



Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft Word 2016 and 2019 (Windows)

This information is based on the resource from the [National Center on Disability and Access to Education](#) and training from Access Specialist [Gaeir Dietrich](#).

Remember the Colored LIST

To help ensure accessibility in any document, consider the use of Color, Links, Images, Structure and Styles, and Tables.

Use of Color

Use color in documents carefully to ensure accessibility.

- Contrast between the foreground and background must be clear
 - Black on white – good
 - Yellow on white – not good
- Do not use color as the only means of conveying information
 - Use a combination of color and text or symbols
- Try the [Colour Contrast Analyzer](#), a free app to analyze colors and contrast

Links

Use descriptive text for hyperlinks and avoid links that are not clear.

- [Click here](#) for Document X – unclear
 - [Document X](#) has the information you need – good
 - Click here for [Document X](#) – ok
- Do not use underlining for anything other than hyperlinks

Images

Add meaningful and brief alternative text descriptions to images.

- Decorative image (in Word 2016)
 - Ivy border – good
 - Border of dark green overlapping ivy vines trailing – not good
- Informative graphic
 - Describe as succinctly as possible
 - Use a caption for a longer description (which may benefit all readers)

Structure and Styles

Use styles to create a document structure that is accessible and helpful for all readers.

- Headings
 - Use in order (heading 1, heading 2, heading 3, etc.) and do not skip numbers
 - Reuse heading 2, heading 3, etc. as needed; do not reuse heading 1
 - Bonus: headings can be used to automatically create a Table of Contents
- Lists
 - Use numbered lists for ordered information – Step 1, Step 2, etc.
 - Use bulleted lists for information that does not have an order
- Do not use text boxes
- Use fonts that will be easier to read online
 - 11 to 12 point is good
 - Consider using sans serif fonts such as [College of the Desert approved fonts](#)
 - Avoid using multiple fonts in a single document
- Use paragraph spacing as needed
 - Avoid using enter key for extra line spacing
 - Avoid using space bar for multiple spaces
 - Avoid using Tab to create columns

Tables

For simple side-by-side text, use columns instead of tables. Otherwise, when using tables:

- Use the first row of the table for the column headers (labels)
- Use the first column of the table for the row headers (labels)
- Do not merge cells
- Place the table title above the table, on a separate line
- Do not break rows across pages
- Add a brief alternative text description to summarize the table

After Checking the Colored LIST

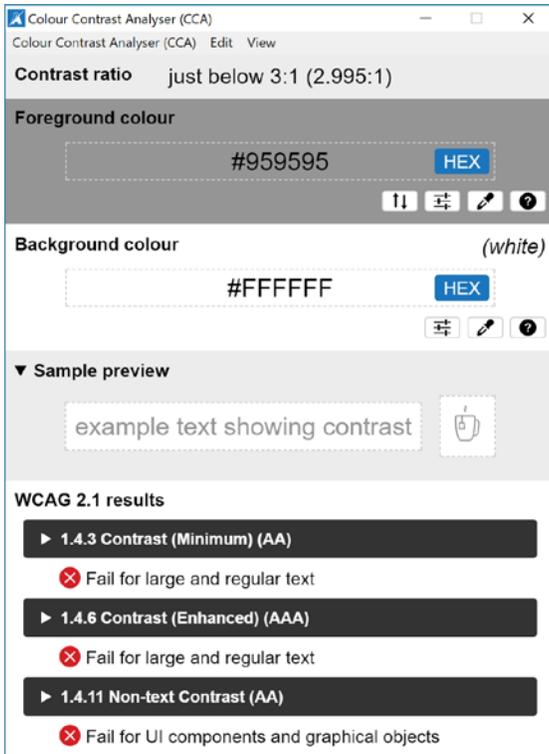
- Add a title in the document properties
- Set the document language
- Run the Accessibility Checker

Color

Color Contrast

Word 2019 will automatically check documents for text color contrast against:

- page color
- highlighting
- headers and footers
- table cell backgrounds
- paragraph shading
- and links.



You can also download the free [Colour Contrast Analyzer](#) to test color contrast of text and images.

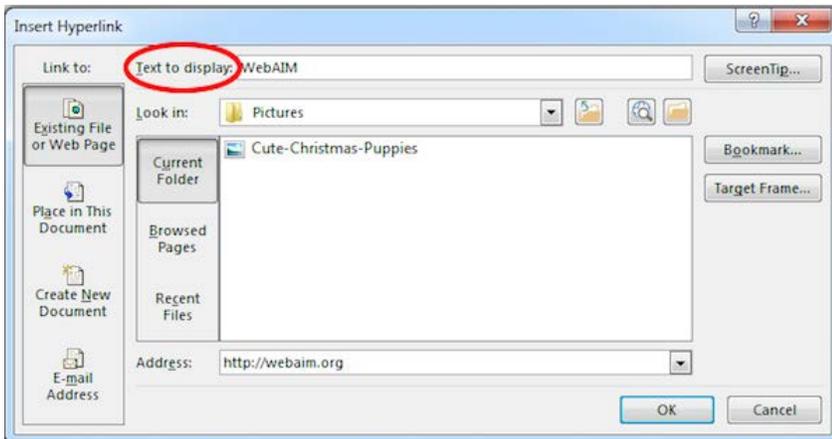
- You can use the eyedropper color picker to choose the text and background colors.
- You can enter any CSS color format or use the RGB color sliders.

More than Color to Convey Meaning

Use a combination of text, shapes, and color instead of relying on color as the only way of communicating information.

- The words **Correct** in green and **Incorrect** in red
- Green box with a white check mark  and a red button with a white 

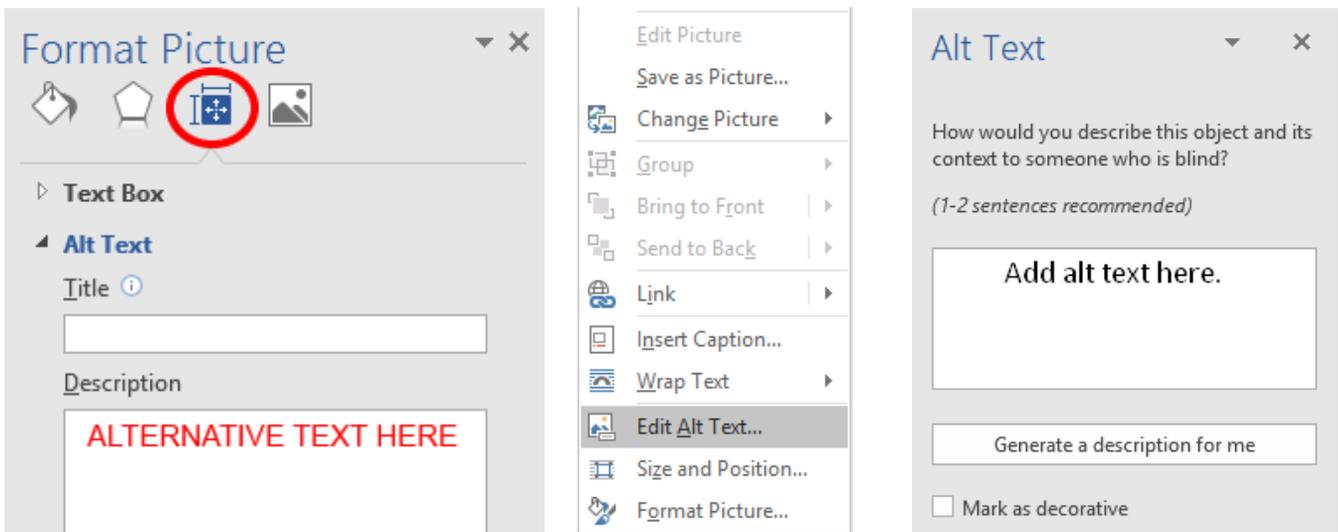
Hyperlinks



Word automatically creates a hyperlink when a user pastes a full URL onto a page. These may not make sense to individuals with disabilities, so make sure the link text is unique.

1. Select a hyperlink, right click, and select Hyperlink or type Ctrl + k.
2. Change the text in the Text to Display field to a more meaningful description.

Adding Alternative Text

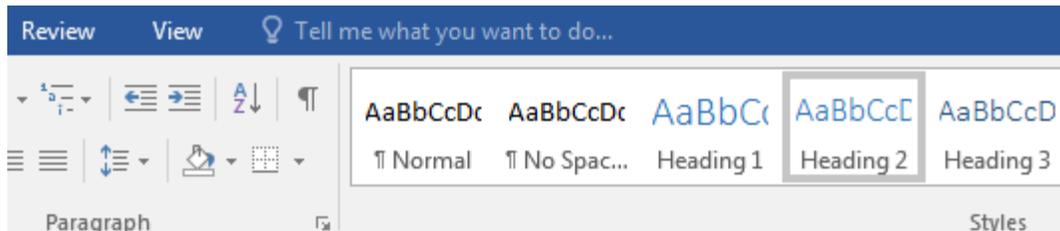


Images can be given appropriate alternative text in Word. Alt text is read by screen reading software in a Word file and usually remains intact when exporting to HTML or PDF.

1. Right-click on the image and select Format Picture (2016) or Edit Alt Text (2019).
2. In the Format Object pane (2016), select Layout & Properties. Then choose Alt Text. In 2019, the Alt text pane opens directly.
3. Enter appropriate Alt text in the Description field.

4. In 2016, enter a brief title in the Title field. A best practice suggestion is to use the same brief description for both the Title and Description of an image in Word.
5. In 2019, choosing the Mark as decorative check box greys out the description field and changes the announcement to users that the image is decorative.

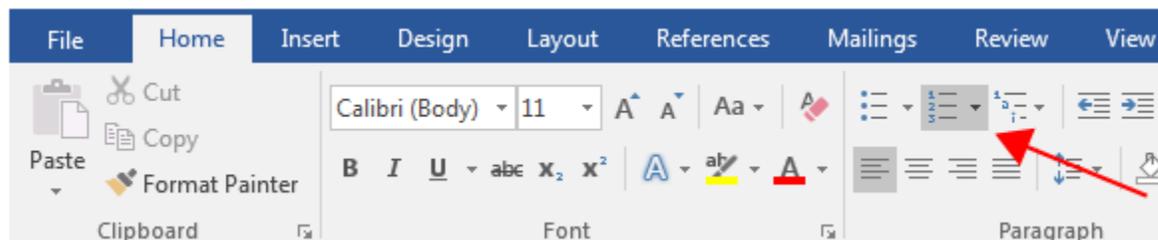
Heading Styles



Create a uniform heading structure through use of styles in Word. This allows users of assistive technology to navigate a document and improves accessibility for everyone.

1. Start a new line to create a heading, or select text to change to a heading.
2. Open the Home tab, and choose the appropriate heading in the Styles panel.
3. Headings 1, 2, or 3 can also be assigned using Ctrl + Alt + 1, 2, or 3, respectively.

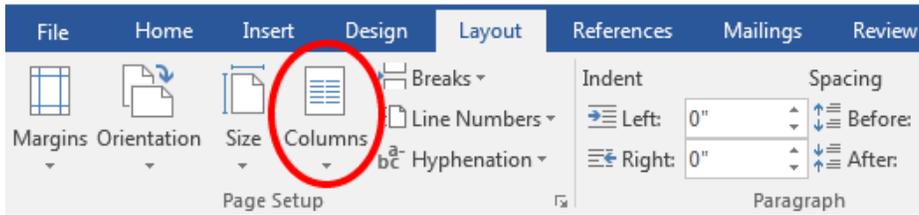
Lists



Use true numbered and bulleted lists to emphasize a point or a sequence of steps.

1. Select the Home tab on the ribbon.
2. Choose the Numbered List or Bulleted List option from the Paragraph group.

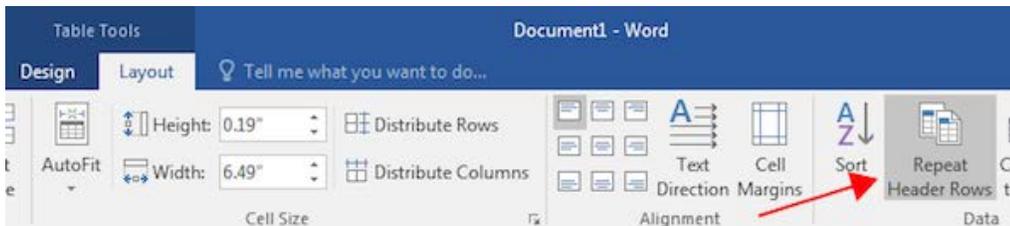
Columns



Always use true columns. Don't create columns with Tab.

1. Select the Layout tab on the ribbon.
2. Select Columns in the Page Setup group.
3. Choose the number of columns.

Data Tables

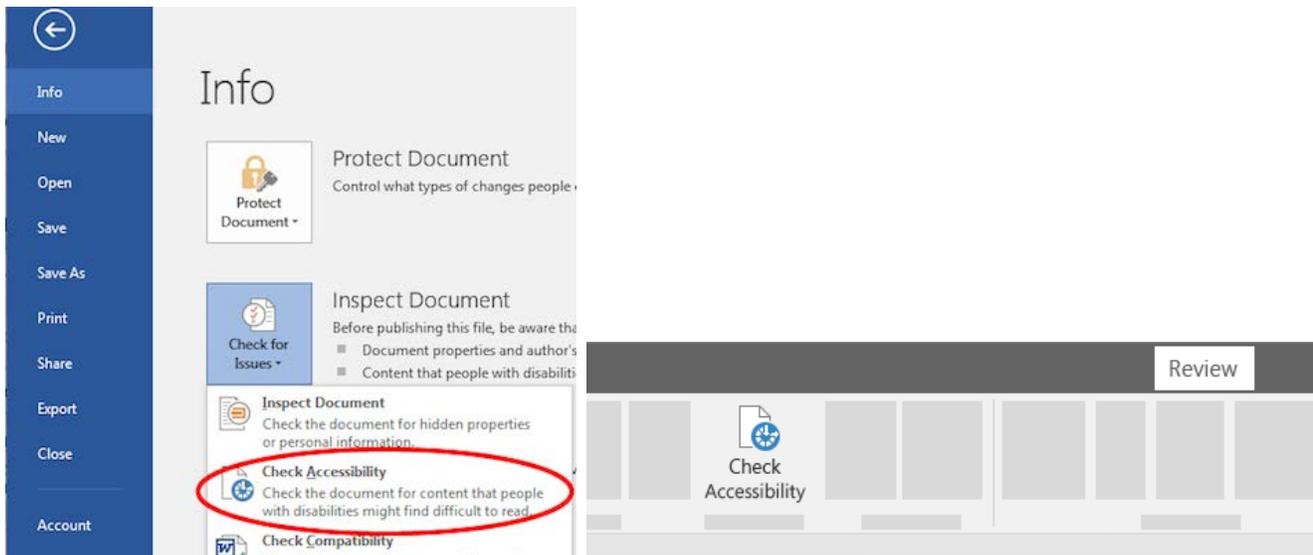


Tables need a clear table structure and table headers to guide users of screen reading software.

1. Select the Insert tab on the ribbon, then select Table > Insert Table.
2. To use the first row as the column headers, select Table Tools > Design on the ribbon. Then choose the Header Row option in the Table Style Options section.
 - a. Also, from Table Tools > Layout on the ribbon, choose Repeat Header Rows in the Data section.
3. To use the first column as the row headers, select Table Tools > Design on the ribbon. Then choose the First Column option in the Table Style Options section.

These settings may be selected by default but it is a best practice to double check. Other options in the Design tab may be used to change appearance but will not provide the necessary accessibility information. Additional steps are required to make a table accessible as a PDF.

Accessibility Checker



Word includes an accessibility resource that identifies some but not all accessibility issues.

1. Select File > Info > Check for Issues > Check Accessibility (2016). In 2019, choose the Review ribbon, then Check Accessibility.
2. The checker presents accessibility errors, warnings, and tips for making repairs.
3. Select specific issues to see Additional Information at the bottom of the task pane.

The Accessibility Checker will not identify all accessibility barriers. Manual checking is still required.

Other Principles

- Ensure that font size is sufficient, around 12 points
- Do not use the file name as the document title
- Provide a table of contents for long documents
- Use simple language
- Ensure that the document language is set to the correct language