DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY ACCESSIBILITY PROGRAM

Microsoft Word Accessibility Reference

OFFICE OF THE
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

➔ Style Sections as Headings

Headings offer structure and easy navigation to sections for users of assistive technology (AT). Be mindful to a) limit the use of **Heading 1** and b) when possible use headings sequentially.

1. Select a phrase to be a **Heading**.
2. From **Home** > **Styles**, select **Heading 1** - **Heading 6** respective to its hierarchy in the document. (The "**Title**" style is not a navigable element.)

AaBbCcDdEe	AaBbCcDdEe	**AaBbCcDd**	AaBbCcDdE	AaBbCcDdEe	*AaBbCcDdEe*	**AABBCCD**	AaBbCcDdEe
Normal	No Spacing	Heading 1	Heading 2	Heading 3	Heading 4	Title	Subtitle

➔ Brand the Heading Styles

Change the appearance 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 expression.

Update a style based on existing text formatting:

1. Highlight the text that has the desired appearance.
2. Navigate to **Home** > **Styles** and locate a desired style.
3. Activate the context menu (or right-click) and select **Update [Style Name] to Match Selection**.
4. Note the **Styles** group reflects the formatting of the highlighted text. Future selection of that style will provide the same expression.

➔ Organize the Document with Headings

The **Navigation Pane** offers a tiered outline of the structure.

1. Locate **View** > **Show** and select **Navigation Pane**.
2. Activate **Headings** within the opened **Navigation** pane.
3. Notice the indentions of items indicating hierarchy.

➔ Complement with a Table of Contents

Table of Contents (TOC) display the framework of a document. Typically, large documents contain linked **Table of Contents**.

1. Navigate to and activate **References** > **Table of Contents**.
2. Select a **Built-In** > **Automatic Table** option.
3. Review the inserted **Table of Contents** based on the document **Heading** structure.

➔ Update a Table of Contents

A **Table of Contents** can easily be updated to reflect changes to sections that are labeled by **Heading Styles**.

1. Locate the **Table of Contents** activate the context menu (or right-click) to select **Update Field…**
2. Select **Update Entire Table** within in the **Update Table of Contents** dialog
3. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
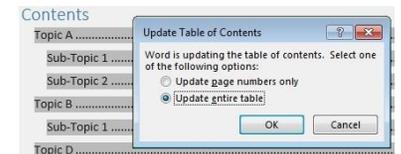
➔ Illuminate with Color and Contrast

Sensible color arrays promote allure yet accessible content.

1. Color cannot be the only means of visually conveying information or prompting a response. Textured patterns (to represent data sets) or textual representation (i.e. an asterisk [*]) must be included to distinguish content.
2. Confirm sufficient contrast is provided between the foreground and background colors. A minimum contrast ratio of 4.5:1 is required. Use the **Home** > **Font Color** picker to choose an appropriate foreground color.

➔ Add Descriptions to Graphics

Alternate (ALT) text should be added to pictures, clip art, charts, and shapes. Keep ALT text to 250 characters or less.

Note: Complex images, such as process flows and data graphs, require text alternatives in surrounding text or an appendix. The ALT text should direct users to the additional description.

1. *Pre-step for Complex Images*: For an image made of multiple pieces, select all the pieces and activate the context menu (or right click) to select **Group** > **Group**.
2. Activate the context menu of (or right click) the image or object and activate **Format Picture** (or **Format Shape**).
   a. For grouped objects, be sure to select the group instead of an individual piece.
3. Navigate to **Layout & Properties** > **Alt Text**.
4. Provide the purpose of the image or object in the **Description** field.
   a. When images of text are used, the words within the image must be included in the **Description**.
5. Set text wrap to **In Line with Text**.
   a. Select the **Layout Options** control and choose **In Line with Text**. Or,
   b. Activate an image's context menu (or right-click) and select **Wrap Text** > **In Line with Text.**
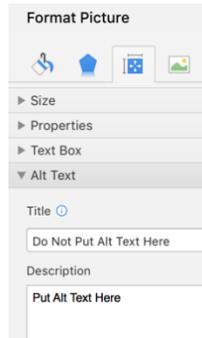
➔ Display Headers & Footers

The **Heade**r and **Foote**r (top and bottom) areas are not automatically reachable by users of AT. Watermarks, contact information, or unique data must be provided once in the main body of the document. *(*Page #s do not apply to this practice.)

1. Navigate to **Insert** > **Header** or **Footer** and select a style.
2. Type content on the first page in the desired area(s).

3. Navigate to **Header & Footer** and select **Different First Page** within **Options**.
4. Navigate to and activate **Close Header and Footer** to return to the document body.

➔ Design Data Tables

Good table design follows some basic principles.

- Tables must be simple and used for data (not layout). A data cell should only relate to one row and/or column header. This includes avoiding merged cells.
   o Solution: Split complex tables into multiple simple tables or direct the user to an alternate version.
- Never use spaces or **TAB** to simulate table structure.
- Avoid blank cells, especially table header cells. (Hint: for data cells enter a **–** or **0**).

➔ Insert a Table

1. Navigate to **Insert** > **Table** to determine the table size.
2. Highlight the first table row, activate the context menu of (or right-click) a highlighted cell, and choose **Table Properties**.
3. Navigate to and activate the **Row** tab to ensure **Repeat as header row at the top of each page** is checked.
4. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
5. Highlight the entire table, activate the context menu of (or right-click) a highlighted cell, and select **Table Properties**.
6. Navigate to and activate the **Table** tab and ensure **Text Wrapping** > **None** is selected.
7. Navigate to and activate the **Row** tab and confirm **Allow row to break across pages** is not checked.
8. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
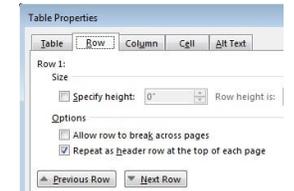
➔ **Group as Lists**

Properly structured lists can be ordered (numbers & letters – offering hierarchy) or unordered (bullets).

1. Locate and select the desired text or place the cursor at the desired location for a list
2. From **Home** > **Paragraph**, select **Bullets** or **Numbering.** Use the arrow menu to change the list style.
3. Note: Sub-list (indented) items must use a different list style than the item one level up.

➔ **Inject Hyperlinks**

Ensure the link text sufficiently describes the purpose of the link.

1. From **Insert** > **Links**, activate **Hyperlink** to open the **Insert Hyperlink** dialog.
2. In the **Text to display** field, type a phrase that describes the link's purpose.
3. Place the URL in the **Address** field.
4. Navigate to and activate **OK**.

➔ **Title the Document**

Document titles inform users of a document's purpose.

1. Navigate to and select **File** > **Info** > **Properties**
2. Select **Advanced Properties** > **Summary**
3. Enter a meaningful phrase in the **Title** field.
4. Optional: Enter an **Author** (i.e. organization name)
5. Navigate to and activate **OK**.
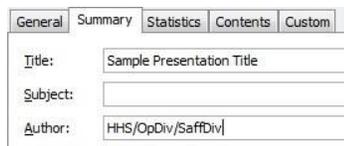
➔ **Render Content in Columns**

A linear content order is preferable, but the built-in **Columns** feature can depict a different layout.

1. Highlight the text to be in columns.
2. Navigate to **Layout** > **Page Setup** > **Columns**.
3. Choose the desired number of columns.

4. To force content to the next column, place the cursor at the desired column end point.
5. Navigate to **Layout** > **Page Setup** > **Breaks** > **Column**.
6. Confirm content has shifted into a new column.

➔ **Perform a High Level Accessibility Check**

Check Accessibility can review some checkpoints automatically. Manual inspection is required in order to complete a full accessibility review.

1. Navigate to **File** > **Info** > **Check for Issues** > **Check Accessibility**
2. Locate the **Accessibility Checker** pane and select an issue for **Additional Information**. Note: False positives are possible.

➔ **Take Additional Measures**

1. Avoid the use of **SmartArt**, **text boxes**, and **embedded objects** as many users of AT cannot access the content.
2. Use **Line Spacing** (**Home** > **Paragraph** > **Line and Paragraph Spacing**) and **Page Breaks** (**Layout** > **Breaks** > **Page Breaks** > **Page**) to create white space.
3. When **watermarks** cannot be avoided, confirm the contents are repeated in the document body and sufficient contrast exists against the document text.
4. Use san-serif fonts (**Arial, Verdana**). **Times New Roman** or **Calibri** (serif fonts) are commonly accepted.
5. Keep text sizes between **12-18pt** fonts.
6. Avoid the use of **Drop Caps**.

Instructions based on Microsoft Office 2016.