Accessibility Guidelines

# Word documents

More information can be found at: <https://support.office.com/en-us/article/make-your-word-documents-accessible-d9bf3683-87ac-47ea-b91a-78dcacb3c66d>

<http://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/word/>

## Basic Structure of the Document:

* Use the Verdana font (or other Sans Serif fonts) for the body text.
* The font size should be at 12 pt. for the body.
* Use Heading Styles to break out different topics or sections in the document.

These styles need to be in place so the Screen Reader can navigate through the document.

To learn how to edit your Styles to the accessibility standards, go to the Defining Styles in Word document.

* Use one form of emphasis for words or phrases, such as bold or underlined, but not both.

Bolded or underlined words are not emphasized by the Screen Reader. So a student using a Screen Reader will not know if something is bold or underlined or italicized.

Be consistent with emphasis usage, such as using underlining for definitions.

* Avoid using all caps and limit the use of italics (these are harder to read in general).
* When using colored text or highlighting, ensure that there is sufficient contrast with the background. If not possible, consider using different patterns (dotted line/dashed line) instead of using color.
* Abbreviations may be misread by the screen reader.

Pts is read as individual letters instead of the word “points.”

SAT is read as Saturday instead of the abbreviation for Scholastic Aptitude Test. These may need to be spelled out.

i.e. does not read, you may have to use ex. for example.

* Use parentheses instead of dashes for parenthetical phrases. (find example)
* Some Auto Formatting should be turned off to aid in accessibility functions.

To see how to change auto-formatting options in Word for accessibility, please see the Setting Advanced Options document.

## Lists:

* Do not use Roman numerals.

Roman numerals are read as letters by the screen reader.

Roman numerals used as an ordered list within a document could be changed to Heading 1. Also, suggest changing document titles to regular numbers.

* For readability in an unordered, bulleted list, choose the default closed bullet symbol. This will be read as “bullet” before the text to indicate this a list entry. As shown below, other symbols are either not read or are misleading, such as the + sign being read as the mathematical symbol.

**Examples:**

* Symbol read as “bullet”
  + Open bullet symbol read as “oh”
    - Closed box symbol not read
      * Dash or minus symbol not read
        + Symbol read as plus sign

Chevron arrow symbol not read

* To learn how to create an accessible ordered and unordered lists, please see the Constructing Accessible Lists document.

## Text Boxes

* Do not use Text boxes.

Text boxes and the contained text content are ignored by the screen reader, so the text should be placed as regular text in the document.

If the box is being used for visual emphasis, a work-around is to make a box shaped graphic (with no fill) around the text and put the shape “in the background.” The screen reader does not tell the listener that the text is in a box but will be able to read the text.

* To learn how to create an accessible alternative to a text box, please see the Choosing Alternatives to Text Boxes document.

## Tables

* Tables should only be used for data and not as a formatting option for text. Because the screen reader identifies it as a table, it is confusing for the student.
* For simple tables with header information in the first row, the screen reader needs to know this to assist with navigation.
* A complex table with spanned columns or rows will not be read in the same way that it can be seen visually. In these cases, an alternative ordered list or flowchart will be needed in addition to (or instead of) the table.
* To learn how to create an accessible table, please see the Creating Accessible Tables document.

## Graphics

* Graphics should be as simple as possible, using high-contrast elements surrounded by sufficient white space for readability.
  + Black and white or grayscale is best; avoid colors.
  + Use thicker line widths for axes and plotted lines
  + Use a sans serif font in a readable size
* Anchored graphics (and their associated alt text) are ignored by the screen reader. These should be arranged as “inline” with the text.
* For complicated graphics, consider breaking them into simpler, separate components. Graphics that cannot be adequately described in alt text may need to be referred to the Accessibility Center for a Braille tactile print. Include “refer to Braille” in the alt text after any description.
* For data graphs, include a data table where possible. This provides an option for the student to replot the graph in an accessible device.
* Graphs used in quizzes may not be describable in alt text without giving the answer. These will need to be referred to Braille.
* To learn how to edit your graphics for accessibility, please see the Using Graphics document.

## Expressions and Formulas

* MathType should be used for all math expressions and equations, even simple ones.
* Typed equations within graphs or other graphics cannot be read by the screen reader. Equations should be rendered in MathType and placed above or below the graph with any other explanatory text.
* If a formula uses words to represent variables, enter this as a text style in MathType. Otherwise, words will be spelled out by the screen reader as though they are variables.
* To learn how to create accessible expressions and equations in MathType, please see the Creating Expressions & Equations document.