


Word tips for accessibility

Line spacing, Headings, Text emphasis, Images, Hyperlinks, Lists, Table headings, Colors, Document Title and Checking for accessibility

Line Spacing

Adding white space between paragraphs using double hard or soft carriage returns decreases the accessibility of a document. Instead use text line spacing to increase or decrease white space between sentences and paragraphs (shown in Figure 1).

1. Select your text.
2. Select the Home tab.
3. In the Paragraph group, in the lower-right corner of the group, click on the icon  to expand the paragraph settings.
4. The Paragraph dialog box opens, showing the Indents and Spacing tab.
5. Under Spacing, select the spacing options you want.

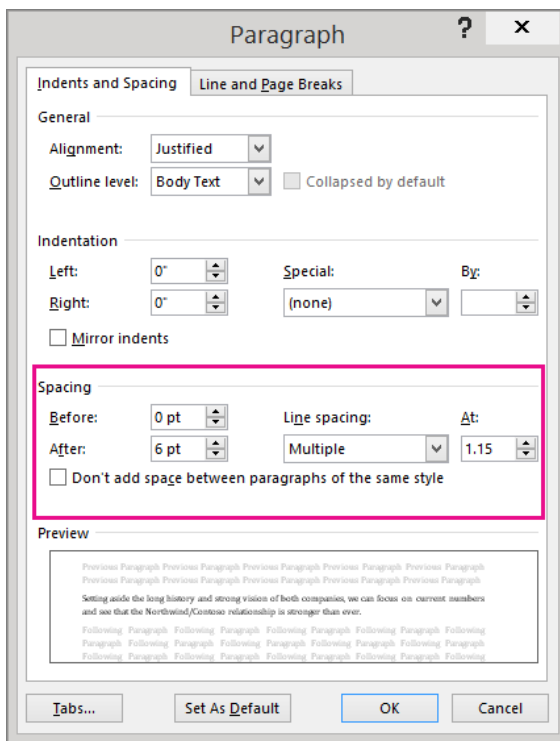


Figure 1

Headings

In order to follow ADA accessibility rules for content on a page, headings must follow the H1 to H5 protocol. The only H1 on a web page would be the page heading. Content elements below that must cascade down from h2, according to the relationship of one to the next. This same rule applies to documents linked to on the web. To apply built-in heading styles for documents:

1. Select the heading text.
2. On the Home tab, in the Styles group, select a heading style, for example, Heading 1 or Heading 2. (Shown in Figure 2).

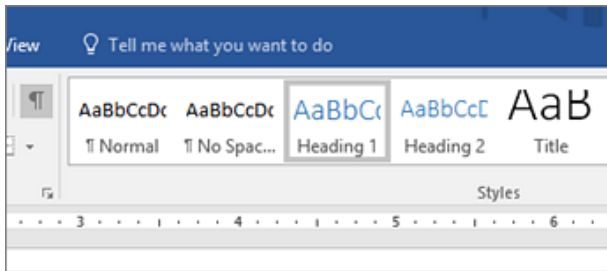


Figure 2

Text Emphasis

Instead of applying **bold B**, *italic B* or ***bold italic B I*** formatting to text, use (**Strong, Emphasis, and Intense Emphasis**) in the Style menu so screen readers will correctly indicate the text emphasis. (shown in Figure 3)

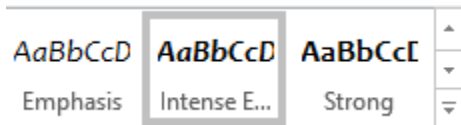



Figure 2

Images

Images in documents, just like images on the web, should have alt attributes so that assistive technology can describe the image in a meaningful way. See [WebAIM's alt text page](https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext) (<https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext>) for additional guidelines on writing alternative text.

To add alt text:

1. Right click on the image
2. Click on **Format Picture** from the drop-down list
3. In the sidebar, click on the third icon from the left 
4. Click on Alt text
5. Enter a meaningful description of the image or figure. The description should convey the content of the image and its purpose to a person using assistive technology.

Create meaningful hyperlinks

Accessible documents allow individuals using screen readers to 'scan' the links quickly by using meaningful text that describes the link destination. Never use phrases like 'click here' since without the context of the paragraph, they are meaningless.

Tip: If the title on the hyperlink's destination page gives an accurate summary of what is on the page, use it for the hyperlink text (shown in Figure 4). For example, this hyperlink text matches the title on the destination page: [Templates and Themes for Office Online](https://templates.office.com/).

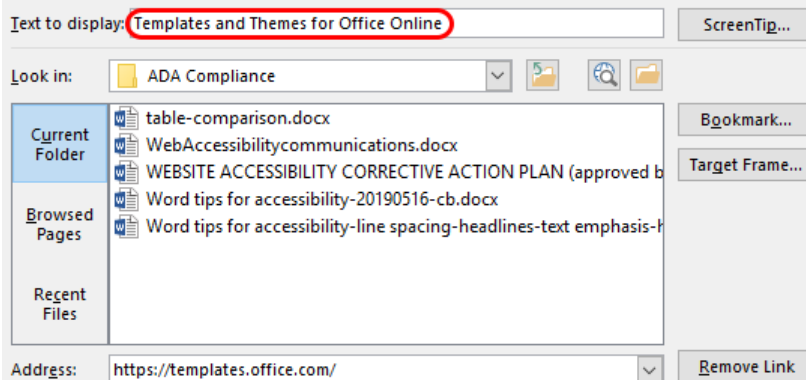


Figure 4

Lists - Use properly formatted lists

Lists add important hierarchical structure to a document. Sometimes users create "lists" manually by hitting the **Tab** to indent content. This provides visual structure for sighted users, but does not provide the document structure needed for assistive technology users.

List types

There are two types of lists used in Word: ordered and unordered. Ordered (numbered) lists are used to present a group of items (words, phrases, sentences) that follow a sequence:

1. First item – ordered list
2. Second item – ordered list
3. Third item – ordered list
4. Fourth item – ordered list
 - a. Second level – ordered list

Unordered (bullet) lists are used for a group of items without a sequence:

- This is a bullet list
- This is a bullet list
- This is a bullet list
- This is a bullet list
- This is a bullet list
 - Second level of a bullet list

Table Headers

Use table headers to provide accessibility to your data tables.

1. Position the cursor anywhere in a table.
2. On the Table Tools Design tab, in the Table Style Options group, select the Header Row check box. (shown in Figure 5)
3. Type the column headings.

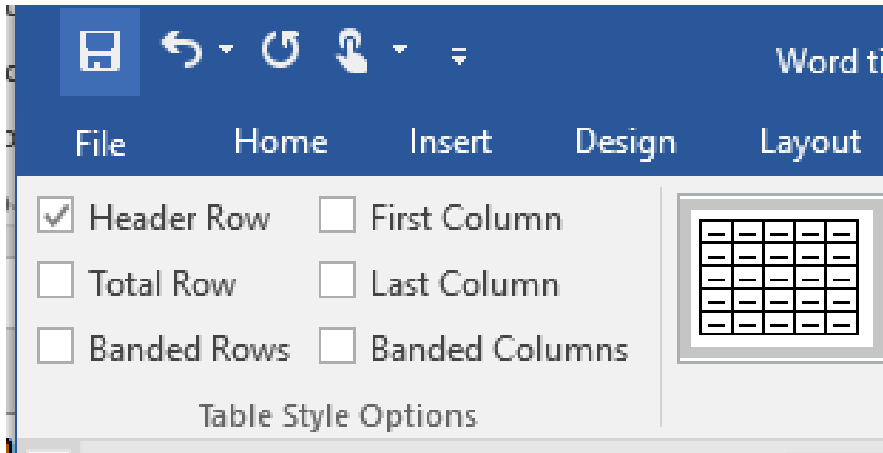


Figure 5

It is also helpful if your table has a caption that identifies the overall topic of the table.

Color - Use accessible text color

Ensure that text displays well by using the **Automatic** setting for font colors. You should select colors that include a high enough contrast between content and background so that is easily read by anyone with low vision or color deficiencies. Select your text, and then select **Home > Font Color > Automatic** (shown in Figure 6).

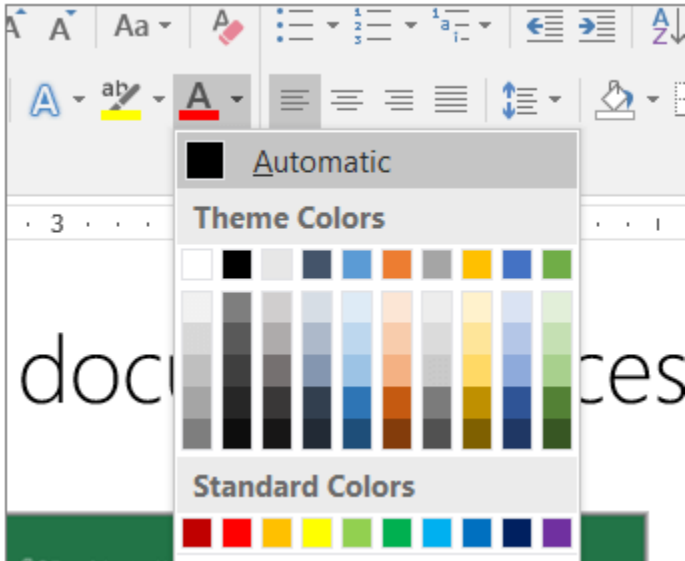


Figure 6

Red/green color blindness is the most common so avoid using those colors in combination. Never use color alone as an indicator. For example, if using color to indicate a required field on a form, also use a symbol such as an asterisk.

Document Title

Give your Word document a title in the document properties. It should succinctly describe the purpose of the document and will be the first thing assistive technology will recognize and read after opening a document.

1. Clicking on **File > Info**;
2. Then **Properties**;
3. If Properties is not visible, click on the arrows to expand the pull down menu;
4. Add title.

Accessibility Checker

Follow these steps to open the Accessibility Checker.

1. Select **File > Info**.
2. Select the **Check for Issues** button.
3. In the **Check for Issues** drop-down menu, select **Check Accessibility** (shown in Figure 7).

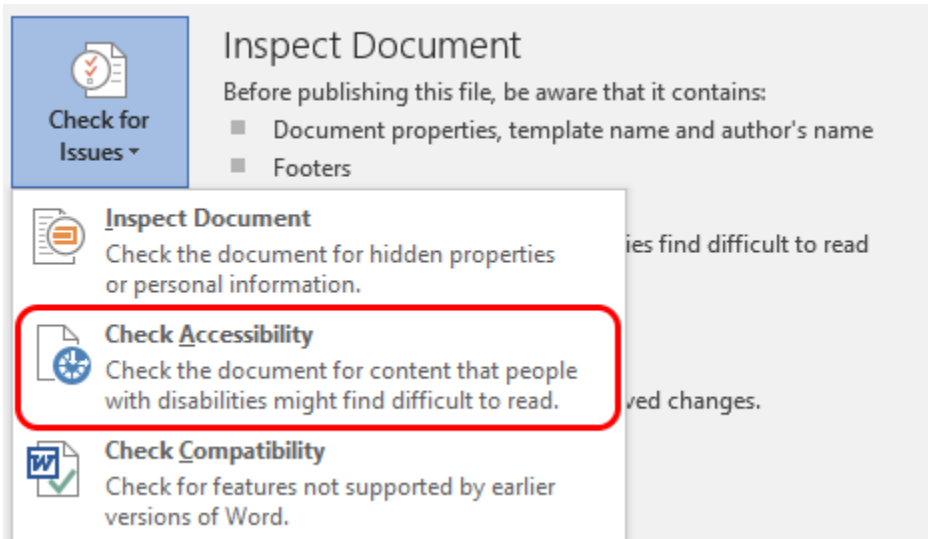


Figure 7

4. The **Accessibility Checker** task pane appears next to your content and shows the inspection results. (shown in Figure 8) Review your results. You will see a list of errors, warnings, and tips with how-to-fix recommendations for each.

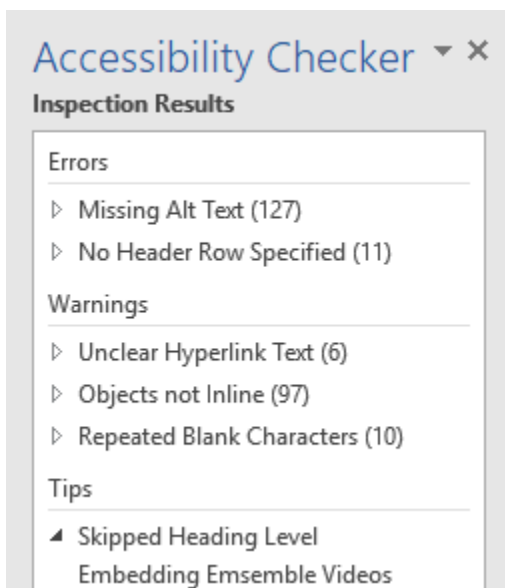


Figure 8

Excerpted from: [Make your Word documents accessible to people with disabilities](https://support.office.com/en-ie/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d#bkmk_windowstextformat) https://support.office.com/en-ie/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d#bkmk_windowstextformat

- To see information on why and how to fix an issue, under **Inspection Results**, select an issue. Results appear under **Additional Information**, and you will be directed to the inaccessible content in your file (shown in Figure 9).

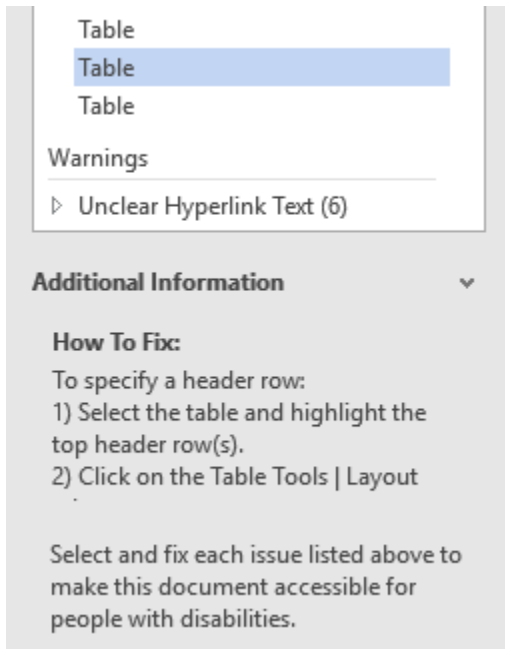


Figure 9

BEFORE EXPORTING YOUR WORD DOCUMENT TO A PDF – Set Save Options

Save as tagged PDF natively (from [WebAIM: web accessibility in mind site](http://www.webaim.org))

Word 2010, 2013 and 2016 allows you to create tagged PDF files *without* installing Acrobat. The tagging process may not be quite as good as with the Adobe add-in, but most content, such as heading levels, lists, and alternative text for images is exported. If you want to verify the accessibility of the PDF or edit the tags that are created, you will still need Acrobat Professional.

1. To convert to PDF using the Microsoft add-in, Select File > Save As, and under Save as type: select PDF. When you select PDF an “Options” button will appear at the bottom of the “Save As” dialogue box.
2. Before you save the file, select Options and ensure that the Document structure tags for accessibility option is selected.

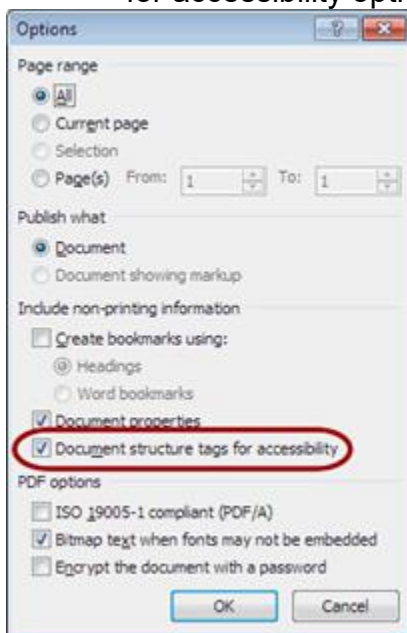


Figure 10