Microsoft Word Accessibility Reference

» Style Sections as Headings

Headings offer structure and easy navigation to sections for users of assistive technology (AT). Be mindful to:
1. Limit the use of Heading 1.
2. Use headings sequentially.

1. Select a phrase to be a Heading.
2. From Home > Styles, select Heading 1 - Heading 6.

(“Title” style is not a navigable element.)

» 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 (right-click) and select Modify...
3. In the Modify Styles dialog, change the formatting properties.

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 (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 (right-click) to select Update Field...
2. Select Update Entire Table within 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.
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 Header and Footer (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).

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.
Go to 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.

Go to 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.

Go to 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.

Go to 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.
3. Choose the desired number of columns.
4. To force content to the next column, place the cursor at the desired column end point.
6. Confirm content has shifted into a new column.

Go to 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.

Go to 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.
6. Avoid the use of Drop Caps.

Instructions based on Microsoft Office 2016.