

CREATING ACCESSIBLE DOCUMENTS

Microsoft Word

NDSU

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Use this list to check for common accessibility issues in Microsoft Word documents. Microsoft offers in-depth information on the use of its [accessibility checker feature](#) as well as step-by-step instructions on [how to fix accessibility issues](#), and further explanation on why these are important.

Insert Document Titles

Why: Document titles provide information on what a screen reader is reading.

- » **How:** File menu > Properties > Summary > Title > Enter descriptive title for your document.

Use Alt Text For All Images

Why: Screen readers cannot read photos without alt text or descriptions. Individuals may miss or wonder if they have missed important information.

- » **How:** Click image > Picture Format menu > Format Pane > Layout & Properties (⌘) > Alt text > Simple images, fill in title, Ex: John Doe; Images with words or diagrams, fill in title and description box with information explaining image significance or what text in the image says.

Use Table Headers

Why: Table headers explain the information in columns a screen reader reads. Without table headers, a screen reader reads, "Accessibility issues, 10, 14, 3" versus "Book title accessibility issues, Page 10, Total pages 14, Number of follow up questions 3."

- » **How:** Insert menu > Table > Choose columns & rows + 1 extra row > Table Design menu > Ensure Header Row box is checked > Type column headers in first row of table

Use Headings And Sub-Headings

Why: Provides a logical reading order for screen readers. Saves time with accessibility when exporting to a PDF.

- » **How:** References menu > Add Text > Highlight text to classify as heading or sub-heading > Choose Level 1, then Level 2, then Level 3 as needed.

Use Descriptive Hyperlinks

Why: Descriptive hyperlinks enable users to know what information they will receive if they click the link. A screen reader reads a link as, "link click here" versus "link how to fix accessibility issues."

- » **How:** Write a description of what the link provides > Highlight link text > Insert menu > Link > Click web or email option > Insert web or email address

Use Good Contrast

Why: High contrast text is easier to read for sighted and low sighted individuals. If the document is black and white, use 70% tint for your gray/black colors. When using color, choose dark colors on a light background or light colors on a dark background. If you struggle to read the document, so will your readers.

- » **How:** Font color menu (A) > Hover cursor over gray/black color choice > Choose a color that says "lighter 25%" or a lesser percentage. "Lighter 25%" means the tint is 75%. If you use anything more than 25% lighter, your document will be flagged for contrast issues.

Use Multiple Ways To Identify Information

Why: If color is the only way to differentiate between items, low sighted, color blind, and sighted individuals may struggle to see the difference between each color. Variations in colors used by computer monitors and printers can be significant; and, when printed in black and white, color variation and meaning are lost.

- » **How:** You can use color to differentiate but offer another differentiation tool. This could be numbers, letters, or other characters.

Watch For Extra Spaces After Words

Why: Extra spaces after words or sentences are read by a screen reader as either "space" or "blank." Neither convey meaning and can contribute to confusion.

- » **How:** Make an effort to NOT add spaces after sentences; and, add, "check for extra spaces," to your editing process. Place cursor at the end of each paragraph, use the right arrow key to see if there are extra spaces, and delete any you find.

For more information or assistance, contact:

NDSU Office of Teaching and Learning
701-231-7015 | ndsu.otl@ndsu.edu

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