



Formatting Microsoft Word for Accessibility

Office 2016

The Basics

File Format

Make sure your documents are saved in the current Microsoft office format, **.docx**. If you go to **File > Save As**, the option for save as type should be Word Document, NOT 'Word 97-2003' or other options

Note: Word Documents with Macros or Forms enabled are NOT accessible.

File Name

Use a Descriptive file name. Make sure you can tell what the document is from the file name.

Document Language

Screen Readers look for the document language to know how to read the text in the document. To set the language, look for "Language" in the Review tab at the top of the window.

Basic Formatting – Make it Easier on Yourself AND Accessible!

- In the home tab of Microsoft Word, there are preset styles (shown below) that can be modified to fit your preferences of look and feel. By using these, you make your life easier by formatting parts of your document with just a click, but this also creates navigation in Microsoft Word that can be read by accessibility programs.



- Once you have your document typed up, you need to verify that the headings show in navigation. Pull up the Navigation Pane and verify all your headings are showing in the navigation and are in the correct order and nesting.
Note: Navigation Pane can be accessed from View > Sidebar > Navigation

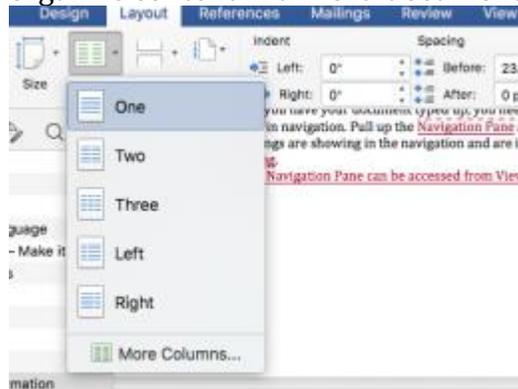
Formatting Details

Lists

Make sure to use the bulleted or numbered lists built in to Microsoft Word, which can be found in the home tab under the paragraph section. If you type in lists manually, screen readers can't read them correctly, making it difficult for users to understand your information.

Columns

In the layout tab, there is an option for columns, which makes it very easy to organize content in a Word document in an accessible way.



Tables

Using a table can be useful for formatting in Microsoft Word, but the layout of your text MUST be left to right, then top to bottom (screen readers will read tables in Word in that order.)

Hyperlinks

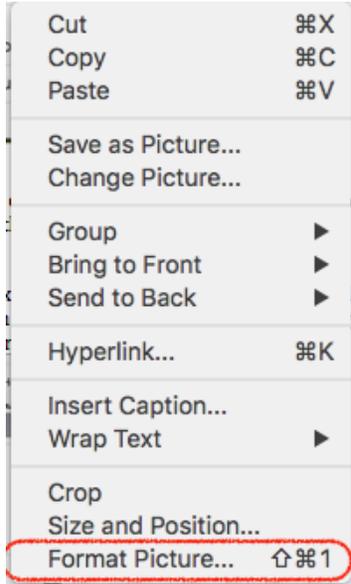
The biggest part of creating hyperlinks is making sure that each link has descriptive, unambiguous links. You can insert hyperlinks from the menu by going to **Insert > Hyperlink** or pressing **Ctrl-K (Command-K for Mac)**.

Headers, Footers, and Watermarks

Any information included in the header, footer, or watermark that is considered important (Respond by date, Confidential, Draft, Do Not Distribute, etc.) needs to be duplicated in the main content area of the document.

Images

Any image or object needs alternative text, or alt text, for screen readers. To add this information, right click the image/object and click **Format [object]...**, and the alt text area can be found under “layout and properties” in the format sidebar.

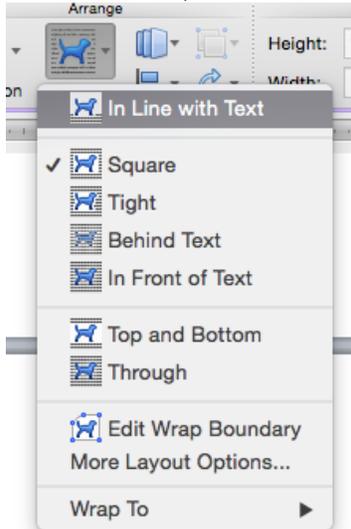


Decorative Items

If a picture or other object is for decoration, insert a space or double-quote, space, double-quote. For the alt. text.

Text Boxes

You can use text boxes for adjusting the text layout beyond what other formatting options in Word can do and they will be accessible, but only if they are positioned in line with text, shown below.



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Colors

Colors are useful for conveying meaning, but for accessibility, you need to use other characteristics to ensure that everyone can understand the information. This is intended for people who may have low vision or those who are colorblind.

Example:

A	Good
B	Questionable
C	Bad

In this example, the colors signify the status of each item, but there is text that also conveys the point.

Checking your Work

In the “Review” Ribbon of word, click the “Check Accessibility” Icon. This will generate an Accessibility Checker Report in the right sidebar. The results are sorted into categories, such as “warnings” and “tips.” By clicking on each issue listed, the tool will give instructions on why the item is an issue, and how to fix it under the results box.

Note: Accessibility Checker tools were not available in Office for Mac until Office 2016, after an update in August 2016. If you do not see the Accessibility Checker, verify you have a version dated after August 2016 or contact the IT Service Center for assistance.

Office for PC

- Click **File**, in the info section, click “**Check for Issues,**” and “**Check Accessibility.**”
- The Accessibility Checker will open on the right sidebar and show any issues that you may have. If you click on the issue, it will give you steps on how to fix it.

Office for Mac

- Click **View** in the toolbox section and select “**Compatibility Report.**”
- The Compatibility Report will open in a small window and show any issues that you may have. If you click on the issue, it will give you steps on how to fix it.

Notes

This may seem like a lot to do and add as you create Documents, but this four-page, detailed document was created in about an hour and a half, and when checked for accessibility in Word 2016, has no issues listed. It isn’t as hard as it seems, it just

breaking away from your normal routine slightly. Small changes truly make a big difference with the accessibility of your documents.

Support Resources

Microsoft now has a [Disability Answer Desk](#) service, available by phone, chat, and video phone for ASL. Information for contacting the Disability Answer Desk is available from Microsoft's Website.

For University Employees, you can email the [Enterprise Disability Answer Desk](#) at eDAD@microsoft.com. In some cases, the Enterprise Help Desk has answered within 15 minutes of sending them an email.