



Accessible Document Guidelines

[Accessibility Services Canada](#) has compiled some general best practices to help you to get started in accessible document design for Microsoft Word. If you would like to learn more, join us for one of our [workshops or webinars on how to make accessible documents](#).

Text

General Rules:

- Use font sizes that are 12 pt. or larger.
- Use left-aligned text for extended reading in English.
- Try to only use all-caps for headings or short lines of text (if used at all).
- Used italics, bold, underlines, and decorative fonts and elements sparingly.
- Avoid using text boxes.

Styles:

- Use built-in styles to create hierarchy within your document. (ex: Normal, Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.)

Colour:

- Black text on a white background is preferable for text.
- Ensure a high contrast between the foreground and background.
 - When using coloured text to create hierarchy or aesthetics to a document, make sure it passes the [WCAG 2.0 colour contrast guidelines](#) by using a contrast checker such as [Tanaguru](#).
- Do not rely on colour alone to convey information.

Layout

General Formatting

- Use Styles and the built-in formatting features of Word (ie: page breaks, columns, etc.) to format documents instead using the tab key, enter, or the space bar to format your text.
- Assign a header row to tables.

Images:

- Add alternative (ALT) text to all images (but not those that are decorative).
- Add ALT text to complex, graphs, charts or tables.
- Align images in-line with text instead of `floating`.

Interactive Elements

- Add help text / tool tip to buttons, forms, and fields.
- Describe the content of the link when including hyperlinks.

Exporting Documents

- When exporting Word documents to PDF, make sure "Tagged PDF" is checked.
- If exporting from a Mac, export from Open Office as Word for Mac does not create tagged PDFs. Or even better, find a PC and export it from there.

Language:

- Use plain language and short sentences.
- Spell out abbreviations when first introduced in a document.
- Set the document language to the language it is written in.

Other

- Assign a title to your document, keywords, etc. in Document Properties. This is helpful when exporting documents to PDF and also adds people using assistive technology to find and access your document.

These tips are not comprehensive but give you a few easy things you can start doing to make your documents more accessible. To learn all the steps in create an accessible document, consider taking one of our [hands-on accessible documents workshops](#). You can come to us or we can come to you!

A Word on Document Accessibility:

There is no one-size-fits-all for accessibility. Even if you create the most accessible document in the world, it still may not work for someone. Flexibility is key to accessibility – and implementing accessible document practices into your everyday office routine make this easier, faster, and more cost-effective.

For example, if you need to make a document available in large print, simply go into your styles and update the style - and *ta da*, its all done!

Want to Learn More?

Accessibility Services Canada offers hands-on workshops in accessible document design for Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat Pro, and Adobe InDesign. We also offer workshops, webinars, and resources on accessible communications. Feel welcome to check out our [Upcoming Events](#) on our website or [send us an email](#) to find out more.

Need Help?

Accessibility Services Canada offers accessible document conversion and design services. The document experts at Accessibility Services Canada can convert documents for you from multiple formats: Word, PDF, InDesign, and HTML. If documents are not convertible, Accessibility Services Canada can also create accessible documents and templates from scratch.

If you would like to discuss accessible documents conversion with Accessibility Services Canada, please contact us at training@accessibilitycanada.ca or 1-866-918-1934.