Designing Tables
Good table design follows some basic principles.
• Use one (1) table per worksheet.
• Keep table structure simple with each data cell associated to only one (1) row and/or column header. This includes avoiding merged cells.
  o Alternative: Split complex tables into multiple simple tables.
• Do not use spaces or TAB stops to simulate structure.
• Remove blank rows and columns. Instead, increase the width to increase white space.
• Avoid blank cells, especially table header cells.
• Avoid placing paragraph text around tables.

Mark Data Cells as a Table
1. Highlight the cells that are to be a table.
2. Navigate to the Insert ribbon and activate Table within the Tables group.
3. In the Create Table dialog, confirm the My table has headers checkbox is checked.
4. Navigate to and activate OK.

Repeat Table Headers on Each Page
1. Navigate to Page Layout > Page Setup group > Print Titles.
2. Confirm the Sheet tab is active in the Page Setup dialog.
3. Under Print titles, choose which Rows to repeat at top and which Columns to repeat at left.
4. Navigate to and activate OK.

Protecting Data
Worksheet restrictions can be necessary but it is important that all users have access to the cells.
1. On the Review ribbon, in the Protect group select Protect Sheet.
2. In the Protect Sheet dialog, confirm Select Locked Cells and Select Unlocked cells are checked in the Allow all users of this worksheet to section.
3. Navigate to and activate OK.

Illuminate with Color and Contrast
Using color sensibly will ensure that content is appealing and accessible.
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 Font Color picker from the Home ribbon to choose an appropriate color against the background.

Style Sections as Headings
Headings indicate a new content section. Headings show the hierarchy of content in the document. Utilize one of Excel’s four heading levels while keeping in mind to a) limit the use of Heading 1 and b) when possible use headings sequentially.
1. Highlight the cell that contains the desired phrase.
2. Navigate to the Home ribbon and locate the Styles pane
3. Select **Heading 1 – Heading 4** for the phrase respective to its hierarchy in the document.

**➔ 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 organizational charts and data graphs, require text alternatives be provided. Users must be directed 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**).
3. Navigate to **Layout & Properties** > **Alt Text**.
4. Provide the purpose of the image or object in the **Description** field.

**➔ Inject Hyperlinks**
Ensure the link text sufficiently describes the purpose of the link.

1. From **Insert** > **Links** group, 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**.

**➔ Give Worksheets Unique Names**
Sheet names provide information about what is the purpose of the worksheet. Blank sheets in a workbook should be removed.

1. Navigate to a worksheet tab and activate the context menu (or right-click) and select **Rename**.
2. Type a brief, unique name that is descriptive of the sheet contents.

**➔ Title the Document**
Document titles assist users in identifying the desired document.

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

**➔ Perform a High Level Accessibility Check**
Use the **Check Accessibility** feature to check items that can be automatically reviewed. Manual inspection is required in order to perform a full accessibility check.

1. Navigate to **File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility**
2. Locate and confirm the **Accessibility Checker** pane opens with results.
3. Select an issue to see **Additional Information** and steps to resolve the issue. **Note:** False positives are possible.

*Instructions based on Microsoft Office 2016.*