# Microsoft Word Microsft Word Icon

# Making Documents Accessible

Communication should be inclusive, not exclusive. Below sets out key areas on how to make your documentation accessible to all.

## Structure/Layout – Headings

Use an appropriate heading structures for your document. This means using a hierarchy of headings – such as Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3 etc. Screen readers will be able to identify headings for the listener, and also allows navigation of the document by its headings.

Headings are set using Styles. Select the text you want to use as a heading and then select your desired style from the formatting toolbar or the Styles Pane.

## Text, Font and Size

* Font - Arial, Helvetica or Verdana.
* Size -12 point or higher.
* Printed documents in large print – we recommend at least size 16 and in Arial.
* Lowercase text - avoid using capitals for text as lowercase text is easier to read.
* Numbering - one to nine are easier to read if they are written as words. Any numbers from 10 upwards should be numerical.

## Colour Set to Automatic

People who are blind, have low vision, or are colour-blind might miss out on the meaning conveyed by particular colours. Often using screen filters can alter colours and negate any meaning. Therefore all colour must be set to automatic.

Note: Using BOLD to emphasise a point is acceptable.

## Spacing and Alignment

* Always left aligned.
* Use tabs and hanging indents rather than using the spacebar.
* Space - make sure you leave sufficient space between paragraphs and lines as this makes your document easier to read.
* Insert hard page break codes at the proper locations rather than using the enter key repeatedly in order to move to the next page.
* Use page numbering codes in LARGE documents, rather than simply typing in page numbers.

## Illustrations

Illustrations can be used as long as they are relevant and non-distracting. Complex images (such as graphs, schemes, screenshots, maps etc.) require a complete equivalent in text, this is a short description often called a text alternative.

When using Text Alternatives you must ensure that all information can be understood without seeing the image.

## Pictures

Alt text is what someone using a screen reader will hear when navigating over an image. If the image fails to download alt text will display in its place.

To add a text to a picture - have your cursor on the picture - go to picture ribbon - on left hand side is the **ALT TEXT** button. Select it and a box appears on the right.  You don’t need to add a title but just add your text in the box below.

**To add alt text to an image in Word for the web:**

* Left click on the image – the “Picture” tab will appear in the ribbon
* Click on “Picture” tab
* Click on “Alt Text” on the left side of the screen – the “Format Picture” pane will open on the right side of the screen
* Add alt text in “Description” box, leave the “Title” box blank
* Close the “Format Picture” pane – the alt text will save automatically (there is no save button)

**To add alt text to an image in the Word desktop app (Word 2016):**

* Right click on the image and select “Format Picture” from the menu – the “Format Picture” pane will open on the right side of the screen
* In the “Format Picture” pane select the third icon
* Select “Alt Text”
* Add alt text in “Description” box. Leave the “Title” box blank.
* Close the “Format Picture” pane – the alt text will save automatically (there is no save button)

## Tables

Tables in Word need to have a simple structure and give column header information. Tables must not contain split or merged cells, completely blank rows or columns, or nested tables.

## Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks must be concise and descriptive – a screen reader will read everything and if it is a complex hyperlink this can be several lines of numbers and symbols with little meaning.

Choose what you want the hyperlink to be called and refrain from using “click here”.

Adding hyperlinks to electronic word document by right-clicking on any word or group of words and insert the link. It is important that the hyperlink makes sense as it needs to convey clear and accurate information about what it links to.

For printed documents make sure you have a note of full URL in brackets after the descriptive link.

## Use the Accessibility Checker

Word has an in-built checker which checks your accessibility of your document. The ‘Check Accessibility’ button can be found under the ‘Review’ menu. Once selected, it will highlight any accessibility problems with your document and give you guidance on how to correct them.

Good practice to get into the habit of using the accessibility checker before sharing or closing your document.

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