

MS Word Accessibility Checklist

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The following checklist is designed to help provide defined checkpoints that evaluate documents for usability. The goal for this checklist is to maximize access to information. No checklist will be able to account for every type of document so use these principles and metrics as a starting point. Passing these checkpoints in the live source document does not ensure WCAG or PDF/UA compliance. Consider using this checklist with our Adobe Acrobat for Accessibility Checklist for maximum compliance.

1.0 Layout and Formatting

Y/N	Requirement
	Has the document been consistently formatted using Style elements (Heading 1, Heading 2, etc.) and/or using Outline formatting in a hierarchical manner (that is, Heading 1 to Heading 2, etc., to Body Text)?
	Are page numbering codes used as opposed to manually typed page numbers?
	If footnotes are present, have they been created through the Word footnote linking feature?
	Is the bullet style being used instead of manually typed characters (for example, hyphens)?
	Have track changes been accepted and turned off?
	Have all comments been removed?
	Has the document been reviewed in Print Preview for a final visual check?
	Do all URLs contain the correct hyperlink and display the fully qualified URL?
	Are all URLs linked to correct (live) web destinations?
	Are all email links correct and accessible?
	Does the document avoid hard returns (does the document use "space before" and "space after" rather than hard returns to advance? Blank spaces used for formatting purposes (for example, multiple carriage returns, and the use of tabs and spaces to align text) create reading issues for non-sighted users.

2.0 Images

Y/N	Requirement
	Do all images, grouped images, and non-text elements that convey information have alternate text descriptions?
	Do complex images (such as charts and graphs) have alternate text?
	Is the document free of background images and watermarks?
	Is the image text wrapping style "In Line with Text" used for all images?
	Are multiple associated images on the same page (for example, boxes in an organizational chart) grouped as one object?
	Have all multi-layered objects been flattened into one image and use one alternate text description?
	Is the document free of text boxes being used for simple graphics or text?

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3.0 Tables

Y/N	Requirement
	Is the table number and title in the paragraph directly before the table and not in a merged table cell?
	Avoid blank table cells. If you encounter blank cells and are unsure of what to do with them, ask the editor/author if some text can be added (such as "not applicable" or "not available"). Blank cells cause problems for screen readers and for non-sighted users.
	Are the table notes placed directly after the table? Do not place notes in a merged table cell.
	Are the table header rows set to repeat if the table goes onto more than 1 page? Do not repeat the table number and title on multi-page tables.
	Do not allow table rows to break across pages. Is the table set up properly in Table Properties and in the Table Design tab? Table Properties: Select entire table. Go into Table Properties. In Row tab, uncheck "Allow row to break across pages." Click OK. Go to Table Tools Design Tab. On far left of screen, uncheck all boxes except "Header Row."
	Is the table free of split and merged cells?
	Is the table free of vertical column headings?
	Are tables used to create a tabular structure (not tabs or spaces)?
	Do all tables have a logical reading order from left to right, top to bottom?
	Are tables described and labeled (where appropriate)? Note: In some cases, naming/numbering of tables may not be appropriate (for example, a small data table in a presentation may not need a reference.).
	Does the document avoid using a table structure for layout? Do not use tables to show information such as lists of names and titles. The screen reader reads one line of text, from left to right, all the way across the page, from top to bottom. Multiple-line entries (such as names that wrap to a second line with titles) are read out of order. Fixing these errors in reading order is time-consuming. A better option may be to use tabs or single-line entries.

4.0 Additional Requirements

Y/N	Requirement
	Is the document file name concise, generally limited to 20-30 characters, and makes the contents of the file clear in the context in which it is presented?
	Does the document use recommended fonts (Calibri, Arial, Times New Roman, Verdana, Tahoma, and Helvetica)?
	If the document contains a Table of Contents (TOC), was it created using the TOC field (e.g., created using the TOC command in MS Word)?
	Is the document left justified (not full justified)?