CREATING AN ACCESSIBLE WORD DOCUMENT

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Below are the important aspects that you need to follow in order to make your Word doc accessible to all users as well as complies with [Section 508](https://www.section508.gov/).

Heading Structure

Providing structure makes it easier for users and assistive technology to navigate your content. Think of the heading structure like the chapters of a book or sections of an essay. Visually, you can skip around the content of a book or essay because large headings and section headings help you find relevant content faster. Heading levels should represent the structure of the document.

* Heading Level 1 is the document title or a main content heading. There is generally just one Heading 1 per document, although it is possible to have more than one (e.g., a journal where each article is a Heading 1).
* Heading Level 2 is a major section heading.
* Heading Level 3 is a sub-section of a Heading Level 2.
* Heading Level 4 is a sub-section of a Heading Level 3, and so on.

You should not skip heading levels, such as using a Heading 4 after a Heading 2 with no Heading 3 between the two.

All structures must start at Heading Level 1 for accessibility purposes. How you apply further levels is up to you, just make sure it makes good sense for the content. Different documents/programs use different methods for creating headings.

Applying Headings in Word

1. Select the text you would like to make a heading.
2. Click on “Home” tab and select “Heading 1” in the “Styles” section of the ribbon.
3. Repeat the same method for heading levels 2, 3, 4… where appropriate for your content.

Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are not always human-readable or screen-reader friendly. It is better to use human-readable text instead of lengthy or illegible text. For example, instead of <https://dli.kennesaw.edu>, you would use [KSU Digital Learning Innovations](https://dli.kennesaw.edu/). You always want to describe where the link is going to take the reader. Using “Click Here” or “Link” is not descriptive enough. If it is a YouTube video, use the title of the video as the descriptive text. Almost everything on the internet has some sort of title that can be used.

Creating Descriptive Link Text in Word

If you are a Mac user, follow the steps below:

1. Select the hyperlink.
2. Right click on the link and select “Hyperlink”.
3. Then, select “Edit Hyperlink”
4. Delete the URL at the “Text to Display” box and type the descriptive text, then click “OK”.

If you are a Windows user, follow the steps below:

1. Select the hyperlink.
2. Right click and select “Copy Hyperlink”.
3. Click on the “Insert” tab, then click on “Link”.
4. The Edit Hyperlink dialog box will show with the URL in “Address” and “Text to Display”. Delete the URL in “Text to Display” and type in your descriptive text.

Most of the time, these documents will be placed online like in D2L. To help make sure the link is interactive while online, make sure the link is set to Open in New Window. Click the Target Frame button to the right of the Edit Hyperlink dialog box. It will open the Set Target Frame dialog box. Which looks like the following:



Click the arrow in the drop-down menu to select “New Window” and then add a check to the button underneath to “set as default for all hyperlinks”. That way you only have to do it once per document.

Data Tables

Accessible data tables help screen reader users understand the relationship between table headers and the cells within their scope. Much like headings, sighted readers can see the associations easily within a table, but low to no sighted individuals will need the content to be properly labeled as screen readers will read the content left to right, top to bottom.

Creating Simple Data Table with Row Header in Word

1. Select the top row of the table.
2. Right click and select “Table Properties”.
3. On the table properties dialog box, click on or make sure the “Row” tab is selected.
4. Add a **check** to the “Repeat as header row at the top of each page”.
5. Make sure “Allow row to break across pages” is **unchecked**.
6. Click on the “Alt Text” tab and type in the table title and description. Click “OK” to complete.

Color Contrast

Color contrast is crucial for users with visual disabilities. To make content accessible for them, one must consider the ratio of foreground to background color. According to WCAG 2.2, the standard ratio should be at least 4.5:1.

There are several free color contrast checkers to help you analyze your foreground to background ratio. The online contrast checkers require knowing the HEX color code to make comparisons. Knowing how to change font colors in Word is the first step. Watch this video and note the Hex code shows up in the Color dialog box under the Custom tab: [How to Change Font Color in Microsoft Word](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSCB9N3C4mk) [VIDEO].

Contrast checkers:

* [WebAIM](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/) (online checker)
* [Colour Contrast Analyser](https://www.tpgi.com/color-contrast-checker/) by TPGi (downloadable color picker)
* [Contrast Ratio](https://contrast-ratio.com/) (online checker)

The default colors in Word are not always the most accessible. For example, we often want to place emphasis on words by using red. But the default red (#FF0000) has a contrast ratio of 3.99:1 on a white background. When you choose a darker version of red, like #981B1E, the ratio changes to 8.36:1 and is much more accessible for those with visual disabilities. One of our most popular colors for KSU is Hooty Gold (#FFC629). However, that color does not work on a white (#FFFFFF) background. It will work on a black (#000000) background. Here are some examples of color combinations that pass:

#205493 on #FFFFFF

#000000 on #FFC629

#4C2C92 on #FFFFFF

#FFFFFF on #303AB2

#2E8540 on #FFFFFF

#000000 on #94BFA2

Metadata

Metadata refers to searchable fields within the document’s properties that identify specific elements like author, title, and possible keywords, etc. Missing metadata causes issues with the PDF Accessibility Checker when you convert Word documents into PDF so it is important to include them when you aim to convert your Word documents to PDF format.

Adding Metadata in Word

If you are a Mac user, follow the steps below:

1. Click on the “File” tab in the menu. Select “Properties”.
2. On the properties dialog box, click on the “Summary” tab.
3. Type in the “Title” and “Author” and any other information you would like to provide, then click “OK”.

If you are a Windows user, follow the steps below:

1. Click on File > Info > Properties > Advanced Properties.
2. On the properties dialog box, click on the “Summary” tab.
3. Type in the “Title” and “Author” and any other information you would like to provide, then click “OK”.

Accessibility Checker

One of the best practices in providing accessible documents is to run the built-in Accessibility Checker. You can run the checker as you create the document, or you can run it as soon as you complete the document.

Running the Word Accessibility Checker

1. Click on the “Review” tab.
2. Click on “Check Accessibility”.
3. The Accessibility dialog box will show results in a pane to the right of your document. If there are issues, the inspection result will show “Errors” and/or “Warnings”. Click on them to expand and see results. Many will include recommendations for how to fix the issue. Please note, that sometimes you will receive notification in D2L through the Universal Design Report that there are accessibility issues and Word has not identified them. It is due to the fact the UDR recognizes issues when having to convert documents into different formats (since that is one of its functions). Do your best to make the modifications suggested when needing to upload content to D2L.