

# Accessible documents

Information for creating accessible word documents, PDFs, presentations and emails.

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Everyone is responsible when it comes to disability inclusion, and a natural place to start is by creating documents that are accessible to all.

Key things to keep in mind when creating accessible documents include:

- Creating descriptive hyperlinks in text. Avoid the use of “click here” or “read more”. For example, instead of “The PSC has a new procurement flowchart. Click here.” try embedding the link in the words “procurement flowchart”. This way if a screen reader user is skipping between links in the body of the email, they will still understand the context of the link.
- Open the Accessibility Checker (can be found as a button called “Check Accessibility” under the “Review” tab of Microsoft applications.) Having the accessibility open from the very beginning will allow you to start designing a document with accessibility in mind.
- Add alternative text to images to give screen reader users context they would otherwise miss. You can do this by right clicking on an image and selecting “Edit Alt Text”. It is best to keep it to two or three descriptive sentences. Check colour contrast through the accessibility checker or external tools such as [Colour Contrast Determinator](#) or [Colour Contrast Analyser](#). Low colour contrast makes documents harder to read for people with low vision.

## Microsoft Word

Key tips to ensure your Word documents are accessible:

- Use the default headings in the ‘Styles’ section in the menu bar to organise information into sections and subsections. Headings act as waypoints for screen reader users, allowing to skip to relevant sections of a document.
- Order your Headings logically. Think of heading levels as nested lists. Use a Level 1 heading to title a section, a Level 2 heading for subsections under the Level 1 heading, a Level 3 heading for subsections under a Level 2 heading and so on.
- Avoid using blank lines. Make use of line spacing, page and section breaks instead. You can use the Paragraph Marker tool (can be found as this button in the “Paragraph” section under the “Home” tab of the Microsoft Word ribbon) to help you identify unnecessary blank lines.
- Try and tabulate your data in ways that remove any reliance on merged cells to avoid confusing screen reader users.
- Do not include images or icons in your tables.

## PDF

To make a PDF document accessible you will need an Adobe Acrobat Pro licence. This licence will provide you with the accessibility tools that allow you to edit and add alt text, edit and add heading tags and check and correct reading order.

You can export your accessible word document to Adobe PDF format and preserve a lot of its accessibility features. When saving your document in Word, select the PDF file format, click the “options” button and ensure that “Document structure tags for accessibility” is checked.

## PowerPoint

PowerPoint presentations can be tricky to make more accessible due to a reliance on images and other visuals to get your message across. Here are some tips to help:

- Ensure that the reading order of your elements are correct. The bottom item of the list will be the first to be read and the top item will be the last to be read.
- Be extra careful about colour contrast. Make sure you are reaching a colour contrast of at least 4.5:1.
- Include alt text for all significant images. Mark inessential images as decorative.

Please note that some screen readers may not be able to read a PowerPoint document. It is a good option to include an accessible PDF version when you send out your slide deck to attendees.

## Email

Microsoft Outlook also has an Accessibility Checker to ensure your email communications are also accessible. Like with Word or PowerPoint documents, you can add alt text to images or mark them as decorative. Avoid using merged cells in tables.