CREATING ACCESSIBLE MICROSOFT WORD 2016 DOCUMENTS (WINDOWS)

GOALS WebAIM
web accessibility in mind

Heading Styles

Create a uniform heading structure through use of styles in Word. This allows screen readers to navigate a document and improves accessiblity for everyone.

1. Start a new line to create a heading, or select text to change to a heading.
2. Open the **Home** tab, and choose the appropriate heading in the **Styles** panel.
3. Headings 1, 2, or 3 can also be assigned using **Ctrl + Alt + 1**, **2**, or **3**, respectively.
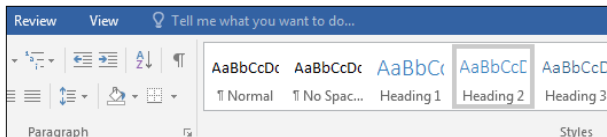
Alternative Text

Images can be given appropriate alternative text in Word. Alt text is read by a screen reader in a Word file and should remain intact when exporting to HTML or PDF.

1. Right-click on the image and select **Format Picture**. A dialog will appear.
2. Select the **Layout & Properties** icon and choose **Alt Text**.
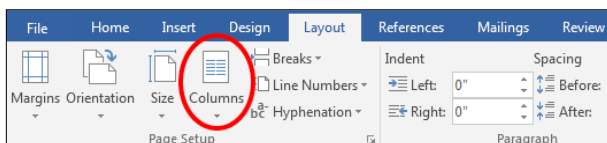3. Enter appropriate alt text only in the **Description** field (not the **Title** field).
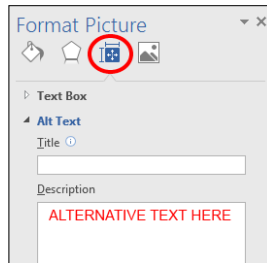
See webaim.org/techniques/alttext for more information.

Columns

Always use true columns. Don't create columns with **Tab**.
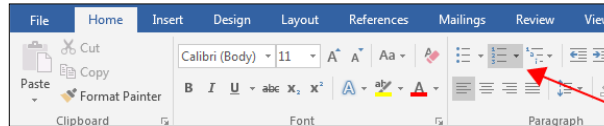
1. Select the **Layout** tab on the ribbon.
2. Select **Columns** in the **Page Setup** group.
3. Choose the number of columns.

Lists

Use *true numbered and bulleted lists* to emphasize a point or a sequence of steps.

1. Select the **Home** tab on the ribbon.
2. Choose the **Numbered List** or **Bulleted List** option from the **Paragraph** group.

Hyperlinks

Word *automatically creates a hyperlink* when a user pastes a full URL onto a page. These may not make sense to screen reader users, so make sure the link text is unique.

1. Select a hyperlink, right click, and select **Hyperlink** or hit **Ctrl + k**.
2. Change the text in the **Text to Display** field to a more meaningful description.
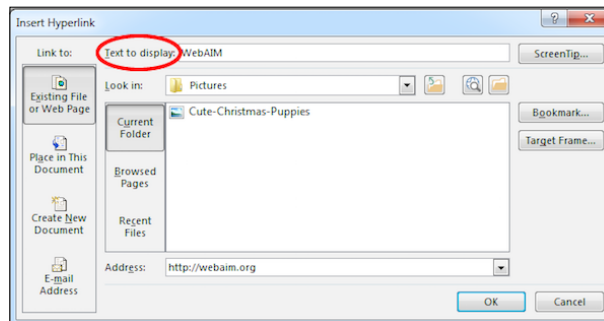
Data Tables

Accessible tables need a **clear table structure** and **table headers** to help guide a screen reader user.

1. Select the **Insert** tab on the ribbon, then select **Table > Insert Table**.
2. To add table headers to the first row, select **Table Tools > Layout** on the ribbon, then choose the **Repeat Header Rows** option in the **Data** section.
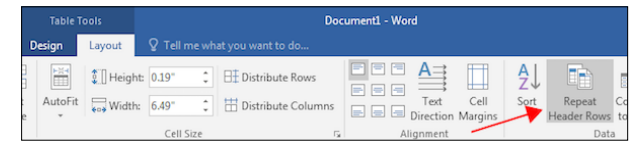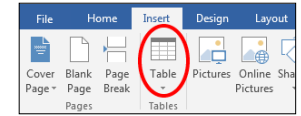
Options in the **Design** tab may be used to change appearance but will not provide the necessary accessibility information.

Accessibility Checker

Word includes an accessibility resource that *identifies accessibility issues.*

1. Select **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**.
2. The checker presents accessibility errors, warnings, and tips for making repairs.

Select specific issues to see **Additional Information** at the bottom of the task pane.
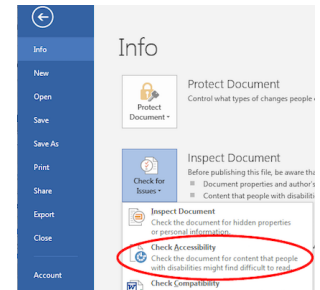
Other Principles

- Ensure that font size is sufficient, around **12 points.**
- Provide sufficient **contrast.**
- Don't use color as **the only way** to convey meaning.
- Provide a **table of contents** for long documents.
- Use **simple** language.

For a digital version, see ncdae.org/resources/cheatsheets