

Accessible Word Documents

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Create Accessible Documents

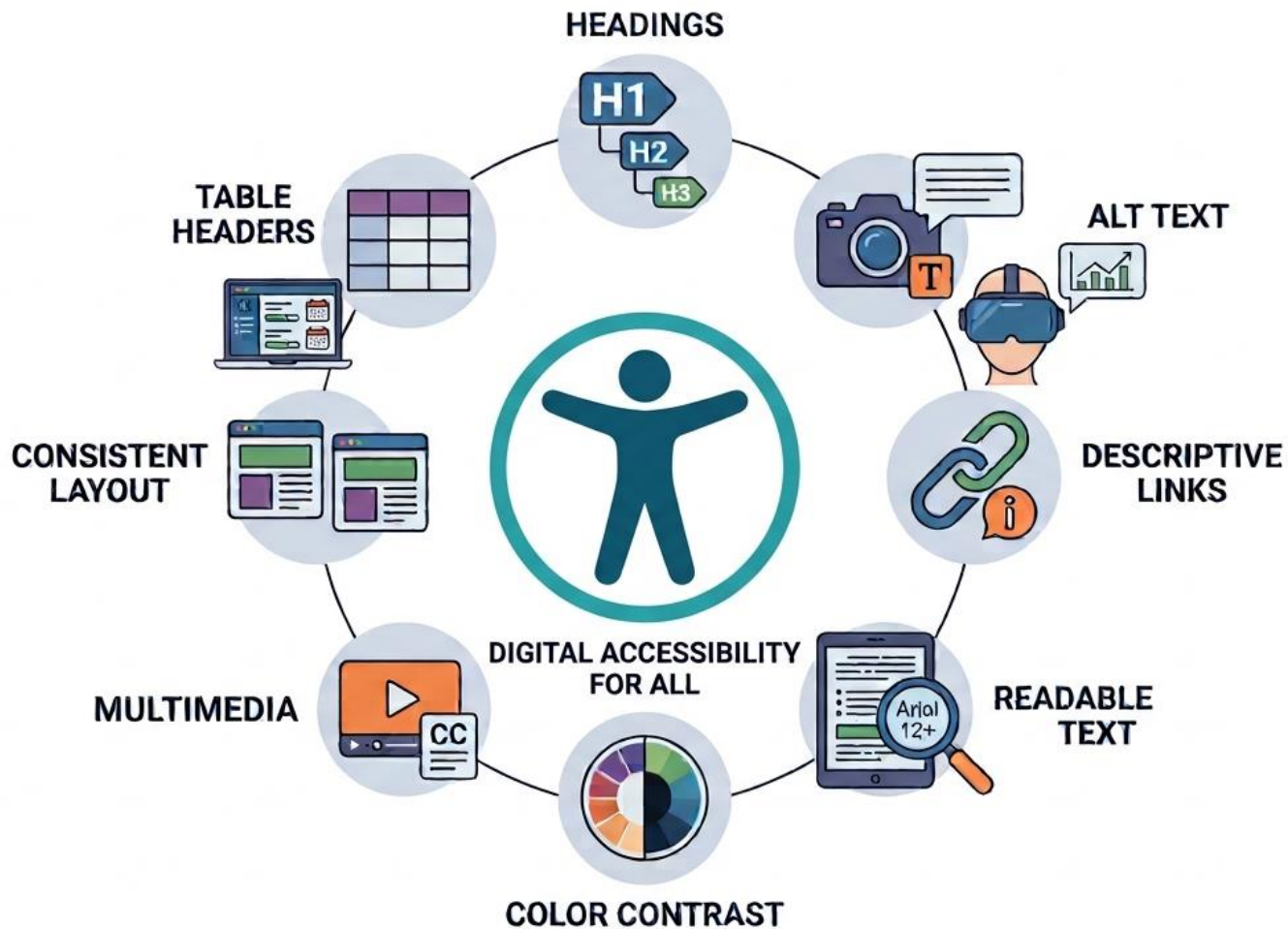
- **Promote** inclusive learning
- **Support compliance** with accessibility standards
- **Improve usability** for every user
- **Enhance document quality** via clear structure, consistent formatting, and meaningful organization



Why Are Accessible Documents Critical for Students?

- Greater independence
- Heavier dependence on digital materials
- More diverse learner populations

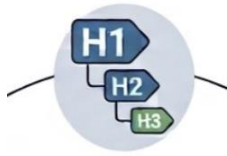
**Accessible
documents are not
just a convenience.**



A practical guide for creating documents everyone can read and navigate

- [Microsoft Accessibility Guides](#): Windows vs. Mac
- Recommendation: Desktop version has more features

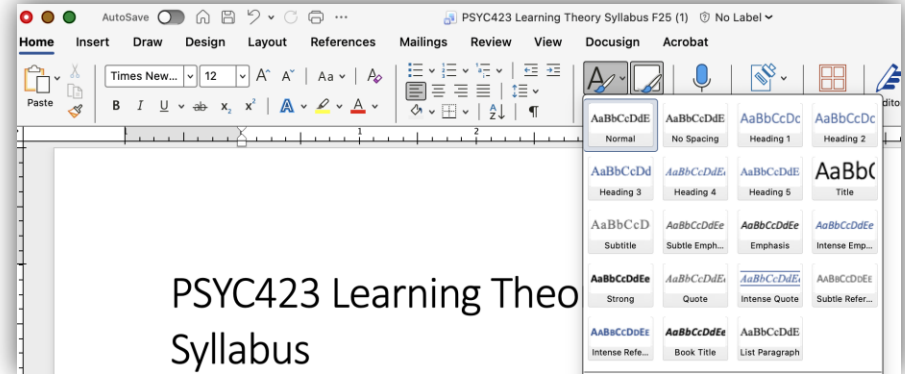
HEADINGS



Structure with Headings

Use Built-In Styles

- Home → Styles Gallery: **Never** format manually
- Heading 1
 - Heading 2
 - Heading 3
- Never Skip Levels
 - Screen readers depend on logical heading hierarchy
- Use Built-in bullets/numbers:
No typed dashes





READABLE
TEXT

Font & Color

Font Format

- Sans serif fonts (Arial, Calibri), 12pt minimum
- Avoid ALL CAPS and excessive italics
- Underline hyperlinks — don't rely on color alone



READABLE
TEXT

Font & Color (continued)

Color Contrast

- Use **Automatic** font color setting
- Run Accessibility Checker to catch contrast issues
- Add symbols (✓ / X) alongside color-coded status

Alt Text



Add Alt Text

- Right-click image → **View Alt Text.**
- Write a brief, meaningful description.
- Mark decorative images accordingly.



DESCRIPTIVE
LINKS

Hyper links

Meaningful Link

- Use the page title as link text.
- **Never** "Click here."
- Add ScreenTips for extra context.

Accessible Tables



- Use for data — not layout
- Avoid merged, split, or nested cells since it makes difficult to follow with screen readers.
- Avoid blank cells. N/A or no data or some label is better.

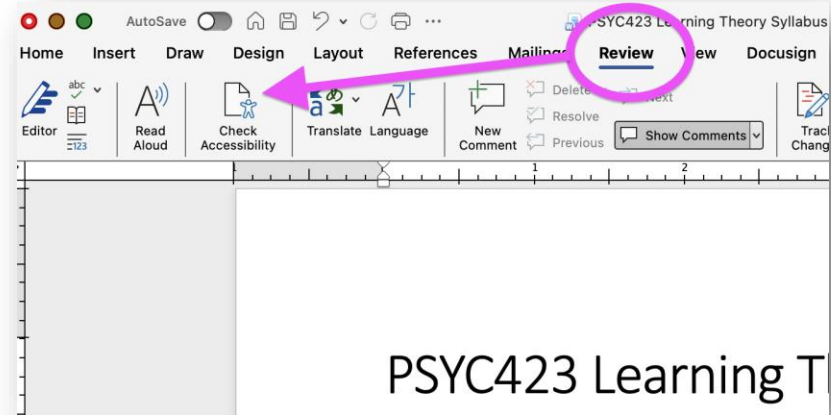
Accessible Tables: Header



- **Always** define header rows
- Do not include table title within the table; first row of a table should only be a header row.
- Designate header row and/or header column by:
 - Make sure your cursor is in the table. Then check the boxes for header row and/or header column on the far right under Table Design on the ribbon.
 - On the ribbon under Table Layout, make sure to toggle Repeat Header Rows on.

Run the Accessibility Checker

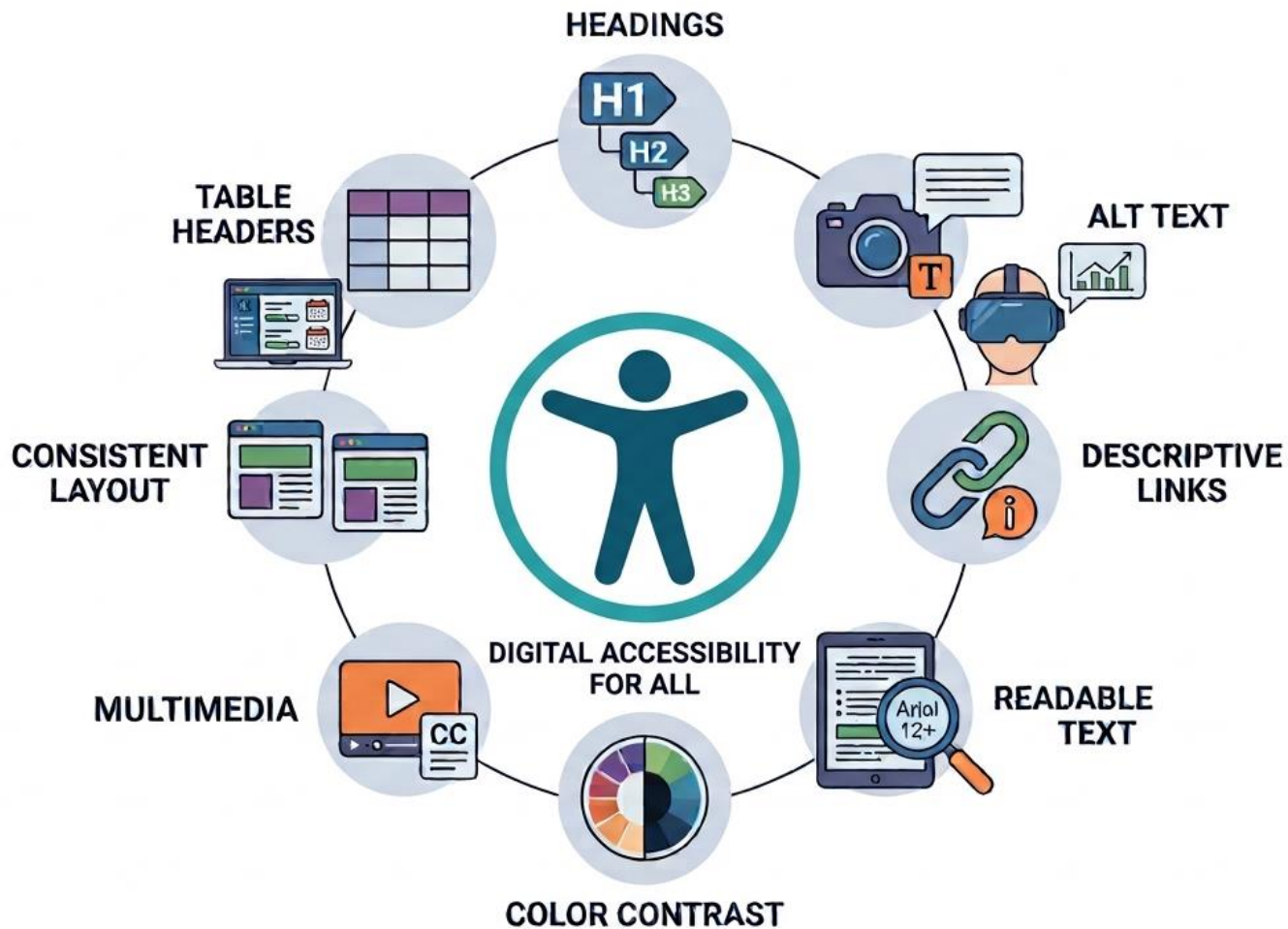
- **Review → Check Accessibility:** Fix Errors, Warnings, and Tips before sharing.
- Not catch all issues: semantic reading order or heading structure
- Requires manual review
- [Checklist](#)



Resources

- [CLI's Digital Accessibility Webpage](#)
- [MS Word A11Y Checklist](#)
- **Microsoft 365 Support**
 - [Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities](#)
 - [Create accessible Office documents](#)
 - [Accessibility Tools for MSWord](#)
- **GSA.gov**
 - [Accessible Documents \(authoring guides from GSA\)](#)
 - [Creating Accessible Word Documents \(videos from GSA\)](#)
- **Other**
 - [Learning Bites How to Make a Word Document Accessible - Microsoft 365 \(YouTube video, 9:56 minutes\)](#)
 - [Ability Net's Introduction to Making Word Accessible \(YouTube video, 47:12 minutes\)](#)





It's Your Turn: Practice

1. Download [the exercise document](#).
2. Follow [the Illinois State Accessible Word guidelines](#) to fix errors.

