

Microsoft Word Accessibility Checklist

Document Structure

- ☐ **Headings and styles:** Use built-in [headings and styles in Word](#) to organize lengthy content.
- ☐ **Lists and columns:** Use [lists and columns](#) to create a clear hierarchical structure. To [make lists accessible in Word](#), use numbered lists for sequential items and bulleted lists for non-sequential items. To add and adjust columns, use the [Columns dialog box](#).
- ☐ **Descriptive hyperlinks:** Use [descriptive text for links](#) to indicate the link's destination or purpose. For example, avoid using generic phrases like "click here" or "read more," and instead use meaningful text like "Explore course resources." [Create and edit link text in Word](#) using the Link option on the Insert tab.
- ☐ **Alt text:** Add meaningful and contextualized [alternative text](#) to all images, charts, and other graphics included in your document. Remember to mark all non-relevant images and graphics as decorative. Learn how to add [alt text in Word from Microsoft Support](#).
- ☐ **Tables:** [Use tables in Word for data only, not for layout](#). Present data in paragraphs with headers whenever possible.
- ☐ **Table structure:** Use simple structures and avoid merged or split cells.
- ☐ **Table headers:** [Add table column and/or row headers](#) when using tables in Word.
- ☐ **Table captions:** Create a [table caption](#) that provides a brief description of the table's purpose and contents. While the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) do not require table captions, they are considered best practice.
- ☐ **Table of contents:** Include a [table of contents](#) for longer documents.
- ☐ **File type:** Stick to Word documents and refrain from PDFs. Learn how to [make your Word document read only](#) if security is a concern.

Fonts, Spacing, and Color

- ☐ **Font and typeface:** Use readable sans-serif [typefaces and fonts](#).
- ☐ **Font size:** [Adjust the font size in Word](#) as needed to ensure readability. Use at least 11 points for body text (14 or 16 points recommended).
- ☐ **Paragraph spacing:** [Adjust space between sentences and paragraphs](#) instead of using a blank return.
- ☐ **White space:** Allow for breathing room or empty space, when possible, to avoid visually crowded information.
- ☐ **Color:** Do not use color as the only way to convey information.
- ☐ **Color contrast:** Use [high-contrast color schemes](#). Check your contrast with [WebAim's Contrast Checker](#).
- ☐ **Watermarks:** Refrain from using watermarks as they impact readability and create low

contrast issues.

Checking for Overall Accessibility

- ❑ **Accessibility checker:** [Check accessibility while you work in Word](#).
- ❑ **Text to speech:** [Test accessibility with Immersive Reader in Word](#).

Document Language and Tone

- ❑ **Document language:** [Specify the primary language of the document](#) to ensure correct pronunciation and interpretation by screen readers.
- ❑ **Language use:** [Use plain language](#) that is clear and easy to understand. For example, instead of "utilize," use "use."
- ❑ **Active voice:** Use active voice vs. passive voice to make sentences more direct and easier to understand. For example, "The team completed the project" instead of "The project was completed by the team."
- ❑ **Capital letters:** Avoid using all capital letters. For example, use "Important Notice" instead of "IMPORTANT NOTICE."
- ❑ **Consistent terminology:** Use consistent terminology, abbreviations, and capitalization rules throughout your document.
- ❑ **Abbreviations and acronyms:** Spell out abbreviations and acronyms on first use, followed by the abbreviation in parentheses. For example, "World Health Organization (WHO)."
- ❑ **Jargon:** Avoid using jargon or technical terms without explaining them. For example, instead of saying, "The campaign leverages omnichannel strategies," say, "The campaign reaches customers through multiple platforms, like email, social media, and ads."
- ❑ **Numbers:** Write out numbers one through nine and use numerals for 10 and above. For example, "three participants" and "15 students."

Learn More

- ❑ Visit CLI's [Digital Accessibility website](#) to learn more about making documents, presentations, and other digital materials accessible and available to all.