

Creating Accessible .PDF Files (In Word)

Bullets/Lists

Do not manually enter lists or bullet points. These do not translate to screen readers, however lists created with Word's tools will. Such lists will be further augmented by having headings.

Structure

When composing your document, be sure to use the “title” and “heading” formatting tools. These tools allow users to more easily navigate the document. This practice also allows those using screen readers and other adaptive technologies to move from section to section without having to navigate the entirety of the document. For longer documents, this also eases the process of creating a table of contents.

Images and Tables

When inserting images or tables into a document, be sure to caption or add alt text. In order to add alt text to an image or table, right-click the image and select “Format Picture (or Table)” or go to “Format” and select “Picture” or “Table.” In this menu, select “Alt Text” and add a brief title along with a full description of the image or table, noting important characteristics, figures, and trends.

Hyperlinks

It is a best practice not to paste in a full URL. Instead, hyperlink the text you want to lead to an external website or document. This offers the opportunity to label where the link goes and prevents each character in a URL from being read aloud. The one exception to this practice is to hyperlink email addresses with the full text of the email spelled out.

Font, Color, and Contrast

Try to use fonts that have clear and distinct lettering (avoiding script and novelty fonts such as Jokerman). Because there are multiple types and levels of vision, do not rely solely on color to convey the difference between emphasized text and non-emphasized text. When changing color of text, be sure to include another indicator (such as size, boldness, or underlining). When using colored bars or wedges in tables, be sure to use textures as well as color to distinguish variables.

Accessibility Checker

When you are ready to save your Word document as a .pdf file, open the File tab and select “Check for Issues” followed by “Check Accessibility.” This tool will help to catch any of the above issues (and others) that might prevent access to your document.

Save, Don’t Print

Once you have completed the above, remember to “Save As” a .pdf. When printing to a .pdf, accessible formatting is lost.