

Accessibility – Microsoft Office – Making Files Accessible

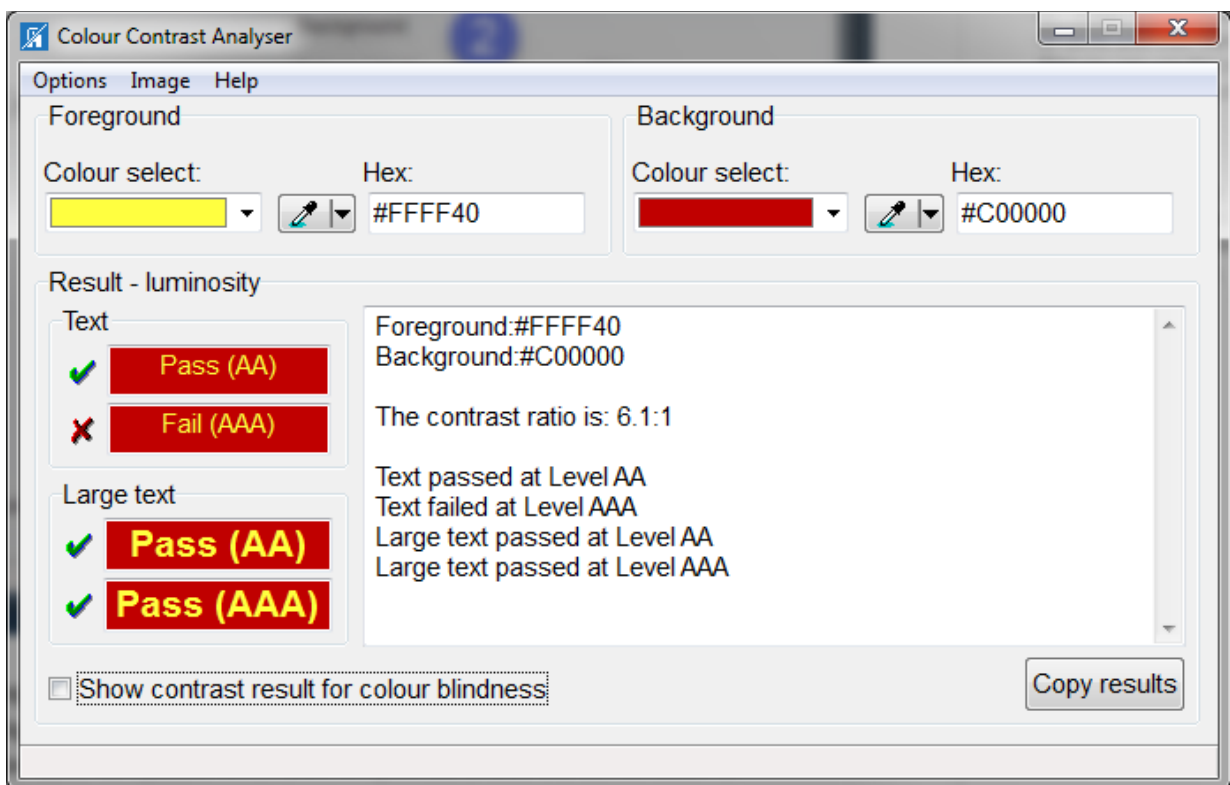
This document will cover the various items one should consider when making files accessible.

Accessible Font (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word)

Font style, size, and color contrast affect how easily text can be viewed by the user.

To make items visually accessible:

- Use a sans serif font.
- Use a font size of 11 to 12 as a minimum for normal text.
- Use a proper color contrast to ensure that text stands out to the user. WCAG 2.0 level AA requires a contrast ratio of 4.5:1 for normal text and 3:1 for large text (typically 14 point bold large or 18 point normal). The [Colour Contrast Analyser](https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/)¹ evaluates the color contrast ratios between foreground and background colors.
- Make sure that color is not the only method of making information stand out or highlight a meaning.



¹ <https://developer.paciellogroup.com/resources/contrastanalyser/>

Built-In Headings and Styles (Outlook, Word)

Organize information into small logical chunks with appropriate heading structure. Use Office's built-in headings to organize sections of text. Headings allow screen readers to assist with navigation through the Office item. Bullets and ordered lists allow text to be listed in a structured order which is also recognized in screen reader navigation.

- Office's built in headers are already formatted for proper font and size adjustments for each level.
- Use headings in logical order: Heading 1, Heading 2, Heading 3, etc. Do not skip levels.
 - Heading 1: Page title or main content.
 - Heading 2: Major section heading.
 - Heading 3: Sub-section of heading 2.
 - Heading 4 to 6: Sub-section of heading 3; etc.
- Do not create a faux heading by manipulating body text to look visually different; this will not be recognized by the screen reader.
- Do not create faux lists by via the tab key and formatted text. The tab key provides no indicators for screen readers.
 - Bullets for non-ordered lists.
 - Numbers for ordered lists.

The image shows a screenshot of the Microsoft Word interface. The top ribbon is visible, with the 'Styles' pane open on the right. The 'Styles' pane shows a list of styles: 'Normal', 'No Spac...', 'Heading 1', 'Heading 2', and 'Heading 3'. A red box highlights the 'Heading 1', 'Heading 2', and 'Heading 3' styles. A red arrow points from a red box labeled 'Headings Tool' to the 'Heading 1' style. On the left, the 'Navigation' pane is open, showing a search bar and a list of headings. A red box highlights the 'Main Topic' heading and its sub-headings. A red arrow points from a red box labeled 'Hierarchy through headings.' to the 'Main Topic' heading. The document outline on the right shows a hierarchy of headings: 'Main Topic', 'Section Heading One', 'Major Sub-Section', 'Minor Sub-Section', 'Section Heading Two', 'Major Sub-Section', and 'Minor Sub-Section'. Each heading is followed by 'Paragraph text.'.

Alternative Text (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word)

Alternative Text (Alt Text) provides a text based alternative to non-text content and is used by screen readers and web browsers. Alt text should let the user know the content and function of the item that it is assigned to.

Alt text should be:

- Accurate
- Equivalent
- Non-Redundant

Items that should have alt text:

- Images
- SmartArt Graphics
- Shapes
- Charts
- Tables
- PivotCharts

Table Structure (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word)

Use a simple table structure with rows and columns to convey data. Using a simple structure allows for a clear representation of the data that screen readers can walk through in the correct order.

- Use only columns and rows; avoid merging and splitting cells in the table.
- Avoid completely blank rows or columns.
- Avoid nested tables.
- Use a header row (first row).
- Provide alt text for the table.
- Verify color contrast.
- Verify that color is not used in the table as the only means to distinguish data cells.

Day of the Week	Hours of Operation
Sunday	Closed
Monday	9 AM to 5 PM
Tuesday	9 AM to 5 PM
Wednesday	9 AM to 5 PM
Thursday	9 AM to 5 PM
Friday	9 AM to 5 PM
Saturday	Closed

Hyperlinks (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word)

Links can be used to take the user to websites, locations in the document, spreadsheet or presentation, or to provide contact information such as email addresses and telephone numbers.

Link formatting:

- Use descriptive link text.
- Avoid repetitive non-descriptive text such as 'click here'.

Worksheet Tabs (Excel)

- Sheet tabs should have unique names.
- Remove blank sheets.

Slide Titles (PowerPoint)

- Give every slide a unique title.
- Slide titles' assist in navigation through the presentation.

Videos (PowerPoint)

Make videos accessible to visually impaired and hearing-impaired users.

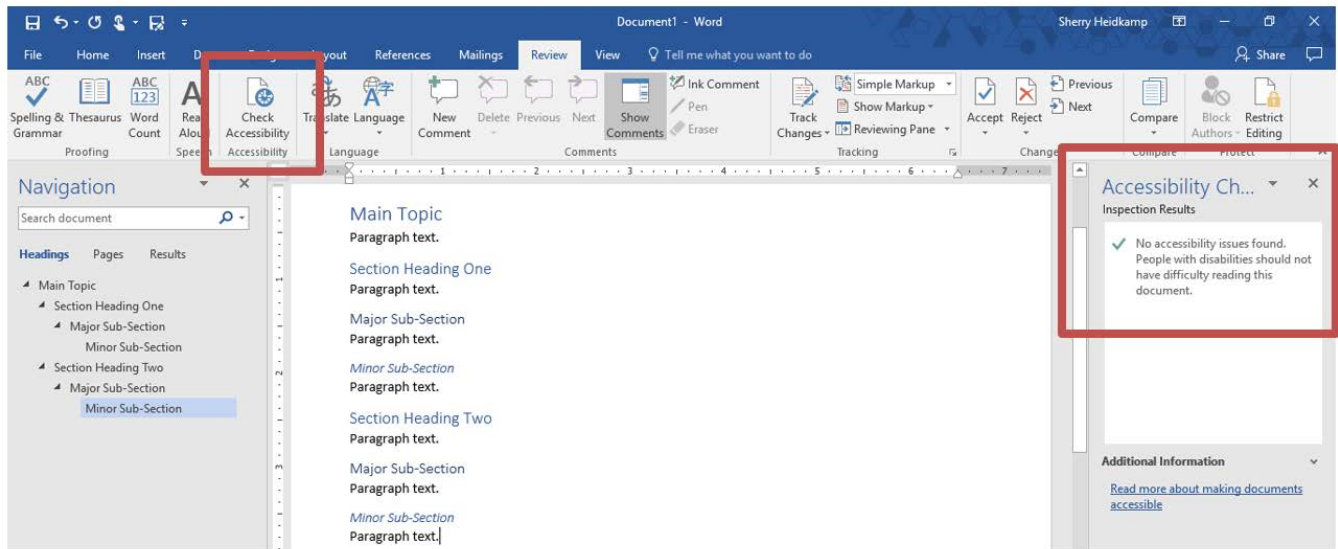
- Subtitles: Transcript of the dialogue.
- Closed Captions: Transcript that typically also describes audio queues.
 - Example: Sound effects that occur off-screen or music.
- Video Description: Audio narrated descriptions of a video's key visual elements.
 - Inserted into natural pauses.
 - Also called audio description in WCAG 2.0 guidelines.

Accessibility Checker (Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word)

Office has an Accessibility Checker tool that helps identify and correct accessibility issues. Issues are grouped into three categories:

- Errors: Can make the document impossible for users with a disability to access.
- Warnings: Can make the document difficult for some users with disabilities to access.
- Tips: Content that is accessible but might need to be manually checked for accuracy.

Selecting a specific result also provides information on why to fix the issue as well as steps to fix the issue.



Additional Resources from Microsoft

The following resource pages are provided by Microsoft and cover Windows, Mac, iOS, Android, and Online versions of the software. For the various topics highlighted above detailed explanations are provided on what to fix, how to find it, why to fix, and how to fix it.

Links open in a new window:

- [Make your Excel Spreadsheets Accessible²](#)
- [Make your Outlook Email Accessible³](#)
- [Make your PowerPoint Presentations Accessible⁴](#)
- [Make your Word Documents Accessible⁵](#)

² <http://tiny.cc/6pl8ny>

³ <http://tiny.cc/3ql8ny>

⁴ <http://tiny.cc/grl8ny>

⁵ <http://tiny.cc/prl8ny>