Georgia Tech · College of Design
Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation

Document Accessibility Checklist

MICROSOFT WORD

This quick guide was created by the Center for Inclusive Design and Innovation (CIDI) to provide the key strategies to create accessible Microsoft Word documents in a checklist format. For a full how-to-guide with screenshots and examples, refer to CIDI's Document Accessibility Guide: Microsoft Word.

Checklist

1. Headings and Subheadings

- ☐ Use built-in heading styles (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) in logical order.
- ☐ Verify headings and structure in the Navigation Pane.
    1. To turn on the Navigation Pane, select the View tab at the top of the workspace. Then check the **Navigation Pane** option under the **Show** section.
- ☐ Use headings to generate a table of contents for long documents.

2. Bulleted and Numbered Lists

- ☐ Use Word's built-in bulleted and numbered list tools.
    2. Avoid manually typing bullets or numbers.

3. Tables

- ☐ Use simple table structures (no merged or blank cells).
- ☐ Identify column and row headers clearly.
- ☐ Use the Header Row option and repeat headers on each page.
- ☐ Add a title in the Alt Text tab of Table Properties.
- ☐ Use banded rows with sufficient contrast for readability.

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4. Alternative Text Descriptions

- ☐ Add concise, descriptive text to all images, charts, and graphs; this is called alternative text, or alt text.
- ☐ Mark images with no purpose other than visual decoration as "decorative."
- ☐ Use 120 characters or fewer (approximately 1-2 complete sentences).
    3. Avoid the phrases "image of" or "picture of."

5. Font Selection

- ☐ Use sans serif fonts such as Calibri, Aptos, or Arial.
- ☐ Use a font size of at least 12 pt.

6. Color and Contrast

- ☐ Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colors.
- ☐ Use Word's **Color Contrast indicator tool** or **High contrast only** feature when choosing font and fill colors to ensure sufficient contrast between text and background.
- ☐ Check **Color and Contrast** within the Accessibility Assistant to improve the contrast of any text flagged with **Hard-to-read text contrast.**
    4. Avoid using color alone to convey meaning.
    5. Do not use red and green color combinations, which are problematic for people who have red-green color blindness.

7. Hyperlinks: Accessible Link Text

- ☐ Add descriptive link text to URLs to create accessible hyperlinks. Highlight or select the URL, go to the **Insert** tab and choose **Links > Insert Link**. Enter the descriptive text in the **Text to display** entry field. Example: **2023 SPP/APR Submission, Part B — Alaska**.
- ☐ Indicate if the link opens a new window or performs a function. Example**: Download Assessment Report**.
    6. Avoid using "Click here" for link text.
    7. Avoid using vague link text such as "Read More."
    8. Do not display URLs in text.

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8. White Space and Line Spacing

- ☐ Use the **Normal** default margins of 1 inch on all sides.
- ☐ Use default spacing between paragraphs.
    9. Avoid reducing the space between paragraphs, as it can make text more difficult to read.
- ☐ Use formatted headings and subheadings to divide content into manageable chunks to improve readability.

9. Descriptive File Name and Document Properties

- ☐ Use a descriptive file name that includes a relevant date.
- ☐ Add a document title and author in **File > Info > Properties.**

10. Accessibility Assistant

- ☐ Fix any issues flagged by the Accessibility Assistant.
    10. To access the Accessibility Assistant, either select **Check Accessibility** under the Review tab or select the **Accessibility** icon  at the bottom left corner of the workspace.

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11. Save as Accessible PDF

- ☐ To save Word document as a tagged PDF, go to **File > Save as > PDF.**
  - From the "Save as" dropdown menu options, Select **PDF.**
  - Click **More options…** directly below the Save as filetype dropdown menu.
  - By default, **Optimize for: Standard (publishing for online and printing)** should be selected.
  - Go to **Options** and ensure **Document Structure tags for accessibility** is selected.
  - Add checkmark to option "**Create bookmarks using: Headings"** Click OK.
  - Click **Save** to save the PDF.
- ☐ Check that bookmarks, structure tags, and alt text are included in the PDF version.

Need additional assistance? Our team of accessibility experts is here to help. Whether you have questions, would like to schedule a training, or need guidance on the upcoming deadline for the new Title II regulations, please reach out to our Customer Support team at cidi-support@design.gatech.edu, call (404) 894-7756, or book a free consultation through CIDI's online form. Our team can help assess options and determine level of effort and resources required to meet your needs.