Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft Office

The world has become increasingly reliant on digital documents—for business, education, government, and much more. But people with disabilities and situational impairments can have difficulty accessing and using these documents if the content is not presented in an accessible way.

With the right tools, you can produce accessible documents that more of your colleagues, customers, and classmates with disabilities can readily use. Microsoft Office makes it easier to create and edit accessible documents, spreadsheets, and presentations—in ways that surpass what is offered by most other productivity applications. In particular, the Accessibility Checker in Office helps you apply accessibility best practices and adhere to widely accepted accessibility standards.

Best Practices and the Accessibility Checker

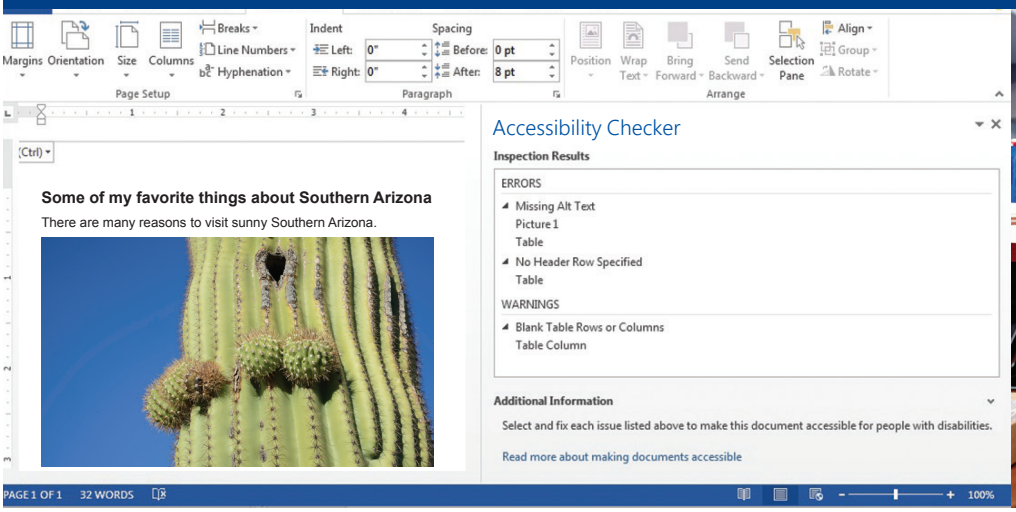
With the click of a button in Word, Excel, or PowerPoint, you can run the Accessibility Checker to scan a document, spreadsheet, or presentation for accessibility issues. Many of these issues relate to accessibility for people with visual impairments, including those who rely on screen readers and people with low vision who need simple formatting and structure in order to navigate through documents. The tool highlights each issue it detects and explains how to address it.

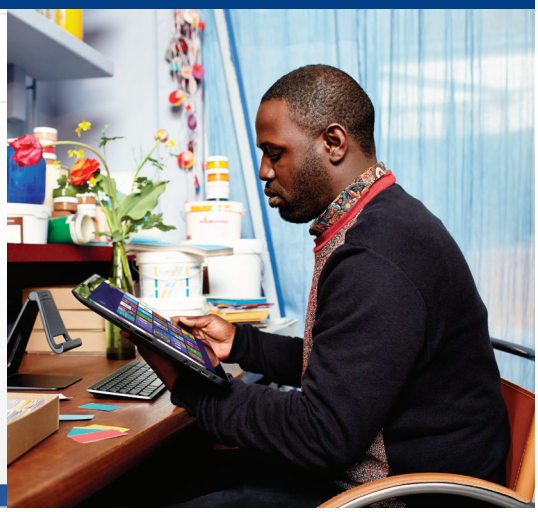
Here are some important practices to follow when you create documents. The Accessibility Checker helps remind you of many of them.

- **Add alt text to images and objects.** Descriptive text known as "alt text" helps people who use screen readers understand the content of objects in your document—including images, photos, charts, and tables.
- **Use simple table structure.** Tables with a simple structure are easiest to navigate—especially for people who rely on screen readers. Try to avoid using nested tables, merged or split cells within tables, and blank cells for table formatting.
- **Use clear column headings in tables.** Column headings that are easy to understand help users navigate within the table.
- **Use heading styles in long Word documents.** Heading styles add structure for people who use screen readers or who rely on headings as visual cues.
- **Give all Excel worksheet tabs unique names.** Worksheet names should describe what is in the worksheet so users can more easily navigate through a workbook.
- **Give each PowerPoint slide a unique title.** People with visual impairments rely on titles for navigation.
- **Make hyperlink text meaningful.** Hyperlink text should clearly describe the link destination rather than providing just the URL or a generic phrase such as "click here."
- **Use high color contrast.** To increase visibility for people with colorblindness, it is best to use high color contrast between text and backgrounds and to avoid using orange, red, and green elements and text.

Creating Accessible Documents with Microsoft Office

Office





Resources and Training

Microsoft offers resources to help businesses, governments, and educators create accessible content and train employees. See the links below to learn more.

To Learn More

Microsoft Accessibility website: www.microsoft.com/enable

Microsoft Office website: office.microsoft.com

Microsoft Developer Network: msdn.microsoft.com