals to help break up the text and make the presentation easier to follow. <input type="checkbox"/> Add images that appear on every slide (e.g. logos) to the Slide Master . Then Alt Text can be applied just once. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider grouping objects in a diagram and then add Alt Text to the group. <input type="checkbox"/> Consider saving a group as a picture . Then insert the image with	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get to the Slide Master: View tab, Slide Master command. To view the slides in greyscale: View tab, Grayscale button. To save a group as a picture: Right click the group, select Save as Picture, delete the group from your slide, insert the saved picture, add Alt Text to the picture.

PowerPoint Category	What	How
	<p>Alt Text applied. (Useful when items in a group include pictures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check an image or whole slide for good colour contrast by viewing in Greyscale. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid lots of animations. 	
Checking reading order	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check the reading order and change if necessary. (Usual reading order is in Z order). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To check and change the reading order: Home tab, Select, Selection pane option. (N.B. first item to be read is at the bottom of the list). Click and drag items to new positions in the list. • To test the reading order: Select your slide, click on the bottom item in the selection pane, press the Tab key repeatedly to see where the selection jumps to.
Backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid bright white backgrounds as can create glare and blur text. Choose off-white or cream colour for background with dark text and lots of space around the letters. <input type="checkbox"/> Use white text if using a dark background. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To change the background colour: Design tab, Format Background command.

Excel

Excel Category	What	How
Worksheet tabs and view options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide meaningful and unique names for worksheet tabs. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid empty worksheets. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid using Freeze Panes or Hide Columns and other viewing options that obscure data or make page navigation difficult. 	
Formatting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Increase font size, add row height and use wider columns when necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying styles in Excel: Home tab, Cell Styles command.

Excel Category	What	How
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If using multiple headings inside a spreadsheet apply heading styles. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid merged or split cells and nested tables. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid empty rows or columns and blank cells. 	
Lists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use descriptive headings and labels. <input type="checkbox"/> Specify header row. <input type="checkbox"/> Select a table style to add banding. Selecting colours to give high contrast. <input type="checkbox"/> Highlight header row and first column. <input type="checkbox"/> Convert table into a List. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To convert a table to a list: Click in the table, press Control + L on the keyboard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make sure you click the checkbox for My table has headers. - Give the table a Name via the contextual tab (helps to navigate or use in formulas).
Visuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> As in Word and PowerPoint, use Alt Text for visuals, tables and charts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-click on the chart and click on Format Chart Area

PDF

Note:

It is recommended that you share documents/files in their original file format instead of or in addition to PDF format. If supplying only in PDF format do provide a contact name where requests for the file to be provided in an alternative format can be sent to. (The original file format allows users to format and customise the file to their requirements).

PDF Category	What	How
Converting to PDF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> First make your document or presentation accessible and then convert to PDF. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a title in the Word document in Document Properties. <input type="checkbox"/> Don't use the print to PDF option from the print dialogue box to convert to PDF. Use one of the methods listed opposite. <input type="checkbox"/> Check that tags for accessibility will be added for the converted file. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Converting to PDF: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Method 1: File tab, Save As, from the File type choices select PDF. Method 2: File tab, Export, Create as PDF/XPS. • To check for tagging for accessibility: <p>When you are in Save As dialogue box click the Options button and make sure the following three checkboxes are ticked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Document structure tags for accessibility. - ISO 19005-1 compliant (PDF/A) - Document Properties • If you do have an image, use Sensus to convert it.