

MS Word Accessibility

Document layout

- Keep lots of white space between columns of text this help's people with low vision and users of screen reading software.
- People with sensory or cognitive disabilities will benefit from documents with lots of white space.
- Make hyperlinks descriptive. Don't use Click here or More.
- Format documents with high contrast. Black text on white provides the highest contrast.
- **Make font sizes 10 point or larger.**
- Use fonts consistently. Use sans-serif fonts such as Verdana, Arial or Helvetica. Avoid decorative or serif fonts such as Brush Script.
- Use built-in bullet and list tools instead of making them by hand

Document structure

- Add structure to a Word document with heading styles. Heading 1 comes before Heading 2 then Heading 3 and so forth.
- Don't skip heading levels. In other words, don't jump from Heading 1 to a Heading 3.
- Change the heading styles to fit your document rather than skip a heading level because you don't like the preset appearance.

Graphics and images

- Avoid lots of graphics on one page. A simple page is easier to read.
- All images and non-text elements that convey information have meaningful alternative text descriptions
- If the document contains graphic elements such as images, diagrams, or charts, be sure to convey information about those graphics in the text of the document.
- Add descriptive text to images known as "alt text". Also add a caption below the image.
- Create meaningful descriptions of graphs, charts, and equations
- **Use text to convey information.** Do not use WordArt or create graphics that contain text.
- Do not convey information or directions with color exclusively. "Press the red button."
- Avoid flashing or blinking elements. Flashing or blinking can cause seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy.
- If you must include animated text then warn your readers so they can avoid it and supply the information in another format such as plain text.
- Provide text alternatives to any sound or video embedded into the file
- Contact your divisional accessibility resource center for assistance with captioning and transcripts.

Tables

- Screen readers and Braille displays read tables row by row across the columns which may not make sense to someone using a screen reader or Braille display. When possible, use lists to convey information.
- HTML provides techniques to code tables that screen readers and Braille displays can read allowing the information to be accessible.
- Indicate the Heading Row on data tables in Microsoft Word.

Accessible File Names

To be accessible to screen readers, file names should not contain spaces or special characters.

File naming conventions are important for web pages and directories, as well as for downloadable files such as PDFs, Word documents, and Excel spreadsheets.

- Don't start or end your filename with a space, period, hyphen, or underline.
- Keep your filenames to a reasonable length and be sure they are under 31 characters.
- Always use lowercase.
- Don't use spaces and underscores; use a hyphen instead.
- Don't use the following special characters in your file names:
 - # pound
 - % percent
 - & ampersand
 - { left or } right curly bracket
 - \ back slash
 - < left or > right angle brackets

General guidelines

- Avoid using color as the only means of distinguishing information
- All non decorative text should have proper contrast with the background ratio of 4.5:1 for regular text or 3:1 for 18/24pt. or bold at least 14/18pt.
- Indicate the destination or purpose of all links in the link text
- document free from printing or copying restrictions which will prevent assistive technology from reading the document
- Tables have a title row, caption, or descriptive (alternative) text
- The first row in all tables with data mark as the header row.
- Repeat table header rows
- Avoid merging cell tables and rows
- Avoid empty cells in the tables
- Insert page numbers using the header/footer icon located on the Insert tool ribbon.
- Set line-spacing using the line space icon, located on the Home tool ribbon.
- Set margins using the Page Layout tool ribbon and Page Set Up Group.
- Check styles

Microsoft Word Best Practices USDA

1. Use system fonts when creating/modifying documents
2. Use a sans serif font
3. Select a font point size no smaller than 12
4. Use styles to associate attributes such as bold, underline, etc. with text (Do not manually associate attributes to text, Note: some readers do not recognize underlines when trying to associate attributes, if used check for accuracy of reading.)
5. Use upper and lower case letters in your sentences
6. Note: Using all capital letters is not recommended
7. Hyphens at the end of a line are not recommended unless absolutely necessary
8. Format your document so that all text (except for the title) is left justified when possible
9. Format your document using a block style (i.e., no indenting other than for bulleted/numbered items)
10. Use color only as an enhancement, not as the sole means of conveying information
11. Make headings different than the body text
12. Create headers and footers using Microsoft Word's header and footer feature
13. Use page numbering codes to number pages within a document (Do not manually type page numbers at the bottom of a page)
14. Use a hard page break code to designate the end of a page (Do not use the Enter key to move text to the next page)
15. Use simple and clear design layout
16. Bullets can be used with lists and key points
17. Explain all acronyms the first time they are used, or in a table near the front of the document
18. Ensure contrast is sufficient
19. Add alternate text to non-text elements
20. Group complex images
21. Ensure images are inserted "Inline with text", rather than as a floating image
22. Do not use text boxes
23. Create tables properly
24. Create columns properly
25. All edits in track changes must be accepted and comments removed

26. The document must be free of background images or watermarks that interfere with text elements

27. Create navigational aids for long documents

28. All URLs must be linked to active Web sites.

29. All URLs must be hyperlinked with the fully qualified URL

30. The document must be reviewed in Print Preview for a final visual check