

**Ready
Willing
& Able**

**Making documents
accessible**

SEE ABILITY

Live. Love. Thrive. Belong.

Making documents accessible is an important step towards making sure everyone can access all information that you are communicating.

You should decide on a set of accessible fonts and logos, then produce an in-house guide for employees to use. This will help guide them to ensure they are following business brand requirements, while also making documents accessible.



Headings

Using the headings functions in Microsoft Word & Google Documents will make sure that screen readers can easily navigate the content. If you just style your text to look like headings or subheadings, screen readers are not able to tell the difference and will just read on through.

Headings should be used in the following order:

Heading 1 / Title - Title of the document (should only be used once)

Heading 2 – Page or section heading

Heading 3 – Sub-content heading

Heading 4 – Sub-Sub-content heading

Normal – Main body of your text

There are other styles that can be used, such as for identifying areas of text as quotes, or to emphasise text in another way.

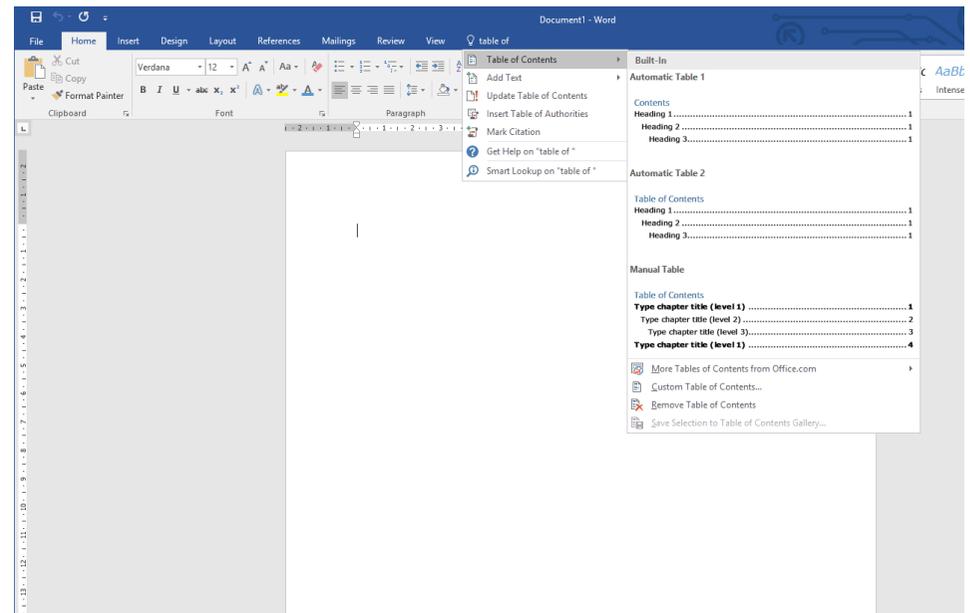
The design of these headings and text styles can be adjusted by using the 'styles' pane, it will then automatically change all the text assigned with this style to your new adjustments. To do this right click on the chosen heading and select 'modify'.

Doing this not only makes it easier for screen readers, but also for anyone who prefers to read in larger or different fonts or colours, as it makes it quicker and easier for them to adjust the styles to suit their needs without losing the overall format of the document.

Contents page

If using Microsoft Word, for longer documents you should consider using the built-in 'table of contents' feature.

This automatically uses your headings to create a linked table of contents that can make navigating your document easier for all readers.



Page layout & text alignment

Adding headers, footers and page numbers to your page layout will provide navigation landmarks to your documents. This makes it easier for people to jump to sections, recall or return to their previous position.

Ensure there is good spacing between sentences and paragraphs. Where possible, keep paragraphs short, avoid large volumes of text, unnecessary additional words and jargon.

Use bullet points or numbered lists to break text down. Use the built in features to create these rather than just adding numbers or symbols as text.

Left aligned text is easier to read. Justified text is harder, as the spacing between words and letters varies.

Rather than using the enter key to create space between paragraphs or images, use indentations and spacing. Screen readers can pick up this spacing as characters in the document.

Colour

If using a variety of colours within your document, make sure they have a high level of contrast between the text and the background, as this will help people to be able to read it.

The built-in accessibility checker within Word should pick this up. If this is not available there are a variety of online tools that can be used to check this, such as [WebAIM colour contrast checker](#). You should aim for a contrast ratio of at least 4.5:1

Avoid using colour as the only way of conveying information, as this cannot be interpreted by people with low vision, colour blindness or people using screen readers. For example, if you are using a colour to indicate a status, also include a word or symbol. You could add a checkmark symbol  if green is used to indicate "pass" and an uppercase X  if red indicates "fail".



Alternative (alt) text

Alternative (alt) text should be provided for images used within a document, as it helps people that cannot see the screen understand what is important about an image or other visuals.

To add alt text, right click on the image, chart or graphic and select 'edit alt text'.

Add in 1 descriptive sentence that explains the image in words to someone who cannot see the image. The alt text description for the image on the right would be: "A bunch of muddy carrots".

If there is any text in your image, please make sure this is also included within the description, as it will not be picked up by screen readers.

If you are using an image to add visual interest but they are not informative and are just decorative, you can mark them as such. This means that people using screen readers skip past them and they know that they are not missing out on any important information.



Tables

Tables are great for organising data and information. Keep them as simple and as logical as possible so that everyone can follow the table, with evenly laid out formats. Try to make your tables read logically from left to right and top to bottom (if working in English). Tables should only be used for real table content, not just for layout purposes.

Avoid using merged or split cells, as these can make it difficult to follow from a visual perspective or when cell contents are read aloud.

Use clear column headings to make tables consistent and easy to navigate. Under 'table options' select and identify this as the 'header row', so that screen readers can identify the top row as column headings.

To get a better idea of how a screen reader will navigate your table, use the tab key on your keyboard to check the order that the cursor goes through your columns and rows.

For larger tables of information, consider using a table format that shades alternate rows so that it is easier for people to follow the row when reading.

Using alt text for tables, as well as images and charts, can also help explain what the table is for.

If you need to highlight key facts from your table, avoid doing this with colours or different fonts. It is best to list out the most important information underneath the table so that screen readers can pick this up.

Hyperlinks

Use clear text for any hyperlinks you are adding to your document. Never use the full URL or 'click here', as this is what a screen reader will try to read.

For example:

Use: [Natural History Museum](#)

Do not use: <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/> or
[Click Here for Natural History Museum link](#)
or [Click Here](#)

When you want to add a hyperlink:

1. Right-click on the line where you want the link and select 'hyperlink' (or go to 'Insert' and then 'hyperlink').
2. Copy and paste the URL into the address or link to text box.
3. Include a simple but meaningful description under display or text to display. This is the writing that will actually be visible in your document. When clicked it will take the reader to the website of the URL.

Presentation documents

When creating documents using Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Slides keep text to a minimum, but also try not to make slides too busy or complicated with multiple images containing text or charts.

When presenting a document use the 'caption' functions to display speakers' words in real time at the bottom of the screen.

Check the reading order of each slide before presenting. If someone is using a screen reader, it will read the elements of a slide in the order they

were added when the slide was created – this isn't necessarily the order in which you want someone to read the information so make sure you have set the correct reading order.

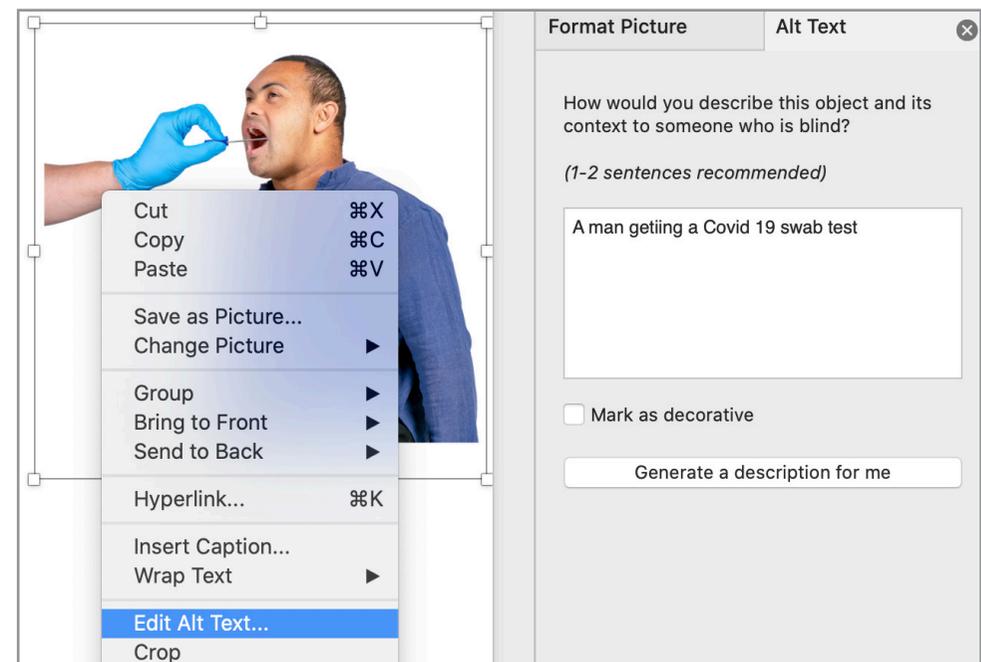
You can view the reading order by clicking on 'review' then opening the 'reading order pane' in the accessibility checker.

Images

If using imported images or diagrams in any type of document, try to avoid using those with text. This text cannot be magnified or picked up by a screen reader.

If the image contains a small volume of text, such as a logo, ensure that this is included in the 'alt text' description.

If the image or diagram contains a considerable amount of text and there is no alternative available, the text should also be duplicated either within the 'alt text' or elsewhere on the page.



Useful links

[Gov.uk guidance on accessible documents](#)

[Microsoft - How to make Word documents accessible](#)

[Microsoft - How to make PowerPoint presentations accessible](#)

[Microsoft - Make slides easier to read by using the reading order pane in PowerPoint](#)

[Google - How to make your documents & presentations more accessible](#)

[WebAIM colour contrast checker](#)